

MS & Militär & Seelsorge

herausgegeben von der
Evangelischen Militärsuperintendentur

Themenheft 8



Herbert Rainer Pelikan
Fundamentalism



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Fundamentalism
Extreme Tendencies in modern
Christianity, Islam and Judaism

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Vorwort

Der Begriff „Fundamentalismus“ ist ein Thema der aktuellen Diskussion; Grund genug, sich damit auch aus ethischer Sicht zu beschäftigen.

„Fundamentalismus“, der sich nach der iranischen Ayatollah-Revolution (1979) verbreitete, ist heute fast ein Schimpfwort geworden.

„Fundamentalismus“ ist keineswegs ein speziell christliches oder islamisches Phänomen, sondern die Gefahr einer jeden - auch säkularen - Weltanschauung und Religion. Anstelle eines vertrauenden und Wachstumsfähigen Glaubens wird ein absoluter und endgültiger Wahrheitsstandpunkt bezogen, der nicht in der Diskussion einsichtig gemacht, sondern nur mit Macht behauptet wird.

„Fundamentalismus“ ist ein sehr ambivalentes Thema.

Denn grundsätzlich ist es ja zu begrüßen, wenn Menschen ihr Leben auf einem festen Fundament aufbauen.

Das gilt ja auch für den Glauben, wie das Gleichnis Jesu „Vom Hausbau“ (Mt. 7, 24-29) sehr deutlich zeigt. „24 Darum, wer diese meine Rede hört und tut sie, der gleicht einem klugen Mann, der sein Haus auf Fels baute. 25 Als nun ein Platzregen fiel und die Wasser kamen und die Winde wehten und stießen an das Haus, fiel es doch nicht ein; denn es war auf Fels gegründet. 26 Und wer diese meine Rede hört und tut sie nicht, der gleicht einem törichtem Mann, der sein Haus auf Sand baute. 27 Als nun ein Platzregen fiel und die Wasser kamen und die Winde wehten und stießen an das Haus, da fiel es ein und sein Fall war groß.“

Ins Politische übertragen könnte man hier von einem Hochhalten einer „Werteorientierung“ - in positiver Abgrenzung gegenüber einem „Opportunismus“ - sprechen.

Dennoch ist der Begriff „Fundamentalismus“ in der jetzigen Diskussion negativ geprägt, bezeichnet er doch ein blindes Schwarz-Weiß-Denken, wie Herbert Rainer Pelikan in seinem Beitrag sehr überzeugend herausarbeiten kann.

Interessanterweise hat man zu erkennen, dass die Fundamentalismuskonzeption nicht (!) europäischer Prägung ist, sondern ein Eintrag US-Amerikas. Das ist nicht nur ein politischer Befund, sondern auch ein historischer.

Ursprünglich bezeichnete sich eine Bewegung amerikanischer Protestanten als Fundamentalisten (The Fundamentals, 1910-1915), die gegen den Einzug kritischer Methoden in die Theologie an - ihrem Glaubensverständnis nach - unverrückbaren Fundamenten festhielten: 1) wörtliches Bibelverständnis (Inspiration) und Irrtumslosigkeit der Schrift bis in alle Einzelheiten, 2) Gottheit Christi, 3) Jungfrauengeburt, 4) stellvertretender Opfertod Jesu, 5) leibliche Auferstehung und Wiederkunft Christi. Der sogenannte Affenprozess von Dayton (1925; gegen Charles Darwins Lehre von der Evolution) schädigte ihr öffentliches Ansehen.¹

Was man dabei bereits bemerkt ist die enge Verknüpfung zwischen politischen und religiösen Ideen; diese gibt es allerdings wohl schon, solange es Menschen gibt. Die Unterscheidung zwischen „islamisch“ und „islamistisch“ will hier differenzieren, setzt sich aber genauso schleppend durch wie die Unterscheidung zwischen „militärisch“ und „militaristisch“.

Die Attentate des 11. Septembers 2001 hatten zur Folge, dass die US-amerikanischen Anliegen zu weltweiten Anliegen gemacht worden sind. Eine Erklärung amerikanischer Intellektueller vom Februar 2002 kann feststellen: „Those who slaughteres more than 3,000 persons on September 11 an who, by their own admission, want nothing more to do it again, constitute a clear and present danger to all people of good will everywhere in the world, not just the United States.“²

Der zitierte Erklärung ist es ein Anliegen, nicht die gesamte islamische Welt in Bausch und Bogen abzuurteilen, sondern eine differenzierte Begründung für den Kampf gegen den Fundamentalismus zu präsentieren. Bleibt sie aber nicht ebenfalls im „Freund-Feind-Denken“ stecken, wenn sie in ihren abschließenden Schlussfolgerungen feststellt: „We wish especially to reach out to our brothers and sisters in Muslim societies. We say to you forthrightly: We are not enemies, but friends.“³ ... so wie ja zweifelsfrei ein „Gut-Böse-Denken“ zum Vorschein kommt, wenn im Rauch der brennenden Twin-Towers ein Teufelskopf erkannt wird.

Nun ist zweifelsfrei der Fundamentalismus mit einer liberalen Weltordnung tatsächlich nicht zu vereinbaren, und Fundamentalismus entsteht nicht nur in Europa, sondern wird auch mas-

siv in die europäische abendländisch-westliche Welt hineingetragen.

Nicht nur, weil es uns auch hier in Österreich betrifft, sondern allein schon, dass Fundamentalismus auch ein religiöses Phänomen darstellt, ist Grund genug, dass sich christlich motivierte Militäretik mit diesem Thema beschäftigt.

„Der fundamentalistischen Versuchung der Verabsolutierung von Überzeugung ist zu begegnen durch die Einübung der Hinterfragung eigener Positionen, von Gewaltlosigkeit und von Vertrauen, das nicht auf die eigenen Verständnismodelle, sondern auf den unfassbaren Gott setzt und sich mit dieser Wahrheit auf den Weg des Lebens macht (Joh 14, 6, wo Jesus sagt: Ich bin der Weg und die Wahrheit und das Leben; niemand kommt zum Vater denn durch mich).“⁴

DDr. Karl-Reinhard Trauner, MilOKur

1 Vgl. E. Biser/F. Hahn/M. Langer (Hg.), *Der Glaube der Christen II: Ein ökumenisches Wörterbuch*, München-Stuttgart 1999, S. 144

2 *What We're Fighting For. A Letter from America*, February 2002, Institute for American Values, S. 9

3 a.a.O., S. 10

4 Biser/Hahn/Langer, a.a.O., S. 144

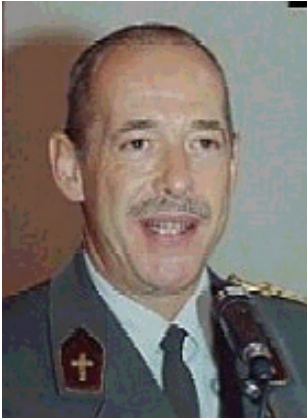


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Foreword



Fundamentalism is in general a description of those who return to what they believe to be fundamental truths and practices of a religion. It can thus be applied to this attitude in all religions (e.g. the resurgence of conservative Islam is sometimes called "Islamic fundamentalism"). But this use is often resented by such people, because of its more usual identification with those, in Christianity, who defend the Bible against charges that it contains any kind of error. More specifically, it denotes the view of Protestant Christians opposed to the historical and theological implications of critical study of the Bible.

To avoid overtones of closed-mindedness, Christians in the fundamentalist tradition often prefer to be called Conservative Evangelicals.

