CHAPTER 3.6

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On the Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism

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3.6.1 INTRODUCTION

It is understandable that many current writers begin their published reflections on the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism by acknowledging the significance of September 11, 2001 and the suicide attacks on the United States of America, in particular on symbols of its economic, military and political power. However there are certain problems with this starting point. Firstly, there is an implied conflation of religious fundamentalism with the use of terrorism and politically motivated violence, a connection that merits further exploration, and secondly it disconnects, by setting to the other side of that watershed, the importance of the Protestant fundamentalism which was substantially mobilized in the US Presidential election campaign of George W Bush the previous year. In addition to Islamic and other religious fundamentalist movements, Protestant fundamentalism had been on the rise in various parts of the world for some time.   BBC News reported on 13 July 1999, _"Heresy trials are to be brought back by the Church of England. After a gap of 150 years tribunals are to be reintroduced for clergy accused of not believing in God."_ Since then the matter has continued to rumble slowly through the governing structures of the Church of England at the same time that the world-wide Anglican Communion is near to schism over the question of the Church's attitude to homosexuality. This demonstrates a profound divergence and antagonism between those who may be described as liberals or modernists on the one hand, and those taking action against them who we might describe as fundamentalists. That the latter group are not merely conservatives is shown by their intolerance of the position of the liberal modernists.   The Anglican Communion has always prided itself on being a "broad church" of liberals, conservatives and others, and the views being expressed by the modernist tendency are by no means new, so the threats of schism and formal discussions within the courts of the Church about the reappearance of heresy trials seem to represent something significant about the growth and development of fundamentalism.

3.6.2 THE HERESY TRIAL OF J. ERNEST DAVEY

The last really significant heresy trial in a major British religious denomination took place in the Irish Presbyterian Church in 1927 when Professor J Ernest

Davey, was cleared of the charge after an extensive trial during February and March of that year. This was followed by an appeal by his accusers, that was then rejected by the General Assembly in June 1927. The action was taken against the young professor by fundamentalists within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and despite the fact that the trial took place more than 80 years ago it is important in our wider consideration of the psychology of religious fundamentalism for a number of reasons.

Professor Davey was one of the brightest theologians of his day.   Born in 1890, a son of the Irish Presbyterian manse, he was showered with prizes from his school days on.   He entered Kings College, Cambridge in 1909 taking a series of prizes, and First Class Honours, and was awarded a Fellowship in Theology in 1916, the first such Fellowship to have been awarded in 26 years. He proceeded to the University of Edinburgh with more 'Firsts' and the Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Studies at Edinburgh described the quality of his papers as 'rarely seen in my thirty years experience'.   He returned to Belfast in 1917 and was elected to the Chair of Church History in the Presbyterian College aged 27 years. In 1923 he published *The Changing Vesture of the Faith* [1] based on a series of lectures he had delivered to members of the public in Northern Ireland, and this book, along with *Our Faith in God* which had come out the previous year, were substantial contributors to his being arraigned on charges of heresy. In *The Changing Vesture of the Faith* he espouses a psychological approach to understanding the changes and developments of Christian beliefs, institutions and observances over the centuries and he writes in very approving terms of the recent developments of psychoanalysis and how they shed light on these subjects.   The Rev James Edgar [2] in his later published challenge to Professor Davey's position singles out his espousal of this psychological approach and his acceptance of evolution as some of the most toxic aspects of his 'modernism' calling for 'a little more repression and a little less expression'. While this challenge, written in the aftermath of the trial, claims a self-sacrificial engagement in the struggle and denies any wish to criticize Davey as a person, it is couched in strident and angry terms and is dismissive and disrespectful of Davey's intellectual work, especially where it involves higher criticism, liberal social ideas, evolutionary principles and psychology. Even more interestingly he betrays a clear political position by appealing to the Sons of Ulster (a commonly used term in Northern Ireland, meaning Protestant Unionists) and making regular references in deprecating terms to Germany, recently defeated in the First World War.

