



## **When Did God Become a Fundamentalist?**

**By Ross Bishop**

The emergence of conservative religious fundamentalism into the political arena is a subject that has brought everything from joy to concern and consternation to many people. Having stood in the background for years while the political and scientific establishments turned a deaf ear toward spiritual beliefs and built a godless bureaucracy, religious conservatives, seeing a resurgence of religious attitudes, undertook a massive organizational effort to mobilize like-minded voters. Having developed an active and successful program, the fear generated by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 added considerable support to their efforts.

It is difficult to characterize a group like religious conservatives because their beliefs are as varied as are the strategies they employ to reach them. The vast majority of truly religious Conservatives, whatever their faith, are well-meaning, heartfelt people who hold a sincere desire to bring greater spirituality into society. Their religious convictions bring them to respect the rights of others, especially of those who disagree with them or belong to other faiths. As an example, as I write this, a number of Christian groups are pushing hard for more compassionate government and greater environmental consciousness at all political levels and interestingly enough, in their home base, the Republican party.

What confuses many people is that there are groups within the conservative religious movement, largely fundamentalist, who use religion as a wrapper around their real agenda, which is political domination. They are not really interested in faith, they are not really interested in religious or even spiritual values, what they want is to be able to tell you what you can and cannot do, and they have demonstrated a willingness to use almost any means to accomplish those ends. And this confuses a great many people because Christian/Jewish/Islamic values have been in existence for thousands of years, and yet, these self-avowed fundamentalists readily violate virtually every principle that they theoretically stand for.

Although the God of the Old Testament was more bombastic than the Christian God, still, even in the Old Testament, God became associated with the qualities of

compassion, honesty, acceptance, not causing harm, reverence, not swearing, not committing adultery, not being greedy and so forth. Although various religious leaders have tried to twist and change those values from time-to time, God has been remarkably consistent in His teachings.

Christ came to earth two thousand years ago to clarify and secularize God's teachings. Christ was a radical activist, speaking of peace, about caring for the sick and the poor and offering salvation to the meek. He challenged the powerful, and condemned economic injustice as sinful. He spoke repeatedly about the importance of loving each other as God's children regardless of race, sex, ethnic association or religious belief. He preached compassion, understanding and being generous to those less fortunate. At the Last Supper He offered the commandment, "As I have loved you, so you also should love one another."<sup>1</sup> His concern was less about what we believed than what we did with our lives. As is so often the case with radicals who threaten the established order, the religious leaders of the day had him silenced. Silencing opposition is an ancient political tool. We know about Christians being fed to the lions in the Coliseum. Andrei Sakharov made the Soviet Gulag famous, and today China has its Laogai forced labor camps. Gandhi spent time in prison, so did Nelson Mandella. Wei Jingsheng "the father of Chinese democracy" and the 33 known Tiananmen Square student protest leaders spent many years in prison. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, has been under house arrest in Burma for years. But, I digress. . .

Given God's values and the considerable energy expended to sustain them over the centuries, it has come like a whiplash to many people to see God and His teachings almost completely abrogated by today's extremist "True Believers." When they hold AIDS victims up as being punished for their promiscuity; deny gays the right of relationship and repeatedly rescue Florida cities from hurricane after hurricane, but allow New Orleans' African Americans to languish in filth and devastation because of their perceived "perversions" like jazz and drugs, one has to wonder what has happened to God's teachings? Many of these fundamentalists have wandered so far away from God that they have more in common with atheists than with real Christians. Truly religious people would never turn their back on the sufferings of the poor, refuse health care or in other ways deny help to those who have lost their way or who suffer.

There is a radical fringe element to the movement, both here and abroad, that is gaining more momentum each day. This radical fringe taints the larger movement by its extremism. These fundamentalists hold little regard for the beliefs of others and see themselves on a mission from God to save the world from the abominations of non-believers. What really sets them apart is the deep-seated fear that drives their political and social ambitions.

Known as the Religious Right in America and Islamic Fundamentalists in the Middle East, these groups hold to a radically held "religious" dogma that goes well beyond the bounds of any faith, although they will vehemently deny this as they wrap themselves in the cloak of moral righteousness. The similarities between these two groups are eerily

striking, to say the least. Concentrated around Tehran, Damascus, Amman and Islamabad in the Middle East and Denver, Lynchburg Virginia, rural Montana, Idaho and

Texas in the U.S., these groups have as their primary agenda forcing their narrow, radical, rigid beliefs upon the larger society and ultimately the world.