If the word (Arab. equivalents are *salafiyya* and *usuliyya*) is used of Muslims, then it refers to those who assert the literal truth of the Koran and the validity of its legal and ritual commandments for modern people (e.g. the prohibition of intoxicants, interests on loans, rate of inheritance, and divorce). While they do not oppose change, they insist that change must be governed by koranic values and modes of understanding i.e. in accordance with the *shari'a* as a fixed corpus of clear directives.

Moreover, it is an attitude of mind, a tendency amongst the educated classes who feel an affinity for the high culture of traditional Islam, and amongst groups, especially the *ulamá*, who feel threatened by Westernization of society.

In an attempt to bring some ordered insight into a confused field, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences set up "The Fundamentalism Project", which began to issue its reports in 1991. The key appeared to be that those who belong to what might be described as movements of reactions against modernity 'no longer perceive themselves as reeling under the corrosive effect of secular life: on the contrary, they perceive themselves as fighting back, and doing so rather successfully'. They fight back (resisting 'some challenge or threat to their core identity'); they fight for (for 'their conceptions of what ought to go on in matters of life and health'); they fight with (selectively with, not the whole of 'a pure past', but 'those features which will best reinforce their identity, keep their movement together, build defences around its boundaries, and keep others at some distance'); they fight against (not so much the outsider as the insider "who would be moderate, would negotiate with modernity, would adapt the movement"); they fight under (mainly under God, but in a minority of non-theistic cases, under some transcendent reference). Fundamentalism is thus inevitably generated by the very process of time and change.¹

¹ The Oxford dictionary of world religions, ed. by John Bowker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.360f.



New Fundamentalism

It started in the ninetenseventies¹

The story of the new fundamentalism in the realm of religion which troubles us so much these days, already started in the ninetenseventies. The French writer Gilles Kepel states in his book "Die Rache Gottes" (The revenge of God), that the years 1977, 1978, 1979 were important dates concerning the history of fundamentalism. In these years farreaching changes take place in Judaism, in Christianity and in Islam.

1977.

In the parliamentary elections in May 1977 the "Workers Party of Israel" suffers a severe defeat and for the first time in the history of the state of Israel has to leave parliament. The new premier minister is Menachem Begin from the Likkud-block. That's when the religious groups, which for a long time seemed to be relatively unimportant in politics, got a big boost. The reason for this development maybe has to be seen in the failures and temporary setbacks of the October-war 1973, which had caused great uncertainties in the population. The new government, who needet the support of the religious political groups in parliament, agreed to found many new settlements in the occupied territories.

1978.

In September of 1978 the conclave in Rome elects the Polish cardinal Karol Wojtila as Pope of the Roman-catholic church. By his election many Catholics hoped for an end of the uncertainties which had spread out since the Second Vatican

Council in the Catholic Church. And indeed the influence of the Catholic right-wingers grew to be stronger, just to mention the traditionalists around archbishop Lefebvre, while at the same time Catholic left-wingers, for a long time considering themselves as the conscience of the church and the council, were increasingly forced into the defensive.

1979.

The year 1979 according to the Islamic timetable ushers in the fifteenth century. It startet with the return of Ayatolla Khomeini to Teheran, where then the proclamation of the Islamic Republic takes place. And the year ends with the storming of the great mosque of Mecca by an armed group who thus protests that the holy sites are controlled by the Saudi ruling family. All of a sudden the hidden potential of the Islamic movement became apparent to the public of the world, starting from Malaysia till Senegal, from the islamic Sowjet-republics to the European capitals housing millions of islamic immigrants.²

1980.

One could add to Kepel the year 1980. In this year Ronald Reagan was elected president of the United States of America. Analysts of the election came to the result that the outcome of the election was strongly influenced by the propaganda of fundamental religious groups, for example the 1979 foundet group "Moral Majority".

1 The most and comprehensive presentation of the subject "Fundamentalism" was published by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences: Martin Marty and Scott Appleby (ed.), Fundamentalism projekt, 5 vol. (Chicago, 1991-1995 (vol.1: Fundamentalism observed, 1991 ; vol.2:Fundamentalism and society, 1993; vol.3: Fundamentalism and the state; vol.4: Accounting for

fundamentalisms; 1994; vol.5: Fundamentalisms comprehended, 1995).

2 Gilles Kepel, Die Rache Gottes: Radikale Moslems, Christen und Juden auf den Vormarsch, trans. French Thorsten Schmidt (München: Piper,1999),p.19-22.

Religious fundamentalism - some considerations



The term "Fundamentalism" is used in two related but clearly distinguishable senses: 1. to designate what is more generally called a conservative type of Christian thought, as opposed to the liberal or modernist tendencies which became influential in the later part of the 19th century and still more so in the first part of the 20th century; and 2. as the name of a specific conservative movement with its own organizations and agencies devoted to the propagation of a definite doctrinal program (the Five Points of Fundamentalism) which, it was claimed, constitute the indispensable elements of the true Christian faith. In the first of these senses, the term is more often used by liberals to describe conservatives than by conservatives to describe themselves. In the second sense, it lost the wide currency that it had

in the first three decades of the 20th century and, though what it stands for is by no means extinct, the movement which it describes changed its methods and less frequently uses that name.

When we talk about "religious fundamentalism", we first take a fleeting glance at "what is religion" and then we dwell briefly on the concept "fundamentalism". Concerning religion this of course can't be a treatise "in extenso" libraries have been written on this subject. Let's try a sociological approach. The sociology of religion is based on the hypothesis, that religious systems of interpretation

of the world and life have the function to make emotionally bearable (up to now) unsolvable dangerous problems which have effects on the existence of the individual or society.¹ Man yearns for the salvation from evils which haunt him and at the same time he searches for a meaning for these occurrences. Religion is an answer for the quest of the meaning of life and at the same time it shows to many people "the right way for the daily life". When man becomes individual he has the choice of either mastering the world in a self-reliant way or to seek security by subjugation or commitments, which destroy his individuality; to achieve and maintain emotional stability and mental sanity man needs a meaning in life, something he lives for, be it work or other human beings.²

This Definition of religion by the sociology of religion can easily be transformed into a theological description: the guarantor for the meaning of life is then God or the gods or other holy respectively transcendent powers. Members of religious communities are convinced, that their religion is a valid and meaningful answer to the queries of there life. Thus religion becomes their refuge.

Is said refuge based on monocausal thinking and feeling, then pluralistic explanations concerning the meaning of life may represent a danger for such people. Such pluralism is a hallmark of our modern, especially western world. So it takes no wonder, that the present religious-fundamentalist clashes represent mostly protestmovements against western civilisations, even within the west.³ It's a clash based on the different understanding of human life and the world. The view of the secular part of the western world has been formed by the philosophy of the eighteenth century movement of "Enlightment", revealing to mankind, that as beings who possess reason they could think for themselves, leave behind the indoctrinated mental minority. The Enlightenment is at once a style, an attitude, a temper-critical, secular, skeptical, empirical, and practical movement. It is also characterized by core beliefs in human rationality, in what it takes to be "nature", and in the "natural feelings" of mankind. Four of its most prominent exemplars are Hume, Jefferson, Kant, and Voltaire. The Enlightenment believe in human rationality had several aspects. 1. Human beings are free to the extent that their actions are carried out for a reason. Actions prompted by traditional authority, whether religious or political, are therefore not free; liberation requires weakening if not also overthrow of this authority. 2. Human rationality is universal, requiring only education for its development. In virtue of their common rationality, all human beings have certain rights, among them the right to choose and shape their individual destinies. 3. A final aspect of the belief in human rationality was that the true forms of all things could be

discovered, whether of the universe (Newton's laws), of the mind (associationist psychology), of good government (the U.S. Constitution), of a happy life (which, like good government, was "balanced"), or of beautiful architecture (Palladio's principles). The Enlightenment was preeminently a "formalist" age, and prose, not poetry, was its primary means of expression. The Enlightenment thought of itself as a return to the classical ideas of the Greeks and (more especially) the Romans. But in fact it provided one source of the revolutions that shook Europe and America at the end of the eighteenth century, and it laid the intellectual foundations for both the generally scientific worldview and the liberal democratic society, which, despite the many attacks made on them, continue to function as cultural ideals; blind believe was now considered "fanaticism", which itself is nothing but superstition converted into action".⁴ The principle of "critical reason" was also applied to the interpretation of the Bible: not adoration of the Holy Scriptures but their critical study was now the task.