As Dr Austin Fulton (also a later Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland) pointed out in his biography of Davey [3] there were a number of elements of the context in which the heresy trial arose that may well have contributed to the fundamentalist/modernist dispute reaching such a pass. World War I had a profound impact on the political framework of Europe, bringing some empires to an end, and beginning the unstitching of those that remained, including the British Empire itself, where that "unstitching" had already begun with the partition of Ireland in 1921.   While there had been no conscription in Ireland during the War, young men had answered the call to arms by the tens of thousands going to their deaths in unimaginable numbers

at the Battle of the Somme and all along the front line. This legacy of sacrifice still has an effect reflected in the special meeting of Belfast City Council held every 1st July for the sole purpose of remembering those who fought at the Somme, though the last survivor died years ago.

3.6.3 PROTESTANTS AND PARTITION POLITICS IN IRELAND

The Great War, as it is still known, was followed by the War of Independence in Ireland in which the Irish Republican Army (IRA) rebels took on the victorious forces of the British Empire and drove them out of most of the island. Only the six Northern counties remained within the United Kingdom after the partition of 1921, while the twenty-six southern counties went on to form their own independent and almost totally Catholic nationalist state. Northern Protestants in the early 1920's were therefore terrified that either they would be abandoned by Britain and taken over by the south, or that their province would be destabilized by internal elements of the IRA supported by the Roman Catholic Church and people.

Into this frightened Protestant population arrived a fiery fundamentalist preacher called Rev W P Nicholson. A native of the North he had trained with the Presbyterian Church in the USA. He returned with the militant certitude and fundamentalist evangelistic techniques being deployed in the fight against modernism in the United States, as exemplified in the 1925 trial of biology teacher John Scopes, accused of breaking the law by teaching evolution to students in Dayton, Tennessee. It is said that after WP Nicholson arrived home he was warned by a representative of the new Government of Northern Ireland not to use his gifts to stir up trouble with the Catholics because of the potential political risks, and he is reported to have reassured his interlocutor that he would "lay off the Papishes" and concentrate his fire on those of whom he disapproved in the Protestant community – in particular the Plymouth Brethren (a small isolated protestant sect) and "liberals, modernists, higher critics and Unitarians". Fulton expresses the view that without this charismatic focus of discontent the plaintiffs in the heresy case might not have been able to get their case off the ground, and while they lost in an overwhelming vote – 707 supporting Davey and only 82 against - their impact was to be long-lasting.

Davey went on to become Principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in Belfast and Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, but he wrote relatively little after the trial, other than his life's work on the Gospel of St John published more than thirty years later in 1958. By that time a new WP Nicholson had arisen in the form of the young Ian Paisley.   Northern Ireland seemed more stable, and his fundamentalism was not taken so seriously for a while, but as he gradually became more of a threat, it was noticeable how reticent the mainstream Presbyterian Church was to rebut his stance.   It was as though no leading figure wanted to risk becoming the sacrificial lamb in a new heresy trial.   The Free Presbyterian Church that Ian Paisley established grew in size and influence and his sermons and writings viciously attacked both modernists and "Romanists" who he put in the same camp.   He participated in anti-civil rights demonstrations and actively contributed to the

breakdown into street violence with the resultant burning of Catholic houses, and the reappearance of the IRA and their Protestant alter-egos - the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), named after those who had fought in World War I, and the vigilantes of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). Northern Ireland slid rapidly into what became a thirty year nightmare of terrorism and violence, with more than 3,000 people killed and tens of thousands injured out of a population of only one and a half million people. In the resultant chronic political uncertainty over the constitutional future of Northern Ireland Ian Paisley's political party slowly emerged as a significant political force, and eventually after the prolonged Irish Peace Process of the 1990's, (which Paisley opposed and tried to undermine) resulted in the Good Friday Agreement (a name he abhorred because of its clear religious connotations) his party became the largest political party in Northern Ireland, and he finished his career in 2008 leading the new power-sharing government as the First Minister of Northern Ireland. Interestingly because of the compromise represented by his going into government with Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, he was forced to relinquish the Moderatorship of the fundamentalist Free Presbyterian Church which he had founded and led for 50 years.