These organizations are homophobic and paternalistic. Their beliefs are founded not on the love and compassion that comes from true religious belief, but in a deep, almost psychotic, fear of passion and emotion. Whether in the West or the Middle East, they shun anything emotionally or sensually stimulating, such as sexuality, music, alcohol, movies or dancing. They negatively project their strangled emotionality and repressed sexual and social values onto the world, seeing others as sinners or agents of Satan. They seek to strip any joy from life so that they will not be tempted over an abyss from which they secretly fear they would never recover.

They hide their deep inner insecurity through generating zeal for "the cause." Thus in the Middle East, women, "who by their nature tempt men," are forced into submissive subservience; and in America, fundamentalists shun just about everything. They support a classed society, valuing religious scholars, businessmen and the wealthy over the concerns and social needs of the many. Microsoft consultant Ralph Reed has replaced Pat Robertson as the point man of the religious right, heading Citizens for the Ten Commandments.<sup>ii</sup> Consider these pronouncements:

*In the ultimate sense, democracy is the cause of all world problems. But democracy ultimately started with satan. Democracy acts from the selfish whims of depraved man and since man is depraved, only junk comes from democracy. Insatiable violence is the innate tendency of atheism. . .*

*... He made the woman WEAKER and UNEQUAL with man. But dumb atheist foolishly assert that man and woman are equal. Such a lie is even expressed in many USA legal documents.*

These radical "religious" groups are cults in the classic sense. They are possessed by absolute moral righteousness. Their fear drives them to demand conformity rather than tolerate dissent. They restrict individual freedom and seek to limit and control the right of personal choice. That is why they want laws against abortion. They do not trust you to use your own judgment.

Two years ago, a joint panel of the FDA's Reproductive Health Drugs Advisory Committee and Non-prescription Drugs Advisory Committee voted 23 to 4 to recommend the approval of contraceptive Plan B to be sold over the counter. The recommendation was railroaded by fundamentalist Bush FDA appointees who were concerned that approving the drug would lead to sexual promiscuity amongst women. A report by the Government Accountability Office confirmed that the process FDA followed in that case was "unusual," and "not typical of the other 67 proposed prescription-to-OTC switch decisions made by the FDA" in the preceding decade.

FDA fundamentalists are presently following a similar strategy against a drug that in clinical trials has shown itself to be 100% effective against certain forms of cervical cancer. The drug is being withheld because these religious FDA members fear that if they felt safe, women would be encouraged to sinful excess. Panel member and evangelical Christian, Dr. W. David Hager said, "Once again, what Satan meant for evil, God (has) turned into good." 12,000 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer this year and 3,000 of them will die. Acceptable losses?

There was a time in my healing practice when I did a lot of work with sexually abused people. I was stunned by the number of children of fundamentalist ministers who came to me for help because their fathers had sexually abused them. This speaks to the sexual perversion generated by fundamentalist emotional repression.

Many members of these radical groups accept violence as a legitimate means of social change (terrorism and suicide bombers in the Middle East, and the bombing of abortion clinics and violence against doctors in the U.S.). Some of them openly support conquest as a means to facilitate the proliferation of their beliefs over non-believer nations (war against Israel, the war in Iraq, etc.) They want us all to have guns and they universally support the death penalty as punishment. We must be careful not to view these groups as simply conservative political movements. They do not represent a logical or more conservative extension of traditional religious belief, they represent a twisted perversion of all things that are good and holy.

Known in some quarters as "Reconstructionist" groups, they are striving to radically change the status quo. They do not want democracy, i.e., "government of the people," they want theocracies. From a training manual of the theocratic right:

*"We will not try to reform the existing institutions. We only intend to weaken them, and eventually destroy them."*

An immigrant medical student concluded a talk to fellow Muslims in LA with this call to arms:

*We must never forget - and this is extremely important - that as Muslims, we are obligated to desire, and when possible to participate in the overthrow of any non-Islamic government - anywhere in the world - in order to replace it by an Islamic one.*

Author Daniel Pipes writes:

*In the words of a teacher at the Al-Ghazly Islamic School in Jersey City, N.J., 'Our short-term goal is to introduce Islam. In the long term, we must save American society. Allah will ask why I did not speak about Islam, because this piece of land is Allah's property.'*