1 Meyers enzyklopädisches Lexikon (1977,repr.1981), vol 19, p.805. The second subject being investigated by the sociology of religion is the hypotheses of religion as justification for systems of rule.

2 Erich Fromm, Die Furcht vor der Freiheit, 6th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1973), p. 29f. Compare also Viktor Frankl, Der Wille zum Sinn: Ausgewählte Vorträge über Psychotherapie, 3rd exp. ed.(Bern, Stuttgart, Wien: Hans Huber, 1982), p. 16f.

3 Compare Samuel P. Huntington, The clash of civilisations and the remaking of world order (London: The Free Press/ Simon & Schuster, 2002; orig. publ. 1996).

4 The Cambridge dictionary of philosophy, ed. by Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 266. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant postulates, that the human will is affected by passions, but is basically free, not necessitated by passion; hence man is responsible for his actions. Comp. The Oxford history of western philosophy, ed. by Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.197. On "fanaticism" comp. Deleyre, "Fanatisme", in Die Welt der Encyclopédie, ed. by Anette Selg u. Rainer Wieland, trans. French Holfer Fock a. o. (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 2001) ,p.99.



Fundamentalism in modern Christianity

Christian fundamentalism in the United State of America

Modern Christian fundamentalism started in the United States of America in the 19th century as a movement of Protestantism projected to counteract modernistic liberal theology and the teachings of Darwin concerning the evolution of species. In defense of the uniqueness of the Christian Bible and Christian religion this fundamentalist movement stresses, as fundamental to Christianity, the final authority of Scripture, the virgin birth and deity of Jesus Christ, his substitutory atonement, bodily resurrection and literal return. These doctrines of course had been integral to Protestantism prior to the rise of modernism in the mid-nineteenth century. As Christian theology was progressively secularized, interdenominational movements and institutions arose to protest doctrinal compromise within the major denominations. This compromise was brought about by circles in university-theology, who treated the Bible on the one hand as a social document and on the other hand



not any more with mere reverence but as a literary product to which the methods of scientific literary criticism could be applied, not just concerning the reconstruction of the original biblical text – that’s what the fundamentalists also want – but also concerning authorship, content and historical

placement of the biblical text.

The Niagara Bible Conference, meeting annually from 1876, proposed a five-point platform in 1895: 1. biblical inerrancy, 2. the deity of Christ, 3. his virgin birth, 4. his substitutory death and 5. his physical resurrection and return. Subscription to these tenets became a test of orthodoxy. As the gift of two evangelical lay leaders, the 12-volume set The Fundamentals (A.C Dixon and R.A. Torrey eds.) was distributed to the Protestant ministry in 1909 to combat modernism. In all, three million copies of these volumes were circulated. The fundamentalist

movement clung to the biblical gospel (as St. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4)¹ as against the modernist defection to the so-called "social gospel".² The fundamentalists stressed biblical Christianity, yet failed to produce much great theological and exegetical literature.³

The second clash of US-American fundamentalism with modern times took place on the field of natural sciences. It was about creation of man and other species by God or by evolution, i.e. by gradual development from a simple to more complex form. The proponent of such an idea of evolution was Charles Darwin (1809-1882), an English natural historian and geologist; with his books On the origin of species (1859) and The descent of man (1871) he changed our concepts of nature and of humanity's place within it. The fundamentalists believed in Biblical inerrancy of the six-day creation, God's word had to be right and Darwin wrong, man's ancestor is not the monkey. So in the nineteenth century the so-called "Monkey-Trial" took place in Dayton, Tennessee. The biology teacher John T. Scopes criticized the belief in verbal inspiration of the Bible by God and the anti-Darwinistic stance of the fundamentalist movement. The teacher was sentenced in the first court case and then acquitted in first appeal because of formalistic reasons. The consequence however was that in some federal states of the USA laws had been enacted forbidding the teaching of evolution in school.

This movement still lives on today and is called "Creationism". Forty-four percent of the population of the USA confess to such an "Creationism", which means they believe that mankind stems from Adam and Eve according to the Old Testament in the Bible and they reject the teachings of evolution by Darwin.⁴

Since the nineteenth century we witness an unexpected renaissance of fundamentalism in the United States of America. This was achieved by means of the so-called "Electronic Church", i.e. the use of public media, especially television. And then an alliance has been formed between fundamentalists and conservative republican politicians. This movement believes that the USA has a special mission from God for the world. Ronald Reagan made use of this development in his successful presidential campaign in 1980. Election

analysts attributed this surprising victory to the electoral mobilisation of the rightwing conservative protestant camp by fundamentalist pastors and television-preachers. The religious-political movements "Moral Majority" and "New Right" exerted great influence.⁵ And in recent times we heard similar tones from the present president of the USA, George W. Bush with his manichean world view. The themes of the new US-American protestant fundamentalism are strong patriotism, a declaration of belief in the capitalist economic system and in private property, moral rigorism and rigid differentiation between good and evil.

1 1. Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2. By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4. And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

2 This "social gospel" was the amalgamation of the gospel with the faith in cultural, especially social progress; one well known proponent of this movement was professor Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) in Rochester; See Karl Heussi, Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte, 13th ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1971), p.533.

3 See Carl F.H. Henry, "Fundamentalism", in The American peoples encyclopedia (New York: Grolier, 1968), vol.8, p.313.

4 Edda Heiligsetzer, „Religiös-fundamentalistischer Terrorismus im Vergleich: Extremistischer Protestantismus in den USA und fundamentalistische Gewalt im islamischen Orient“, Die Friedenswarte, No. 76 (2001), p.85f.

There is also a convergence of certain elements of the Christian right and discrimination based on race, gender, gay/lesbian sexuality, and social class; comp. Ann Burlein, Lift high the cross: Where white supremacy and the Christian Right converge (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002). Brian Laythe a.o. though state, that fundamentalism is essentially unrelated to ethnic prejudice when considered alone, but is a significant predictor of prejudice against gays and lesbians; "Religious fundamentalism as a predictor of prejudice: A two-component model", Journal for the scientific study of religion, vol.41 (December 2002), p.623-635.

A good analysis on the subject of terror in history and future is Hubert M. Mader, Edwin R. Micewski, Andreas B. Wieser, Terror und Terrorismus: Grundsätzliches, Geschichtliches und Perspektiven, Schriftenreihe der Landesverteidigungsakademie „Studien und Berichte“, No.8/2001 (Wien: Landesverteidigungsakademie, 2001).

5 We will not dwell here on the phenomenon of religious violence being caused by the confrontation of apocalyptic movements and an established order which seeks to control cults. For this matter see John R. Hall with Philip Schuyler and Sylvaine Trinh, Apocalypse observed: Religious movements and violence in North America, Europe and Japan. (London, New York: Routledge, 2000). See also the chapter „Fundamentalismus im Bibel-Belt“ in Peter Scholl-Latour, Kampf dem Terror - Kampf dem Islam ? Chronik eines unbegrenzten Krieges, 2nd ed. (München: Propyläen, 2003), p.270-274.