3.6.4 FUNDAMENTALIST CERTAINTY AND POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in the history of Northern Ireland, there is an intimate connection between the strength and aggressivity of fundamentalist religious views and instability and uncertainty about the political and constitutional future of the province. Despite the insistence of fundamentalists that faith is an individual matter and that each person must make a personal commitment based only on their convictions and relationship with God, there is much evidence that this is more generally a group phenomenon related to political anxiety and fear. Indeed many authors have identified the rise of fundamentalism amongst Protestants in the United States of America and amongst Muslims from Indonesia to Morocco to various aspects of social, economic and political instability and change in the world as they experience it, and I have been struck in my own conversations with religious Islamists how they are keen to emphasize the importance of the political problems rather than religious differences with the West.

It is worth exploring Davey's writings in some more detail because he was one of the first eminent theologians to apply the emergent ideas of psychoanalysis to religion, and one could reasonable assume from the extent of their profound reaction against this modest and shy academic, that what he wrote and said must have struck a particularly notable if dissonant chord with his fundamentalist accusers.

3.6.5 PSYCHOANALYSIS, FAITH AND RELIGION

Davey starts from the observation that at what he calls 'the higher end of the scale', Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are remarkably alike in the lines and forms of their development, and proposes that this is due to the similarity of

human nature the world over. His first thesis is that life, which is invisible, can only be observed as it is expressed in visible forms. While diversities come from the creativity of individuals, they are then adopted by groups and communities, and the resultant forms give to life, what he describes as habit, consistency and coherence, but also limit spontaneity. The treatment of religion then, from the individual and social psychological viewpoint is, he believes, the truest way of understanding what religion means since individual and social psychology is the study of human nature. An important function of religious forms including those of his own Christian faith is the reassurance they give in the presence of fear of death, danger and discomfort. When sincerely engaged upon, he maintains, the serious thinker must reach the conclusion that there can be no complete certainty in life. Those who seek such a thing must depend on short-cuts to reassurance which, in intellectual terms, will often require the vehement defence of every link in their chain of argument for fear the whole edifice collapses. He contends that in religious faith it is the authenticity of experience and the reality of one's nature that are the truly important matters rather than the details of belief and doctrinal systems, but it is the latter that are misleadingly depended upon for reassurance rather than faith. For the average man then, religion is less a matter of faith than an ethical system with authoritative sanctions, and as such it is an essential of a social being. The institutions of the Church are the answers to man's craving for ethical and spiritual guidance. These change – "the changing vesture of the faith" – and at any time in history they represent to a great degree the culture and temperament of the people concerned. He observes that Northern Europeans lean towards Protestantism with its Calvinistic or Augustinian points of view, while the Catholics of the South lean towards semi-Pelagian or Scotist tendencies. Ironically the more there has been a concentration on the writing of creeds and confessions of faith, the more the central and indeed common themes of faith, love and the value of the human soul have been ignored, even in the wording of the creeds. The common things of faith and human existence are passed by and the creeds and confessions focus instead on the areas of contention and often contemporary error. This masks what is for him the key to faith, that the search for ideals, for self-completion, is the search for God, a hunger that is part of the human condition and which can only be satisfied in the experience of personality. The expression of such experience is the key to the forms of religion, at least at their best and most authentic, and this is not a matter of logic so much as one of proportion, fitness and balance, "keep(ing) abstract reason in its place of servant to life".

This leads him to conclude that the forms of the Church in any age (by which he refers to beliefs, institutions and observances) tend to reflect the political forms and interests of the social organism as it exists in that age. He then moves to consider the tendency to regard matter as evil and so to build an edifice of self-denial and self-mortification, but he points out that actually it is usually the desire which is associated with the body, rather than the matter itself which is the problem, and that "instinct for sacrifice" should represent something temporary for the sake of gain, rather than something in itself. This takes him to the universal presence in societies everywhere of taboos and sacrifices in various forms, and proposes that the special contribution of

Christianity in its higher forms is to emphasize consecration rather than renunciation as redemptive.