*Some of this ilk even talk about overthrowing the U.S. government and replacing it with an Islamic one. Although it sounds bizarre, this attitude attracts serious and widespread support among Muslims.<sup>iii</sup>*

Author and educator George Grant, who was Executive Director of Coral Ridge Ministries for many years, explains in *The Changing of the Guard, Biblical Principles for Political Action*:

*Christians have an obligation, a mandate, a commission, a holy responsibility to reclaim the land for Jesus Christ -- to have dominion in civil structures, just as in every other aspect of life and godliness.*

*But it is dominion we are after. Not just a voice.*

*It is dominion we are after. Not just influence.*

*It is dominion we are after. Not just equal time.*

*It is dominion we are after.*

*World conquest. That's what Christ has commissioned us to accomplish. We must win the world with the power of the Gospel. And we must never settle for anything less... Thus, Christian politics has as its primary intent the conquest of the land -- of men, families, institutions, bureaucracies, courts, and governments for the Kingdom of Christ.<sup>iv</sup>*

In Dec. 2002, *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman reported that (former) House Majority Leader Tom Delay had openly admitted he was "on a mission from God to promote a 'biblical worldview' in American politics." On the following Monday, the *Washington Times* revealed that Delay was "about to announce his own legislative agenda." "One goal, [Delay] said, will be to re-establish what he sees as the rightful role of religion in public places. . ."<sup>v</sup>

What matters to this part of the religious right is winning, because it is for God. The ends justify the means. After all, if they lose this battle, what does that mean for them? It's not a pretty thought.

In America, radical conservative religious groups favor corporations at the expense of the people. They have sought to eliminate virtually all regulations that protect the environment, worker safety, and public health. They have already

acted to deny health benefits to the poor and lifetime-earned pensions to millions of retired workers.

Business is one area where Muslim and Christian fundamentalists diverge. Muslims, even radical ones, are severely limited by the Koran regarding business practices. Islam requires a proper balance between commercialism and humanitarianism, and between

profit and social responsibility. Muslims are not allowed to pay or receive interest, limiting what they can do in comparison to Western televangelists. Islamists typically condemn America for its immorality, consumerism, tolerant social policies, and warm relations with Israel. They talk about America's "unrelenting greed" and its neglect of the downtrodden.

American religious conservatives and Islamists do agree on the relationship that should exist between religion and politics (because fundamentally, they are both political movements). The Religious Right maintains that the principle of separation of church and state is "a myth." When the U.S. House recently passed the "Defense of the Ten Commandments" amendment to the juvenile justice bill, the supporters of the bill reiterated the Christian-right mantra that the USA is a Christian Nation, and that our legal system is founded on the Christian Bible. In a press conference attended by Gary Bauer, President of American Values, Rep. Robert Aderholt (R, Alabama), the sponsor of the amendment, said: "*The Ten Commandments represent the very cornerstone of the values this nation was built upon, and the basis of our legal system here in America*". Never mind that in the 27,620 words of the U.S. Constitution, there is not a single reference to God, done so purposefully and intentionally by The Founders.

In the Ten Commandments there is nothing mentioned about any form of government, freedom of speech, separation of powers, freedom of religion, open elections, checks and balances, separation of church and state, and virtually anything else that characterizes our system of government. Our legal system is rooted in the common law of ancient Rome, and in the principles of Greek democracy, not in biblical authoritarianism. Mediterranean and Middle Eastern societies had developed the legal processes that we have adopted long before the Christian era. When I was in law school, we were encouraged to have a reading knowledge of Latin, not Hebrew or Aramaic. Those languages were left to the theology students.

Pat Robertson, the former leader of the Religious Right, in his book *The New World Order* wrote, "When I said during my presidential bid that I would only bring Christians and Jews into the government, I hit a firestorm. 'What do you mean?' the media challenged me. 'You're not going to bring atheists into the government? How dare you maintain that those who believe in the Judeo-Christian values are better qualified to govern America than Hindus and Muslims?' My simple answer is, 'Yes, they are.'"