Fundamentalism in the protestant churches in Europe

European fundamentalism has been strongly influenced by the movement in the United States of America. It is rampant in the churches with calvinistic, baptist and pietistic tradition. The sphere of influence of fundamentalism in Europe is limited. Here are a few examples of this movement:¹

- "Alarm concerning the Bible" ("Alarm um die Bibel") is sounded in a book by Gerhard Bergmann, which warns against the modern historic-critical interpretation of the Bible.

- the movement "No other gospel" ("Kein anderes Evangelium"), which was founded in 1966 and which fights against modernist theology and against an ethic pluralism in the congregations.

- there is a broadly organized evangelical movement, which among others founded a "Free Theological Academy" ("Freie theologische Akademie"-FETA) in Basel, Switzerland, as an alternative to theological studies at state-universities with their historic-critical interpretation of the Bible.

How do European protestant Christian fundamentalists see the Bible? The European branch took over the "Chicago declaration on the correctness of the Bible" from 1978, in which article VI states: "We confess, that the scripture as a whole and in all of its parts, up to the words of the original text, was inspired by God"; and

thus declares the German theologian Gerhard Maier in Tübingen, "that the inspiration of the Bible is a whole process, which materialized in the making of the scriptures" as a means of expression of the revelation of God.²

This expresses the believe of the protestant fundamental movement in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. It is assumed, that there have been primeval scripts, which have been prepared by God or even written by him. Of course fundamentalists also know, that today we have to deal with later copies or translations and that these contain errors. Nevertheless they claim that there must be a

primeval text which stems from God himself. Why they insist on this is clear: they want a reliable fundament for their religious believe and so they demand the absolute reliability of the Bible which the Christian of today holds in his hands. This also explains the allergic reaction of protestant fundamentalists against the historic-critical interpretation of the Bible. They fear that by application of said method the Word of God or respectively the truth of faith as expressed in the Bible could be relavated or even totally suppressed. To interpret in a historic-critical fashion always means to place a text back into the time of the history of his generation, his making, and to consider that this text has been written according to the mode of interpretation of world and life of these days. This would mean



that the text of the Bible is not an unchangeable solid rock in an everchanging world and life but that it is itself subject to hermeneutics, to various interpretation. This would dissolve the wished for "eternal fundament", which provides emotional security.

1 Comp. Klaus Kienzler, Der religiöse Fundamentalismus: Christentum, Judentum, Islam, 4th ed. (München: Beck, 2002), p.36ff.

2 See W.Thiede, „Bibelglaube“, in Fundamentalismus der verweltlichten Welt, ed. by H Hemminger (Stuttgart, 1991), p. 131-162.

Fundamentalist tendencies in the Catholic Church of today

Modern Catholic fundamentalism has its roots in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the church thought it had to defend itself against modern secular ways of living. Pope Pius IX. published the "Syllabus errorum" to fight this "modernism-crisis". In this syllabus eighty erroneous developments are listed, among these wrong philosophies and ideologies (such as liberalism and communism), wrong developments in society and government (e.g. modern democracy), too much individual and human rights. The Catholic Church was the "societas perfecta", not the secular state. The epitome of this fight was the First Vatican Council, in which the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope in matters of teaching and moral was constituted in 1870. If the Pope couldn't rule any more an absolute monarchy in Middle-Italy because of the loss of the Church-State due to the unification of Italy, he still could be an absolute monarch in the Catholic Church.

The second "modernism-crisis" is connected with the decree "Lamentabili" of the Holy Office and with the encyclica "Pascendi" of Pope Pius X. from 1907. Together they form a new syllabus, in which about another 65 heresies of modern life are listed. This so-called "ultramontanistic" movement fought against what it considered to be wrong positions concerning the Pope as authority in matters of the teaching of the church, the inspiration of the Bible and wrong developments in matters of faith and dogma. This later resulted in the foundation of the "Bible Insti-

tute" in Rome for controlling world wide the catholic biblical sciences. It was Rome, who demanded the only right to decide, how the Bible ought to be read and interpreted. And it was Rome, who had to decide which tradition was valid in the Catholic Church. In other words, it is the Pope who has the final say in matters of teaching of the Catholic Church.¹ And this also constitutes a fundamentalistic streak in Catholicism: what in protestant churches is the final appeal to the Bible, in the Catholic Church is often the appeal to the Pope.

Another fundamentalist phenomenon in the Catholic Church is the so-called "traditionalism", i.e. placing the tradition of the church over Bible and Pope. This movement was provoked by the constitutions of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The aim was a basic reform of churchly life together with the "opening" of the church to the modern world and a new orientation of the relationship of the Catholic Church toward the other Christian churches and the non-Christian religions. Some of the most important results were: reform of liturgy (national language instead of Latin, the priest facing the congregation with the altar), strengthening of the position of the local churches and of national bishop-conferences, affirmation of freedom of religion and conscience.

Against this development traditionalistic groups within the Catholic Church oppose.

Just to name a few:²

- Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and his followers. They stand for a rigid traditionalism and demand among others the return to the Latin Tridentine liturgy and the renunciation of the "aberrations" of the "Second Vatican Council". The "aberrations" concern the above mentioned results of this council. Lefebvre later on was excommunicated and part of his followers became schismatic.

- the "Brotherhood of Priests of St. Peter". That is the non-schismatic part of the Lefebvre-movement.

- the "Opus Angelorum" ("Work of Angels"). Several brotherhoods of priests and laypeople belong to this organization.

- the "Opus Dei" ("Work of God"). It promotes the restoration of the Catholic Church in the sense of an authoritarian conservatism.

In order to achieve a conservative change in the Catholic Church these traditionalistic groups aspire to the same tactic: they send letters of petition to the Pope and the Bishops complaining about putative outrages.

1 Concerning the historical development of the Catholic Church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century compare Karl Heussi, Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte, 13th ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1971), pp. 434-454.

2 Compare Herder-Korrespondenz (1995), pp.477-482, quoted after Klaus Kienzler, Der religiöse Fundamentalismus: Christentum, Judentum, Islam, 4th ed. (München: C. H. Beck, 2002), pp.65-68.



Fundamentalism in modern Islam

At the end of 1988 there started the affair concerning the British writer Salman Rushdie of Indian descent and Islamic faith. The imams of the British town of Bradford were outraged about his book "The Satanic Verses" in which he supposedly offended the Prophet Mohammed. The imams, who wanted to burn the book in public, belonged to the intellectual core of an Islamic group, called "Djama'at-i-islami" ("Community of Islam"), which was founded by Abu l-A'la al-Maududi (+1979), a fundamentalist ideologist in Pakistan. Ayatollah Khomeini in the Iran ordered the execution of the writer Salman Rushdie, accusing him of blasphemy because he putatively

disparaged the Prophet Mohammed in his novel. The indirect aim of this move of Khomeini at that time was his attempt to regain the leading position of Iranian politics in the Islamic world and to overcome the lost war with the Iraq. The Rushdie-affair also was Khomeini's last attempt, to spread the jihad, the holy war, unto international terrain: with the help of the Rushdie-affair he exerted pressure on European states with large Islamic minorities, spurring them on to acts of violence. That is the kind of Islamic fundamentalism, which we associate with that concept. And this brings us to the question, what is fundamental in Islam?