In the early 1920's when Davey's lectures were given to a mixed lay and clerical audience there was a good deal of discussion about the application of psychoanalysis to society. *Social Aspects of Psychoanalysis*, for example was published by Ernest Jones in 1923 [4], containing a series of lectures given by senior psychoanalytic figures to the Sociological Society in London. It is not difficult to see how Davey's observations as a very intelligent and educated young man, soaking up the new findings of psychoanalysis and evolutionary biology before, during and after the First World War, when there was the most profound turmoil of thought, society and world order, should lead to such insights into the normal form and function of religion. As psychiatrists, we know that in the study of disturbances of personality and mental life in the psychiatric patient, where the phenomena are easily seen because they are exaggerated and inappropriate, we learn not only about mental pathology, but also about normal mental evolution and function. So it is that in the extremes of social upheaval we may hope to appreciate more of the how and why of large group life. At such a time of frightening uncertainty however it is also easy to see why his message was not a reassuring one and was responded to with attacks and denigration. While his intention was to adumbrate the best of the higher forms of faith, he inevitably, if gently, pointed up the rigidities and pathology of what he referred to as 'the lower end' of religion, and in doing so from within the theological faculty of the church rather than from a more remote academic perch, he opened himself up for vitriolic abuse from those who by this time were part of a fairly coherent network of religious fundamentalism.

3.6.6 FUNDAMENTALISM AND HOLY SCRIPTURE

The term "Fundamentalism" is generally regarded as having come from a series of twelve essays by two American brothers Lyman and Milton Stewart entitled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, published between 1910 and 1915 and promoted by conservative elements in the United States. These views made their way to Britain through various evangelists including those involved in the Keswick movement. Not all those who held to such views wished to be identified as fundamentalists, but they did all share a commitment to defend a supernatural as distinct from a scientific approach to faith. In their very useful survey of *The Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism* [5], Hood, Hill and Williamson recognize the work of Carpenter, Marsden and others in the Fundamentalism Project which identifies militant opposition to modernity as the key to understanding Protestant fundamentalism and also see this as applicable more generically to describe the religious and cultural phenomena of religious fundamentalism world-wide including within Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and other religions. While applauding much of its work, Hood et al are concerned that the approach of the "Fundamentalist Project" may be too broad and "obscures more than it illuminates" and they have developed a model which they believe

accommodates both an appreciation of the commonality of fundamentalisms as well as a respect for the specifics of each fundamentalist faith.

They rightly point out that all attempts to identify a particular personality type as identifying fundamentalist believers has proved nugatory, and maintain that the historical and socio-cultural context is vital in appreciating it as a meaning system. They focus on the importance of a sacred text within fundamentalism as providing the centre-piece for understanding it and propose a cognitive model of what they call 'intra-textuality'. This principle focuses on the absolute pre-requisite of reading a sacred text as the text itself prescribes, accepting as absolute the "Truths" which the text itself prescribes as such. The Divine has spoken and the recorded text is treated as being the only legitimate version of absolute truth, not to be measured by any external measures, but providing meaning to the believer and guidance for life and for the interpretation of all other knowledge. It is not necessarily the case that all elements of the sacred text be considered to have the same level of significance, but the issue can only be resolved 'intra-textually' that is to say, under the instruction of the text itself. The value of this model, as the authors point out, is that it not only allows for the differences between fundamentalists who adhere to different sacred texts, but also, because interpretation of the intra-textual meaning will itself vary from individual to individual and from group to group, it allows for the considerable variations between different fundamentalist groupings who hold to the same sacred text, for example within Protestantism.

It is certainly the case that they demonstrate the way in which an intra-textual reading provides a coherent, meaningful, unifying philosophy of life, and they identify five key features amongst Protestant fundamentalists – belief in the inerrancy of scripture, a literalist interpretation of the text, the importance of evangelism, separatist behaviour and commonly (but not essentially) the doctrine of pre-millenialism. They are also right to urge caution in assuming too close a connection between fundamentalism and violence. The overwhelming majority of people who hold to fundamentalist views do not support overt violence in the form of terrorism, however that is not to say that there is not a degree of militancy in their attitude. There is a different emotional tone in fundamentalism than in conservatism. Fundamentalists press their case in a more vigorous and less tolerant manner. One is unsurprised when fundamentalists grasp the opportunity of a heresy trial, for example. While conservative minded people and so-called evangelicals within Protestantism hold to many of the same doctrinal positions as fundamentalists, they tend to be more prepared to accept that other people have a different perspective, of which they may at times despair, but which they generally accept as part of society and even of church society. I am not entirely convinced by the inclusion of the Amish as fundamentalists by Hood et al. It seems to me that they are instead a rather particular, small conservative group. The intra-textual model also tells us very little about why fundamentalism appears at particular points in history. The intra-textual approach appears meticulously respectful to fundamentalists by dealing with it entirely within the encapsulated bubble of the interpretation of the sacred text, however as far as the fundamentalist is concerned this isolates his convictions