The religious right has made a special target of homosexuals. There is a reason for this. When your group is somewhat shaky regarding its own convictions, it solidifies things a great deal to have a target group upon which they can project their own fears and anxieties. Seeing the other as "evil" is an old propaganda tactic practiced by radical political groups over the centuries. It was perfected by the Nazis in Germany. In the 1930s and 40's, the Nazi's did it with the Jews and today the Religious Right is doing it to homosexuals. Donna Glee Williams writes in: "*Yesterday and Today: Nazis and the Righteous Right*"<sup>vi</sup>:

*And then there were the Jews. For historical reasons, the Nazi party had, ready on hand, a tiny subgroup of people that they could call "evil" and have that name stick. Once the "evil" was identified, people projected onto the Jews every disowned trait they hated in themselves.*

(By the way, the repressed emotionality of these groups {think about German stoicism} is a significant and defining characteristic.) Williams continues:

*Enormous energy was mobilized to oppress, exile, and destroy the theoretically contagious corruption of Jewishness. The righteousness of the cause was "proved" by the visceral disgust the oppressors felt towards the oppressed. Hatred kept the dominant group bonded, energized, focused, and easy to manipulate.*

***Today, similar rhetoric is mobilizing hatred for another tiny minority, homosexuals, who are similarly represented as undermining the entire fabric of American life and values. In the same way, appeals to disgust as a moral arbiter (to) "prove" the validity of the argument. Incidents of violence against gays remind us of the spotty street violence against Jews that came before the systematic, state-sponsored violence of the Holocaust.***

In 1937, the Nazi's produced a propaganda book entitled, *The Eternal Jew*. Displays of photos from the book were shown throughout Germany. The title came from a disparaging term for Jews coined by Hitler in *Mein Kampf*. *The Eternal Jew* was followed in 1940 by a propaganda film of the same name.

What is somewhat shocking is that the arguments against gays put forward by the Religious Right today come almost word-for-word from Hitler's successful and immensely disparaging propaganda program that opened the door for the killing of millions of Jews, gays, minorities, gypsies and other "undesirables."<sup>vii</sup>

In order to facilitate its program of racial purification, the Nazis needed to eliminate the voices of dissent from within its own house. Some of these were political. Some were religious. German Christian churches were systematically Nazified. The governing boards of seminaries were taken over seat by seat. Seminary faculties were pruned of opposition, guaranteeing that the pulpits of Germany would spout preaching that supported the Nazi agenda. The prophetic voice of the church was silenced. There were surprisingly few voices of dissent and those few that were quickly silenced. But, Germany has never lacked for martyrs, so the absence of dissent is notable.

What is happening today in the systematic right-wing takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention, board by board, professor by professor, pulpit by pulpit, is so eerily similar that it could be an echo of the muffled cry that went unheard, 70 years ago. Consider this: as regarding to the legal system in America, the editors of *The Christian Century* wrote on May 17th:

*After listening to James Dobson and his evangelical Christian colleagues talk about controlling the federal judiciary through the Republican majority in Congress – to the extent of punishing judges and defunding courts – one can't help recalling the events in 1930s Germany. The National Socialists removed judges who didn't go along with the party program. Law became what they party said it would.*

*Dobson, speaking on his radio show in April, imagined political change proceeding this way: "The troublesome Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco could be abolished and then staffed by different judges immediately." He complained that "Congress has not had the political gumption to take any such action." House Majority Leader Tom DeLay has encouraged such views: "We set up the courts. We can unset the courts. We have the power of the purse."*

In her article on Nazism mentioned above, Donna Williams goes on to point out that in addition to the 'traditional' anti-Semitic Holocaust revisionism by extremist groups such as The Institute for Historical Review; a new and arguably, perversely twisted form of anti-gay Holocaust revisionism has emerged recently. This new thread has been endorsed by mainstream religious right organizations such as Colorado for Family Values and the Oregon Citizen's Alliance. These groups are teaching something so off-the-wall that you laugh at it until you realize how serious they are and how seriously these teachings are taken in some quarters. In an incredible philosophical about-face, these groups teach that Hitler was actually soft on gays and that it was the homosexuals in the Nazi movement that were responsible for creating the holocaust.<sup>viii</sup> It's a perverse and clever tactic. This, by the way, was the same "soft and tolerant" Adolph Hitler who wouldn't let a German into the Nazi Party if he had so much as a single dental filling.