Back to the ideal of the beginning

The origin of Islam is a prophetic vision of the relationship between God and man. The Koran, the holy scripture of Islam, sees in God the sole cause of the world. To turn one's countenance fully towards God, that is the doing of man, by which he achieves his salvation. Mohammed was not very successful in convincing his co-citizens of Mecca and had to flee to Medina, which flight was called "hijra" and now means the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Mohammed now sought to safeguard his theological position with political and military means. Religious law becomes now of prime importance: who performs the Islamic law, fulfills the will of God. This will is expressed in the sepa-

rate religious regulations according to which the community of the faithful has to live and to act. This approach was rewarded with the breathtaking success of the Islamic community a few years after the Prophet's death and thus placed the religious law at the center of Muslim life. The Islamic state, headed by a caliph as successor of the prophet and ruling as agent of the divine order on earth, proved to be a success. This process was finally consolidated in the tenth century A.D. and its outcome was: 1. God is the sole cause of all being and the final cause of all events. 2. The Muslim is always aware of this fact and therefore he is certain of his salvation. 3. The Islamic community,

foundet on the devine law, is the perfect order and has been propagated as such completely by the Prophet Mohammed and realized in the community of Medina. This mirage still beckons to the fundamentalist Muslim today and it is his utopian dream. The ideal order of things, the community

based on devine law, was real at the times of the Prophet – so it is believed and should be established again in our present time. The function of this fundamental believe is the attempted preservation of the Islamic world in the clash with modern western moral values.

The Koran is sacrosanct

While the compilation of the scriptures of the Bible took hundreds of years, the completion of the Koran demanded only twenty years. Its testimony goes back to one person, the Prophet, and twenty years after his death in 632, the Koran was layed down in all his parts.¹ The individual Sura are arranged according to their lenght and not according to their historic conection. The shorter and most likely older parts are placed at the end, the longer and assumedly younger paragraphs stand at the beginning. Every word, every single letter has been revealed and dictated by God (verbal

inspiration). Everything is laid down in this book. But there is no final authority which could interpret the text authentically. For the faithful Muslim the Holy Koran ist the final revelation and the word of God adressed to all of man. The teachings and commendments of the Koran are obligatory everywhere and still today.

1 Compare G.G. Scheiber, „Theologischer Fundamentalismus im Islam“, in Eindeutige Antworten? Fundamentalistische Versu-
chung in Religion und Gesellschaft, ed. by J.Niewiadomski, theolo-
gische trends, No.1 (Thaur, 1988), pp.63-88.

Sharia - totalitarian religion

The Sharia, the devine law, rests on the tradition (sunna), the biography of the Prophet (sira) and on the handed down statements of Mohammed (hadith) and dates back to the tenth century. Decisive for the Islam is that the Sharia, which at first hand is the religious law, was and still is in some states applied as normative law for the Islamic community, the law of the state is the religious law: "din wa daula" (religion and state). This is a politisation of religion, the Sharia shows the legal way. It derives from this conception that Islamic clerics understand themselves at first hand not as theologians but as legal scholars. Thus the Sharia not only regulates matters of cult and morality. This law also contains concrete

regulations for doing buisness, family-law, inheritance and divorce, clothing and manners, naurishment and personal hygiene and more. Here also are the regulations for the status of women ("half as worth as a man"), the ban of pork and alcohol. In the Sharia are also listed the socalled Hudud-punishments, like stoning of women convicted of adultery, cutting off the hand for theft and so on. The Sharia also regulates the contact with members of other faith; Christians and Jews, as "people of the Book", generally enjoy a special tolerance, they are regardet as protegee (dhimmi). They are not without rights, but they are inferior and subordinate to the true believers of Islam.

Rebellion of Islam against the West

The modern fundamentalist movements of Islam take a critical look at western civilization. The spirit of western culture was made the scapegoat for the deplorable state of affairs in the Islamic world. The real cause is a failure in modernity.

Almost the entire Muslim world is affected by poverty and tyranny. Both of these problems are attributed, especially by those with an interest in diverting attention from themselves, to US-America – the first to US-American economic dominance and exploitation, now thinly disguised as "globalization"; the second to US-America's support for the many so-called Muslim tyrants who serve its purposes. Globalization has become a major theme in the Arab media, and it is almost always raised in connection with US-American



economic penetration. The increasingly wretched economic situation in most of the Muslim world, compared not only with the West but also with the rapidly rising economies of East Asia, fuels these frustrations. US-American paramountcy, as Middle Easterners see it, indicates where to direct the blame and the resulting hostility.

The combination of low productivity and high birth rate in the Middle East makes for an unstable mix, with a large and rapidly growing population of unemployed, uneducated, and frustrated young

men. By all indicators from the United Nations, the World Bank, and other authorities, the Arab countries - in matters such as job creation, education, technology, and productivity – lag ever further behind the West. Even worse, the Arab nations also lag behind the more recent recruits to Western-style modernity, such as Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore.

Modernization in politics has fared no better – perhaps even worse – than in warfare and economics. Many Islamic countries have experimented with democratic institutions of one kind or another. In some, as in Turkey and Iran, they were introduced by innovative native reformers; in others, as in several of the Arab countries, they were installed and then bequeathed

by departing imperialists. The record, with the exception of Turkey, is one of almost unrelieved failure. Western-style parties and parliaments almost invariably ended in corrupt tyrannies, maintained by repression and indoctrination. The only European model that worked, in the sense of accomplishing its purposes, was the one-party dictatorship. The Ba'ath Party, different branches of which have ruled Iraq and Syria for decades, incorporated features of its Soviet model. Since the death of the Egyptian president Nasser, in 1970, no Arab leader has been able to gain extensive support outside his own country. Indeed, no Arab leader has been willing to submit his claim to power to a

free world. The leaders who have come closest to winning pan-Arab approval are the Libyan Mu'ammār Qaddafi in the nineteenth seventies and, more recently, it was Saddam Hussein. That these two, of all Arab rulers, should enjoy such wide popularity is in itself both appalling and revealing.

In view of this, it is hardly surprising that many Muslims speak of the failure of modernization and respond to different diagnoses of the sickness of their society, with different prescriptions for its cure. For some, the answer is more and better

modernization, bringing the Middle East into line with the modern and modernizing world. For others, modernity is itself the problem, and the source of all their woes.¹

Political Islam is a product of the Islamic dilemma concerning the cultural modernity. Islamic fundamentalists do not reject modernity as a whole. In their striving after an Islamic political order, they want to make use of the material and technical achievements of western modernity.² What Islamic fundamentalists don't want is the ideology of a western philosophy, which rests on the view of life of the age of European Enlightenment, i.e. that man is not the slave of destiny but the maker of his world, be it with the help of a God or be it on the basis of atheism respectively agnosticism.

Fundamentalists reject this man-centered view of life and propagate a "Kingdom of God" instead, with a western technical standard. They want to connect the institutional-instrumental modernity with a theology from the middle ages and thus realize their dream of half a modernity.³

1 On the failure of modernity of Islamic countries compare Bernhard Lewis, The crisis of Islam: Holy war and unholy terror (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), pp.87-92.

2 Bassam Tibi, Fundamentalismus im Islam: Eine Gefahr für den Weltfrieden? (Darmstadt: Primus-Verlag/ Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), p.175.

3 Bassam Tibi, Die fundamentalistische Herausforderung: Der Islam und die Weltpolitik, 3rd rev. ed., Beck'sche Reihe, No.484 (München: Beck, 2002), p.55.

Fundamentalist groups and movements in Islam

Islamic reform-movements in the late nineteenth century nourished nearly exclusively a fundamentalist body of thought. This fact was hardly registered in the west.