from the wider world from which he both wishes to separate himself, but with which he is also inevitably, though conflictually engaged. Protestant fundamentalists may relate their strivings to changes that have taken place in the intellectual and religious order of things, and are then reflected in political and other unwelcome changes that have taken place. The question for observers is whether the "truth" is the reverse - that is that the intellectual and political changes have created an unwelcome uncertainty and instability to which their religious fundamentalism is a response of some kind. The Hood et al approach is certainly more thoughtful and respectful than the simple contention that fundamentalists are misled by wrong teaching, or worse, however to separate it off and deal with it as a phenomenon of intra-textuality to avoid disputes about causes and motivations, also strips it of the key to understanding it, both from within and without the religious perspective.

3.6.7 FUNDAMENTALISM AND GROUP PSYCHOLOGY

Vamik Volkan tries a different route of exploration. The FBI were confronted in the USA by a number of crises with fundamentalist groups, notably in 1993 when the FBI attacked and burned the Waco cult compound in Texas. Volkan was invited to chair an advisory committee to the agency's Critical Incident Response Group and he became interested in what he has described as "encapsulated" fundamentalist organizations, not only David Koresh's Davidians in Waco, but Jim Jones in Jonestown, Shoko Asahara's Japanese Aum Shinrikyo, Joseph's DiMambro's Order of the Solar Temple and others. These are movements that remain isolated within the larger society and tend to induce negative feelings, including fear, in those outside the encapsulated group. From these groups Volkan identified ten common characteristics - a divine text; an absolute leader who is the interpreter of the divine text; a demand for total loyalty to the group and the yielding up of all aspects of life and choice to the group and its leader; tangible benefits for members; feelings of being both omnipotent and yet victimized; extreme sadistic and/or masochistic acts; alteration of the shared "morality"; creation of borders (psychological and sometimes physical) between the group and the rest of society; changing of family, gender and sexual norms within the borders; and negative feelings and fear amongst outsiders. These ten observations from so-called "encapsulated" fundamentalists are clearly not entirely separable items. The setting down of a border for the group and the creation of different ways of thinking and behaving based on the divine text as (idiosyncratically) interpreted by the single inspired leader will not surprisingly contribute to the sense of omnipotence, the negative attitudes of outsiders, and the resultant and ambivalently unwelcome sense of victimization.

Volkan further postulates that when for some reason a significant number of outsiders begin to become sympathetic rather than have negative feelings about the group, perhaps because the wider society has undergone a massive trauma that has resulted in feelings of humiliation and helplessness, the idea of a "saviour" becomes attractive. He refers to the remarkable growth and power of the Taliban in post-Soviet Afghanistan and describes as especially powerful the symbolic link established with Mohammed through the