Consider these words by a prominent Religious Right group:

*Those who practice homosexuality should swiftly be put to death by the government. God emphatically condemns the practice of exchanging proper gender characteristics among men and women. God justly calls for the death-penalty for anyone who practices homosexuality.*

Every movement has its wackos, but what follows is a statement by Barbara Blewster, a prominent member of the Church of Latter Day Saints and an elected representative in the Arizona State Legislature, who says, "*The perversion that follows homosexuality is bestiality and then human sacrifice and cannibalism.*"

In "The Christian Coalition: On The Road To VICTORY? A Special Report From Inside The Pat Robertson Political Machine,"<sup>ix</sup> Frederick Clarkson shared his observations, and prophetically touched on the beginnings of the religious political movement in America:

*When I slipped into the national leadership meeting of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, I thought I knew what to expect. I'd written many stories about the Religious Right. But I was unprepared for what I saw, heard and felt inside*

*Robertson's Virginia Beach, Va., headquarters for two days in November during the "Road to Victory" Conference and Strategy Briefing.*

*The historic Louisiana governor's race was reaching its climax. Men and women crowded around televisions, awaiting the electoral fate of neo-Nazi Republican David Duke. Although Pat Robertson denounced racism and Naziism to reporters outside the conference, inside there were open expressions of support for Duke, from the ordinary membership to the leadership. (I saw only five blacks out of 800 delegates.) For many there was grim disappointment at Duke's defeat.*

*I was also surprised to see a rapidly growing, technologically sophisticated religio-political organization, built largely from Robertson's 1988 presidential campaign. Christian Coalition activists are working to take over the Republican Party from the grassroots up, while electing right-to-life conservative Christian Republicans to public office at all levels.*

Christian conservatives now hold a majority of seats in over half the Republican State Committees, plus large minorities in the rest, double their representation from just a decade ago. Look how far we have come from the compassionate, inclusive teachings of Christ to the narrow-minded, exclusionary condemning views of today's radical Christian Conservatives.

The real issue with these people is not their faith or their beliefs. They are entitled to those. The problem is their addiction to thinking they are right, which is so typical of religious zealots throughout history. It's an addiction to believing they hold the truth, driven interestingly enough, by the fact that their positions are shaky and they fear having that exposed. That is why they must wrap themselves so tightly in extremism. And, as it has been said, "The human emotion that most imperils peace is not rage, but righteousness."

*"Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God; that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship; that the legislative powers of the government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should `make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," **thus building a wall of separation between church and State.**" **Thomas Jefferson**, in his historic Danbury letter, January 1, 1802*

*"The United States is in no sense founded upon the Christian doctrine." George Washington.*

When did God become a Fundamentalist?

*"As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion ..."* from the Treaty of Tripoli, signed by John Adams, June 10, 1797.

*"If English was good enough for Jesus Christ, it ought to be good enough for the children of Texas."* Texas Governor Ma Ferguson, elected 1924.

When did God Become a Fundamentalist?  
©2005 Blue Lotus Press All rights Reserved

---

<sup>i</sup> This was actually the repeat of a Commandment given in Leviticus (19:18), "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

<sup>ii</sup> Formerly at: <http://www.hom.net/~angels/democracy.html>. See also:

<http://www.tylwythteg.com/enemies/enemies.html> and <http://www.kyfor10.org/>

<sup>iii</sup> "It Matters What Kind of Islam Prevails. Culture: Muslims can bring their strong values into U.S. life or try to dominate it." By Daniel Pipes, Los Angeles Times, Thursday, July 22, 1999.

<sup>iv</sup> (pp. 50-51)

<sup>v</sup> [*Washington Times* -

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0502-33.htm>, Monday, May 2, 2005 by CommonDreams.org.

<sup>vii</sup> Nazi Anti-Jewish Speech VS. Religious Right Anti-Gay Speech, Matthew Shepard Online Resources, from Hate Crime.org, <http://www.hatecrime.org/subpages/hitler/hitler.html>

<sup>viii</sup> *The Pink Swastika* by Scott Lively (formerly of the Oregon Citizen's Alliance) and Kevin Abrams.

<sup>ix</sup> "The Christian Coalition: On The Road To VICTORY? A Special Report From Inside The Pat Robertson Political Machine." by Frederick Clarkson, *Church and State*, January, 1992. The Rise of the Religious Right in the Republican Party.

[http://www.theocracywatch.org/road\\_to\\_victory\\_1991.htm](http://www.theocracywatch.org/road_to_victory_1991.htm)