Some of these fundamentalist groups in past and present are:¹

- The salafitic movement, which started in the Ottoman Empire around nineteenth century. It demanded the return to the Islam of the "upright ancestors". The substantial founder of this movement was the traditionalistic Rashid Rida.

- the Muslim Brotherhood (al-ikhwan al-Muslimun). Founded 1928 in Egypt by Hasan al-Banna (1906-1948). He coined the phrase for the basic teaching of the Brotherhood: "The Islam is an all-encompassing order, which includes all aspects of life: state and fatherland, government and people, morality and power, mercy and justice, science and law, material possessions, acquisitions and wealth, investment and prayer, dogma and reverence".

- the Community of Islam (Djama'at-i-islami). Founded in Pakistan by Abu l-'Ala al-Maududi (1903-1979).

- Followers of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and other extremist and militant groups like the "Party of God" (Hizb Allah or Hizbolla) or Islamic Holy War (Jihad al-islami).

- the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the Palestinian Autonomous Area.

- of special interest for the European Union is the "National Salvation Party" in Turkey, which was founded in 1973 and forbidden in 1989 by the secular Turkish Army; this movement though has found a successor nowadays.

1 Compare A. Th. Khoury, „Fundamentalismus im heutigen Islam“, in Die verdrängte Freiheit: Fundamentalismus in den Kirchen, ed. by H. Kochanek (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), pp.266-276.

Islam and Holy War

One of the basic tasks bequeathed to Muslims by the Prophet was "jihad". This word comes from Arabic j-h-d, with the basic meaning of striving or effort. It is often used in classical texts with the closely related meaning of struggle, and hence also of fight. It is usually cited as Koranic phrase "striving in the path of God" (e.g. 9,24; 60,1 et cetera) and has been variously interpreted to mean moral striving and armed struggle. It is usually fairly easy to understand from the context which of these shades of meaning is intended. In the Koran the word occurs many times, in these two distinct but connected senses. In the early chapters, dating from the Meccan period, when the Prophet was still the leader of a minority group struggling against the dominant pagan oligarchy, the word often has the meaning, favored by modernist exegetists, of moral striving (e.g. Sura 73,9-13).¹ In the later chapters, promulgated in Medina, where the Prophet headed the state and its army, it usually has a more explicitly practical connotation. In many, the military meaning is unequivocal. A good example is Sura 4,77; 9,20-22 and 4,95.²

Some modern Muslims, particularly when addressing the outside world, explain the duty of jihad in spiritual and moral sense. The overwhelming majority of early authorities, citing the relevant passages in the Koran, the commentaries, and the traditions of the Prophet, discuss jihad in military terms. According to Islamic law, it is lawful to wage war against four types of enemies: infidels, apostates, rebels, and bandits. Although all four types of wars are legitimate, only the first two count as jihad. Jihad is thus a religious obligation. In discussing the obligation of holy war, the classical Muslim jurists distinguish between offensive and defensive warfare. In offense, jihad is an obligation of the Muslim community as a whole, and may therefore be discharged by volunteers and professionals. In a defensive war, it becomes an obligation of every able-bodied individual. It is this principle that Usama bin Ladin invoked in his declaration of war against the United States.

For most of the fourteen centuries of recorded

Muslim history, jihad was most commonly interpreted to mean armed struggle for the defense or advancement of Muslim power. In Muslim tradition, the world is divided into two houses: the House of Islam (Dar al-Islam), in which Muslim governments rule and Muslim law prevails, and the House of War (Dar al-Harb), the rest of the world, still inhabited and, more important, ruled by infidels. The presumption is that the duty of jihad will continue, interrupted only by truces, until all the world either adopts the Muslim faith or submits to Muslim rule. Those who fight in the jihad qualify for rewards in both worlds- booty in this one, paradise in the next.

In this as in so many other matters, the guidance of the Koran is amplified and elaborated in the "hadiths", that is to say traditions concerning the actions and utterances of the Prophet. Many of these deal with holy war. The following are a few samples:

Jihad is your duty under any ruler, be he godly or wicked.

A day and a night of fighting on the frontier is better than a month of fasting and prayer.

The nip of an ant hurts a martyr more than the thrust of a weapon, for these are more welcome to him than sweet, cold water on a hot summer day.

He who dies without having taken part in a campaign dies in a kind of unbelief.

God marvels at people (those to whom Islam is brought by conquest) who are dragged to Paradise in chains.

Learn to shoot, for the space between the mark and the archer is one of the gardens of Paradise.

Paradise is in the shadow of swords.

For most of recorded history of Islam, from the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed onward, the word "jihad" was used in a primarily military sense. Muhammed began his prophetic mission in his birthplace Mecca, but because of the persecution that he and his followers suffered at the hands of the pagan oligarchy ruling that town, they moved to the town of Medina, where the local tribes welcomed them and installed the Prophet first as arbitrator and then as ruler. This move is known in Arabic as the "hijra". The Muslim era dates from

the beginning from the Arabian year in which the hijra took place, that is the year 622 of the Christian era. The first jihad was waged by the Prophet against the rulers of his birthplace and ended with the conquest of Mecca in the month of Ramadan of the year 8 of the hijra, corresponding to January 630 of the Christian era. The Meccan leadership surrendered almost without a fight, and the Meccans, apart from those accused of specific offenses against the Prophet or a Muslim, were granted immunity for their lives and property, provided that they behaved in accordance with the agreement. The next task was the extension of Muslim authority to the rest of Arabia and, under the Prophet's successors, the caliphs, to the rest of the world.

Jihad is sometimes presented as the Muslim equivalent of the Christian Crusade. In a sense this is true – both were proclaimed and waged as holy wars for the true faith against an infidel enemy. But there is a difference. The Crusade is a late development in Christian history and, in a sense, marks a radical departure from basic Christian values as expressed in the Gospels, which values of course also have to be seen within the context of the world-view of Jesus Christ. Christendom had been under attack of Islam since the seventh century, and had lost vast territories to Muslim rule. Yet in the long struggle between Islam and Christendom, the Crusade was late, limited, and of relatively brief duration. Jihad is present from the beginning of Islamic history – in scripture, in the life of the Prophet, and in the actions of his companions and immediate successors. It has continued throughout Islamic history and retains its appeal to the present day. The word "crusade" derives of course from the cross and originally

denoted a holy war for Christianity. But in the Christian world it has long since lost that meaning and is used in the general sense in a morally driven campaign for what is believed to be a good cause. One may wage a crusade for the environment, for clean water, for better social services, for women's rights, and for a whole range of other causes. The one context in which the word "crusade" is not used nowadays is precisely the original religious one. "Jihad" too is used in a variety of senses, but unlike "crusade" it has retained its original, primary religious meaning: the extension of Muslim authority to the rest of the world.³

1 Sura 73,9-13: He is the Lord of the east and the west. There is no God but him. Take him as your counsel, bear patiently, what the infidels utter, restrain yourself in front of them, but without being uncouth and insulting. Leave it to me what shall happen with those, who declare the divine tidings as lie who enjoy good living and grant them a short time. At us there are prepared for them fetters and hellfire.

2 Sura 4,77: Have you not seen those, to whom was said in the beginning "Restrain your hands from fight and perform the prayer and give tax of alms"? When lateron they were commanded to fight, a part of them feared man, as one fears God, or even more.

Sura 9, 20-22: Those who believe and did emigrate and who have with their goods and in their very person waged war for the sake of God, those stand with God in higher esteem as the others. Great felicity will be assigned to them. The Lord announces them from the treasure of his grace mercy and pleasantness, and that gardens will be assigned to them, in which enduring bliss they will feel, and in which they will stay forever. At God in the days to come there will be a mighty reward.