leader, Mulla Omer, publicly putting his arms into the sleeves of a cloak believed to have belonged originally to the prophet Mohammed - this symbolic link collapsing the passage of time and the separateness of the two individuals concerned. While Professor Khurshid Ahmad has disputed the authenticity of reports of this particular event, Volkan has demonstrated a similar mechanism in a number of other case studies in the Balkans, Baltic states, Cyprus and elsewhere. Volkan, who is senior Erik Erikson scholar at Austen Riggs Hospital, sees the phenomenon of fundamentalism as representing a regression in the functioning of a group in the face of a threat or threats to the identity of the large-group, an idea that he has developed out of a revision of Erik Erikson's description of individual identity. [6,7] Large-group identity - whether it refers to religion, nationality, ethnicity, or shared ideology - he defines as the subjective experience of thousands or millions of people who are linked by a persistent sense of sameness while also sharing some characteristics with "others" who belong to foreign groups. He describes this identity as being part of the psychic development of the large group which emerges out of its, often mythologized, history, and describes how, in a fashion analogous to that of the individual under threat, it is possible for the large group to regress to points in its earlier development where chosen glories and traumas (analogous to fixation points) become infused with emotion and significance and lead to a series of defences. An example would be the appearance in a people of "entitlement ideologies" such as irredentism where the nation's difficulty in mourning the loss of people, land or prestige, in, for example, the loss of empire, leads to attempts to deny the losses and seek to recover them either in fact or in symbolic form, sometimes at great cost, and with a continuing significance that is not much diluted by time, and can be re-ignited after years or even centuries. Another example are the "purification" practices where words are purged from a language, symbols removed from view, or worst of all, ethnic cleansing is embarked upon, to repair the damaged sense of identity, in a defence analogous to externalization/projection in the individual.

The idea that identity might from a useful bridge between the psychology of the individual and the group has been around for some time. The social anthropologist, John Blacking, for example, explored it in South Africa in the 1970's using musical culture because it showed the link between individual and group feelings and action and the power of something which has affective significance, even if transitory in its performance and experience. [8] He also showed how identity has continuity even when its external cultural expressions adapt to take account of changes in the political context and climate, especially where there is stress or conflict – a musical/cultural version of Davey's "changing vesture" thesis in the religious aspect of large group identity.

One of the important things about Volkan's work is that he not only applies the concept of identity to the large group but he also sites it within an evolutionary or developmental process, which can be put into reverse in the context of trauma. This evolution/dissolution model is familiar to psychoanalysts but as was demonstrated in a life-time of work by Henri Ey, the French psychiatrist, it comes from the pre-psychoanalytic work of Hughlings Jackson in neurology

and psychiatry.   Ey developed a neo-Jacksonian approach which he called organo-dynamic because it paid due attention to both biological and psychological aspects of psychiatry, and was based on a model that was congruent with both. [9]

3.6.8 REGRESSION AND THE LOSS OF TEMPERO-SPATIAL FUNCTIONS

The key features of this model are his explication of mental life as being our construction of "reality" and his application of the development/regression model to that experience of reality. Mental illness in his description is not only a shrinking of human existence and a pathology of freedom, but also a disturbance of our capacity of experiencing reality.   We have to understand, he says, the limits set to the sick man's comprehension of the mental disturbance that makes him sick with a "disease of reality". The reality of the disease consists precisely of the unreality, or the "imaginary structure" of the basic experiences, what Ey calls "pathologies of the field of consciousness and personality", though he uses these terms in a particular way.   In the regression or dissolution of the experience of reality, whatever the cause, there are negative features coming from the loss of higher functions, as well as positive symptoms coming from the release of the remaining mental functions, but there is also reconstructive or reparative work which follows, given time. The negative effect of the illness involves the loss of tempero-spatial functions - the temporal function being the capacity to distinguish in the experiencing of time between what is past, present and future, and the spatial function being the experience of what is inside me and what is part of someone else.   Such regressions may be sudden, temporary mental crises, or may become chronic in which case there are adaptations or reconstructions of the personality from the remaining and regressed capacities.

In applying such a phenomenological model to large-group identity we can note, as Volkan has pointed out, the temporal regression or "collapsing of time" such that events from the distant past may evoke powerful images and emotions, as though they happened only yesterday. The loss of spatial function in the individual is experienced in primary process thinking, both in the normal and regular dream life from which we can voluntarily waken up, and also in the more terrifying loss of ego boundaries, characteristically with the release phenomena of transitivism and appersonation and the appearance of hallucinations, where the patient's thoughts or memories are felt to be outside of themselves and directed at them, rather than internal and proceeding from them.   Sometimes the dissolution of the self is actually experienced directly in psychosis or in the pre-psychotic period.   Various attempts are made by the remaining mental function to make sense of the experience, or repair the "reality" for example through delusion formation.