Sura 4,95: Those of the believers who stay at home, other than the disabled, are not equal to those who strive in the path of God with their goods and their persons on a higher level than those who stay at home. God has promised reward to all who believe, but he distinguishes those who fight, above those who stay at home, with a mighty reward

3 To the section of "jihad" compare Bernhard Lewis, The crisis of Islam: Holy war and unholy terror (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), pp.23-29.



Funtamentalism in modern Judaism

Torah and Talmud

The basis of religious Judaism is the Torah, which means "teaching, instruction". In a limited sense the Torah contains the Pentateuch, the five books which are assigned to Moses, in a broader sense the whole Hebrew Bible ("Old Testament" in Christian terms). And finally Torah contains the whole corpus of Jewish religious law. Besides the Hebrew Bible the Talmud is the most important source of Jewish religious law. It is the fundamental thesaurus of the "Oral Law" which was reduced to writing and finished during the second century, (Mishnah), fourth century (Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud) and sixth century (Babylonian Talmud) of the Christian era. The Talmud is a kind of encyclopedia in its scope, a storehouse representing the knowledge and the thought, the religious and literary creativity of post-Biblical Israel in Palastine and Babylonia, in so far as it has been preserved, of probably more than eight centuries. The Talmud (Hebrew: teaching, learning) consists of the "Mishnah" (Hebrew: oral repetition, teaching), a systematic collection of religious – legal decisions developing the laws of the Hebrew Bible, and the "Gemara" (Aramaic: completion, decision, or perhaps also teaching), supplementary material, commentary based on the Mishnah.¹

What does "Torah" mean to Judaism up today? According to rabbinical tradition the Torah is Gods plan for the whole creation, which plan has been drafted naturally before the creation. This plan guarantees the continued existence of the world.

In the revelation on Mount Sinai God also has revealed to Moses the Torah. This Torah is a devine gift to the Jews. It is for them an obligation to live according to it in all aspects of life. A seperation between Torah and individual, societal or governmental realm is basically not possible. But how can all the rules of the Torah of the time of Moses still be valid today? This brings us back to the Talmud, the "Oral Torah", in which we find the rabbinical application of the laws of Moses to the respective time. This conception of Hebrew Bible and Talmud, or scripture and tradition, as we also find in the Catholich Church, secures for Judaism in all future a continued interpretation and application of the Torah, the religious law. In charge of such matters are authorized teachers of the Torah, the rabbis. This is important for the concept of religious fundamentalism, since according to the process of continued interpretation and application of religious law, the Torah theoretically should offer no basis for fundamentalism. Also the "Oral Torah", the Talmud i.e. the rabbinical tradition should offer no ground for fundamentalism. This tradition is of obligatory but of non-dogmatic character. It is rabbis and scholars who interpret Jewish religious law and who lay it down. Judaism knows of no supreme institution in matters of doctrine as the Catholic Church does, which arrogates the right to declare as obligatory a certain doctrine or morality for all congregations and for all time.

1 Compare Encyclopaedia Britannica (London, 1962), vol. 21, p. 768.

On the subject on Jewish faith compare also:

Peter Landesmann, Die Juden und ihr Glaube: Geschichte, Gegenwart und Erkenntnis, 2nd rev.ed., München: nymphenburger

(Herbi), 2003; Leo Trepp, Die Juden: Volk, Geschichte, Religion, Rev. and enl. ed., rororo Sachbuch, No.60618, Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1999; Dieter Vetter, Religion und Nation im Judentum: Anspruch und Wirklichkeit, Frankfurt am Main: Josef Knecht, 2000.

Talmud in practice - Jewish life in Israel

We read in Talmud, Abot I,1 that Moses teaches "Make a fence around the Torah". The Torah as revealed by God is eternal, the interpretation of it, the Talmud, not. The interpretation is the "fence around the Torah". Such interpretation varies from time to time and in degree: it can be limited or liberal. Here are starting points for fundamentalist movements, such like so-called "ultra-orthodox Jewish groups". They want to transform their conservative interpretation of the religious law into law of the state, organize all of public life according to religious law. This orthodoxy is a decisive power in the state of Israel since its founding in 1948. The first president of Israel, David ben Gurion, wanted to regulate the future relations between state and orthodox Jewish groups, many of them united in the "Agudat Israel" and proponents of traditional piety and way of living. In this document orthodox groups get the assurance 1. that the sabbat will be a national rest.day, 2. that religious dietary laws (kashrut) will be observed in all public kitchens, 3. that jurisdiction in matters of marriage and divorce will be exclusively reserved for rabbinical courts and 4. that religious schools will be acknowledged by the state. These orthodox groups aim for a "religious-judaistic character" of the state of Israel. By being a necessary coalition partner for a parliamentary majority of the big parties, they enforce laws which make Israel seem like a theocracy. So in 1977 Menachim Begin from the conservative Likkud-block became primeminister with the support of national-religious

groups and ultra-orthodox groups, the Agudat Israel. The religious groups then did not demand positions as secretaries of state, but an increasing influence of religious laws. Here are some examples:

- that the sabbat would be the weekly rest-day was clear to everyone from the very beginning. Also the use of the Jewish calendar, which starts from the creation of the world and is now in the sixththousenth year. But now religious laws are increasingly enforced on private life: on sabbat streets even outside of orthodox municipal districts are closed for traffic; movies, theaters and sportfields remain closed; the airline El Al is not allowed to fly on sabbat.

- kashrut law. "Kosher-guards" watch in the kitchens of hotels, restaurants and public institutions that the rabbinical dietary laws are observed. In foodstores no goods can be sold which do not correspond to the religious rules for the time of passover. No pork may be sold in the whole of Israel. In the army chaplains watch that rationing and kitchen are kosher.

- Law on marriage ceremonies can only be performed by rabbis according to Jewish religious law. There are no civil registry offices and hence there is no civil marriage. Jews of non-Jewish faith can not marry unless they convert to Jewish religion.

- immigration. Before the stricter religious laws every Jew could immigrate in Israel. Now they



are questioned about their orthodoxy.

- medicin. Autopsy and transplantations were made more difficult. Abortion because of social indications is forbidden.
- archaeological diggings are not allowed where presumably graves of Jews could be.

The main proponents of these religious endeavours concerning the transformation of the state into a theocracy are the religious-political groups of "Agudat Israel" and the "Schass-party". The second one is an offspring from Agudat in the nineteneighties and very influential. It is dominated by the "Council of the great scholars of Talmud".¹

¹ Compare Klaus Kienzler, Der religiöse Fundamentalismus: Christentum, Judentum, Islam, 4th ed. (München: Beck, 2002), pp.103-105.

"The promised land" - Scripture and borders

The brilliant performance of the Israeli Army in the six-day-war in June 1967 brought Israel a great success: the western Jordan area, the Sinai peninsula and the Golan Heights were conquered. This was approximately the extension of the land we know from the Hebrew Bible.¹ Religious fundamentalist groups welcomed this development. „The concrete return to beloved towns of remembrance and the yearned after landscapes of the ancestors symbolized the return to the ‚land‘. Seen ideologically this return caused a reactualisation of the religious and conceptual meaning of ‚land‘. (...) The six-day-war seems to be the moment, when the secular concept of the state Israel was replaced by the religious concept of the land of Jews (...)“.² "Erez Israel", the "promised land" has become the fixed idea of ultra-orthodox Jewish circles.

After the Israeli-Arab war of 1973 "Gush-

Emmunim" (block of the faithful) was founded. It propagates the influence of religion in politics and actively supports the foundation of Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories which leads to conflicts with the Palestinian population there. With the new government under Menachim Begin in 1977 from the conservative Likkud-block, the Gush-Emmunim became a publically recognized movement for settlements in the occupied territories, received money from the state and stood under governmental and military protection. The settlers carry arms. The fundamentalists also oppose a laicistic state.

Another little fundamentalist group is formed by the "Lubawitsch Chassidim", a messianic movement of great piety. "We want Mashiah now" is their slogan and with his coming the "Kingdom of God" will be founded in Israel within the traditional borders of the Hebrew Bible. There is

no place for idolatry in the "Promised Land", the non-Jewish "Land" yearns for redemption, i.e. being in Jewish possession again.

1 Compare *ibid.*, pp.106-113

2 Gideon Aran in *Die Rache Gottes: Radikale Moslems, Christen und Juden auf dem Vormarsch*, by Gilles Kepel, trans. French Thorsten Schmidt (München: Piper, 1991), pp.221-223.

Where are really the borders of the "Promised Land"?

The Hebrew Bibel offers various statements concerning this question: on the one hand it speaks of a rather large territory, on the other hand of a rather moderate one. Ultra-orthodox Jews dwell on these verses of the scriptures in a fundamentalist fashion.

In Genesis 15:18 we read: "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying: Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." According to this promise nearly the whole Near East would belong to the "People of God", the Jews. And in the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy, Moses tells the people what the Lord has told him where they should go and what they shall possess (chapter 1:6-8): "The Lord our God spake unto in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount:/ Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and

unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto the Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates./ Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them." And similarly we read a little later on that the Israelites shall get all this land if they keep the law, the commandments (Deuteronomy 11:22-24): "For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him;/ Then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves./ Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and



Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be". According to religious fundamentalists here God shows the picture of a "Great-Israel", stretching from the Euphrates-river to the Mediterinian Sea.

A "Promised Land" not as large as mentioned above, but still a good deal larger than present Israel, is described in the book of prophet Ezekiel, chapter 47:13-21: "Thus saith the Lord God; This shall be the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions./ And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance./ And this shall be the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad;/ Hamath, Berothäh, Sibram, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Häzärhaticon, which is by the coast of Hauran./ And the border from the sea shall be Hazärenan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And this is the north side./ And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And this is the east side./ And the south side southward, from Tamär even to the waters of strife in Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And this is the south side southward./ The west side also shall be the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This is the west side./ So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel."

It is difficult to verify this description of the "Land" by Ezekiel historically or geographically, since many of the listed places are not known any more today. It is though certainly smaller than the described land before.

But archaeological reality concerning the extension of the "Land" seems to be even more dim. Challenging the fundamentalist readings of the scriptures and marshaling the latest archaeological evidence a new vision of ancient Israel comes forth. In an iconoclastic and provocative work, leading scholars Israel Finkelstein und Neil Asher Silberman draw in their

book *The Bible unearthed: Archaeology's new vision of ancient Israel and the origin of its sacred texts* (2001)¹ on recent archaeological research to present a dramatical revised portrait of ancient Israel and its neighbours. They argue that crucial evidence (or lack of evidence) at digs in Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon suggest that many of the most famous stories in the Bible – the wanderings of the patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt, Joshua's conquest of Canaan, and David's and Solomon's supposedly vast empire – reflect the world of the later authors of the Bible and the political empirialist endeavors of King Joshua from the southern kingdom of Judah rather than actual historical facts. The borders of Biblical Israel can not be proofed archaeologically.

Concerning the Biblical borders of Israel however the fundamentalist interpretation of this scriptures can be dangerous: it naurishes the utopical conception of "Erez Israel" (Land Israel) of the ultra-orthodox Jewish groups and encourages them to take adequate actions for the fulfilment of the devine promisses of a "Greater Israel" and which actions would lead to a clash with the concerned nations and states.

Israel Shahak, who came in 1945 to Palastine and was there professor for organic chemistry and a human rights fighter writes on the question of the borders of Israel:

In 1956 I eagerly swallowed all of Ben-Gurion's political and military reasons for Israel initiating the Suez War, until he (in spite of being an atheist, proud of his disregard of the commandments of Jewish religion) pronounced in the Knesset on the third day of that war, that the real reason for it is "the restoration of the Kingdom of David and Solomon" to its Biblical borders. At this point in his speech, almost every Knesset member spontaneously rose and sang the Israeli national anthem. To my knowledge, no zionist politician has ever repudiated Ben-Gurion's idea that Israeli policies must be based (within the limits of pragmatic considerations) on the restoration of the Biblical borders as the borders of the Jewish state. Indeed, close analysis of Israeli grand strategies and actual principles of foreign policy, as they are expressed in Hebrew, makes it clear that it is "Jewish ideology", more than any other factor, which determines actual Israeli policies.²

However this may be, it is also an historical fact, that after its foundation on 14th May 1948, Israel was attacked almost at once by Egypt, whose armies invaded a part of Palestine which the United

Nations proposal had awarded to Jews. Jordanian and Iraqui forces supported Palestinian Arabs in the territory proposed for them. But Israel fought off her enemies, and the truce supervised by the United Nations, followed. In the future development many currents flowed together in a curious and ironical way to swirl in confusion in an area which had always been a focus of world history. Victims for centuries, the Jews are in their turn now seen by Arabs as persecutors. The problem with which the people of the area have to grapple were poisoned by forces flowing from the dissolution of centuries of Ottoman power, from the rivalries of successor imperialism, and in particular from the rise of two new world powers, which dwarfed these in their turn, from the interplay of nineteenth-century European nationalism and

ancient religion, and from the effects of dependence of developed nations on oil. There are few moments in the twentieth century so soaked in history as the establishment of Israel.³

1 Quotations from: A Touchstone Book, New York a.o.: Simon and Schuster, 2002); German: Keine Posaunen vor Jericho: Die archäologische Wahrheit über die Bibel, trans. English Miriam Magall, München: Beck, 2002.

2 Israel Shahak, Jewish history, Jewish religion: The weight of three thousand years, 3 rd ed. (London: Pluto Press,2002), p. 8f.; German: Jüdische Geschichte, Jüdische Religion: Der Einfluss von 3000 Jahren, trans. of 2nd ed. (Süderbrarup/ Deutschland: Lühe-Verlag,1998), p.33f.

3 Compare J. M. Roberts, The new Penguin history of the world, 4th ed. (London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 2002), p.990.



Afterword

Ever since the prophets of Israel started to write down what they believed to be their experiences with God, monotheistic religions have in some sense created a God for themselves. God has rarely been seen as a self-evident fact that can be encountered like any other objective existence. Today many people seem to have lost the will to make this imaginative effort. This need not be a catastrophe. When religious ideas have lost their validity, they have usually faded away painlessly, but sometimes also though by brutal force. Yet in the past people have always created new symbols to act as a focus for spirituality. Human beings have always created a faith for themselves, to cultivate their sense of the wonder and ineffably significance

of life. The aimlessness, alienation, anomy and the onslaught of other cultures, that characterize so much of modern life makes many people yearn for unchanging certainties, for an eternal fundament. So religion has made its reappearance as a fundamentalist ideology of social order. Religion can give spirit to public life and provide a beacon for moral order. At the same time it needs the temper of rationality and fair play that Enlightenment values give to civil society, otherwise the reappearance of religion might have devastating consequences if it dons a rigid fundamentalism coupled with the readiness to commit acts of violence in the name of God.



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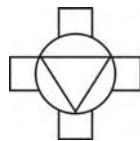
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