If one applies this to the large group, whatever the cause or trauma, regression would involve a loss of the higher functions which enable history to be experienced as past (temporal function), and for differentiation between

individuals within the group as well as between the group and other groups (spatial function).   The loss of these functions leads to the collapse of time so that the past invades the present, and the loss of differentiation between individual people and between the large group and other large groups leads to what Girard calls a 'mimetic crisis' with the attendant danger of violence.

3.6.9 'VIOLENCE AND THE SACRED'

The importance of the differentiation between individuals and groups in controlling violence is identified in great detail by the French Canadian, Rene Girard in a series of books, but for the purpose of this chapter *Violence and the Sacred* [10] is probably the most relevant.   In human beings, he says, there are not only the instinctual appetites for food or water and so on, which we share with the animal kingdom, but also imitative desire – "I want that because I observe that you have it." This fundamental mechanism of mimesis or non-conscious imitation of desires inevitably leads to rivalry and in Girard's view the social constructions of law, culture and religion were essentially mechanisms that set down boundaries for rivalry, which, if uncontrolled, would lead by rapid mimesis to a violent rivalrous crisis.   The particular device at the centre of this boundary setting is the scapegoat mechanism, by which, instead of everyone being set against everyone in violence, all turn against one individual who is demonized, victimized, sacrificed, and then, since his sacrifice brings peace, is ultimately divinized. Girard identifies this mechanism as key to understanding the foundational myths of what he calls archaic religions.   In every repetition of the phenomenon the lynch mob feels itself justified in their violence against this individual who is regarded as the embodiment of some sort of evil.   The difference between such myths and Judaeo-Christian religion in particular (as exemplified in the crucifixion of Christ and its ritualization in the Eucharist) he says, is the recognition that the identified victim is actually innocent and that he is being sacrificed, not because of his wickedness, but to rid the community of its evil/violence. The problem is that once the myth of the wickedness of the victim is exposed as a lie the power of the mechanism is destroyed for no-one can feel so justified in scape-goating. In a post 9/11 expression of his thinking [11] Girard says that while the realization of the hypocrisy or "lie" behind the scapegoat mechanism has ensured that we have in many ways become less violent through our insistence on the rights of women, racial and religious minorities, the disabled and other victims or potential victims, this demythologizing has also contributed to more violence through the release of the old mimetic violence which the sacrificial violence was instigated to control.

3.6.10 REGRESSION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF LARGE-GROUP IDENTITY

As I have outlined elsewhere [12] if one puts these observations together, the rise of religious fundamentalism may be seen as resulting from a societal regression brought about by the fear of the loss, or in some cases the trauma of actual damage or loss, of large group identity resulting from a combination

of rapid socio-political changes in the past century. These might be summarized as follows - the advances in evolutionary science which remove the boundaries between humanity and the rest of the animal kingdom and introduce complexities of thinking which a majority of the population may find difficult to construe; the collapse of traditional authoritarian forms of government (monarchies, empires and tribal chieftains) with the advance of participatory democracy; the developments in information and communication technologies, greater speed and ease of travel and the borderless capacity for destruction in the nuclear age, all of which both excite interest and threaten large-group identity; the end of the Cold War, the collapse of communism and the widespread espousal of free market economics; in short the forces which we describe as rapid globalization represent the loss of boundaries and our experience of time and space is shaken.

Interestingly however fundamentalists do not generally see their movements as merely going back to the past. They certainly feel that they are identifying key strands from the roots of their faith and tradition, which they feel to have been overlooked, lost or denied, however they describe their activities as "revival", and many readily espouse new technology in their own lives. Professor Ahmad starts his paper on Jama'at-e-Islami [13] in precisely this way, and in conversation I found him very clear that the Islamist approach was about addressing the modern world, not trying to recreate the past. Hamas and Hizballah also say that are not trying to recreate an old way of living, and there is nothing Amish-like in their style of life. They are instead developing new ways of constructing social and economic models for their communities. From a Jacksonian point of view fundamentalism is not merely a form of regression but also includes the release of functions from an earlier time or lower level of structure and complexity, and most importantly also incorporates an attempt at reconstruction from a position of dissolution. Given what Girard describes as the fundamental mechanism of mimesis (or non-conscious imitation) large-group identity regression may result in a reparative attempt to re-erect the boundaries that could obviate mimetic rivalry, but have been removed by the traumatic loss of or damage to large group identity. It is as though the unsaid message from the frightened community is, 'We do exist; we are different and we may be acting in an aggressive (scapegoat) way, but it is in order to prevent worse (mimetic) violence." This is of enormous importance because it makes clear that it is possible to identify within fundamentalism an innate reparative or reconstructive component, something that is often missed or dismissed by observers. It may not be impossible to relate to this component if it is recognized.

3.6.11 FUNDAMENTALISM, RADICALIZATION AND VIOLENCE

Finally, I return to two of the problems identified at the start of the chapter, the relationship between different fundamentalisms, and the relationship between fundamentalism and violence.

Girard's emphasis on mimetic behaviour and the infective nature of violence should alert us that different fundamentalisms will imitate each other and create a cycle of regressive thinking and action. Hence the growth of Protestant fundamentalism within the USA is not hermetically sealed from the growth of fundamentalism elsewhere, and not only Protestant fundamentalism, but other religious fundamentalisms too. As the boundaries are dissolved, so the possibility of mimesis of thinking increases.

Further, as Volkan points out, and Girard helps to further explain why it is, there is an inherent violence, sadistic and/or masochistic, in the scapegoat mechanism, and therefore insofar as fundamentalists are attempting to reinstitute it, with old and new boundaries there will be an aggressive tone to their approach. It may be militant in its evangelism, aggressive in its language and attitude especially to lukewarm co-religionists who are more of a threat than those who are clearly different, and in its treatment of women in particular, and minorities in general, there will often be abuse and sometimes overt violence. The overwhelming majority of fundamentalists however do not become involved in, or supportive of terrorism, and indeed many will abhor it. Those who do become genuinely supportive of, or involved in terrorism seem to have undergone a kind of radicalization which they may share with others who are not religious fundamentalists at all. Many of the young people who get involved in suicide attacks and other terrorist activities are radicalized, but not especially religious, though if they survive they may become religious afterwards while in prison or under the influence of radical clerics or other prisoners. This differentiation between fundamentalist religious convictions and radicalized activists is of great importance in managing the deterioration in global security, and we do not yet understand it fully, save to say that one does not necessarily progress to the other, or require the presence of the other, though they can be present and facilitate each other.

A further key question is how far the scapegoat mechanism can really be revived. Perhaps it can no longer work for so long because the "cat is out of the bag" that the mechanism is based on a lie, though I am not yet sure of this because as human beings our capacity for denial is significant. There are in any case possible alternatives. The development of the European Union and some of the other peace processes which have been modeled on it show that in certain contexts a process can be created through which it is possible not only to contain the violence but to work though and transform it by the development of relationships in which differences can be sustained and mimesis limited or directed in positive competition rather than dangerous rivalry. On this however I must sound a note of warning because these alternative processes are new and as we can see in Europe, are still susceptible to deteriorate into mimesis and rivalry. While the post-war generations in Europe remembered that the purpose of the European Project was to prevent a return to the rivalries of nation states which had resulted in catastrophic wars, all was well. But now that a new generation of leaders is more concerned with economic success and using the EU as a platform for power to rival the USA, Russia and China, so the dangers re-emerge both within the EU, with the appearance of racism and xenophobia, and also in

collusion with a new line of international division with scape-goating of the Islamic world in general, and Iran in particular.

In summary, religious fundamentalism can perhaps best be understood as a phenomenon of large group psychology which occurs not merely as a direct result of regression in the face of treat or trauma, but showing three related elements - the loss of some more developed social functions, the return to or release of more elementary social characteristics, and the reconstruction of the large group identity from the remaining functions and faculties of the group. Fundamentalism is characterized by the diminution of individual freedom, a concretizing of thinking and restrictions of behavior, but its "purpose" is to repair or reconstruct the group identity and as well as to prevent further breakdown and/or violence and this positive component should not be disregarded.

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