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Supporting A-level Religious Studies. The St Mary's and St Giles' Centre

Challenging Religious Issues

Supporting Religious Studies at A-level and beyond

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Challenging Religious Issues
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Euthanasia: Do We Have a Right to Die When We Want?

Michael Armstrong

This article seeks to explore the main legal and Christian theological issues surrounding the current debate over euthanasia and 'assisted dying'.

Specification links: WJEC RS1/2 CS: Introduction to Religion in Contemporary Society (AS). 1. Medical and Environmental Issues; RS3 ETH: Studies in Religion and Ethics (A2), 4. Medical and Genetic Ethics; RS4 HE: Studies in Religion and Human Experience (A2), 3. Life, Death and Life after Death.

Euthanasia is a topic of keen debate with strongly contrasting viewpoints (Jackson & Keown, 2012). The current law in England and Wales is that while suicide is not illegal, giving assistance to anyone to commit suicide is. Test cases such as that of Debbie Purdy in 2009 led to the Director of Public Prosecutions clarifying the circumstances in which prosecution would be likely for assisting someone to end their life. For some, this is the ideal legal solution because it provides a compassionate response to those with pure motives; but for others it is an unsatisfactory legal fudge which leaves uncertainty for people in desperate end of life situations. The euthanasia debate often involves strong emotive arguments from personal experience, but similar experiences can lead to opposite views and empirical evidence can be interpreted quite differently. Public debate is therefore often polarised and negative, although surveys of public opinion show a consistently large majority in favour of some form of Voluntary Active Euthanasia (VAE).[1] The 2014 Assisted Dying Bill of Lord Falconer proposed a form of VAE where a competent patient gives voluntary consent to the ending of her life. In fact, the Bill actually proposed Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS): a procedure where the doctor prescribes a lethal medication which the patient must administer herself. Euthanasia can be involuntary (a competent patient, but no consent) or non-voluntary (patient lacks competence to make an end-of-life decision).

[1] For example, the latest YouGov poll – see http://yougov.co.uk/publicopinion/archive/10298/. Bear in mind that this poll was commissioned by the 'pro' side of the debate.

Treatment withdrawal is sometimes called 'passive' euthanasia. Some countries have legalised a form of voluntary euthanasia.

In the USA the states of Oregon and Washington have a form of PAS, as does Switzerland; Luxembourg, Netherlands and Belgium have a form of VAE; and there are proposals in France and Canada. There is no legal practice of involuntary euthanasia, but non-voluntary euthanasia does take place in the Netherlands with regard to severely ill infants.[2]

It is important to recognise two characteristics of our contemporary society which affect the debate. First, as a typical western industrialised nation *death has become a social taboo* and discussion of death is generally absent from normal social, family and national life. Second, the success of medicine in recent decades means that *most people are now living longer* and therefore often *live the final years of life with serious medical conditions*. The increase in rates of Alzheimer's and other forms of senile dementia is one obvious indicator of this. Increasing financial cost of end of life care is an issue which hovers around the debate but is rarely mentioned directly.

The legal debate

End of life decisions have to be and are being made all the time within our medical system. The phrase 'terminal sedation' refers to the necessary relief of pain to the extent that it induces coma and hastens end of life. The 'pro' side argues that this is the same as PAS/VAE. The foreseen but unintended 'double effect' of such pain relief is a legal nicety: it is killing the patient. The 'anti' side say it is a quite different thing, as is the withdrawal of treatment from a patient in certain end of life circumstances. Also disputed is whether it would fundamentally change the relationship of patient and doctor.

The 'pro' side argues that we are imposing horrible deaths on people in extreme situations of suffering at the end of life. While excellent palliative care should continue to be expanded (the 'anti' side say such development would be adversely affected if VAE/PAS was introduced), it is not universally available (hospices deal primarily with cancer patients) and cannot always control pain. The introduction of VAE/PAS is therefore necessary and would not lead to a 'slippery slope' for the vulnerable: appropriate safeguards could be put in place. The 'anti' side see an inevitable progression from PAS to VAE and then to non-voluntary euthanasia. They claim it is impossible to have adequate safeguards, particularly regarding adequate psychiatric assessment of someone seeking assisted dying. Once the principle is accepted that 'life is not worth living' in some circumstances, then why wait for people to decide this for themselves? The severely disabled and others who require extensive medical care would feel vulnerable (a claim hotly disputed by the 'pro' side).

The theological debate

The belief that we are *made in the image of God* (*Imago Dei*, Gen. 1:27) means that *each person in any and every situation is to be valued, cared for, and protected from harm*. Furthermore, Jesus protected the weak and vulnerable in his ministry, and from texts such as Matt. 25:45 we see how the Church is called to look after such people. The *sanctity of life* (life as sacred/holy and therefore to be protected) would appear to be clear.

[2] In consultation with state criminal prosecutors, according to the protocol developed in 2004 by medical staff at the University of Groningen. The full consent of parents is required, and prosecutors review every case.

But should life be protected at all costs? For example, could it ever be ethically correct and necessary to harm one person to protect others? An 'absolutist' ethical position would say that moral values are God-given and absolute: so the sixth commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' (Ex. 20:13) means exactly that, in all situations. However, it can be argued that the Old Testament has many exceptions to this commandment (such as warfare, and the death penalty), and biblical texts seem to forbid murder but not suicide (for example Samson, see Judg. 16:30). Also, Jesus chose to lay down his own life (John 10:18) and emphasised the moral value of dying for another (John 15:13). Many early Christian martyrs chose (or even sought out) death to avoid apostasy. A 'consequentialist' ethical position would say that nothing is good or bad in itself, but depends on what follows from it. Some theologians would claim that Jesus' ethical approach was not absolutist; for example, he gave priority to human need over the letter of the law (the Sabbath rule, Mark 2:27). Jesus summarised the law as 'love of God and love of neighbour' (Matt. 22:37-40) and his golden rule was to 'do for others what you want them to do for you' (Matt. 7:12). So Paul Badham wonders, if we truly love our neighbour as ourselves, how could we deny them the assisted death that we would want (Badham, 2009, p. 121)?

If *life is a gift of God* can human beings ever decide when to end that gift? George Pitcher is 'in no doubt that the playing out of life to its natural end is not just a worthwhile but a sacramental enterprise' (Pitcher, 2010, p. 20). He represents the view that blames the development of *secular individualism* (increased emphasis on human autonomy and the right to our own personal choices) as the driving force behind those seeking to legalise euthanasia. The *Imago Dei* means life has been gifted to us; and we in turn gift it to others, even when we are dying. We cannot decide when a human life ends, and should recognise that our lives are part of the community to which we belong. In its opposition to assisted dying, the Church of England makes clear that personal autonomy is problematic and that whenever this is in conflict with protection of life there should be a 'presumption in favour of life' (*Assisted Dying/Suicide and Voluntary Euthanasia,* March 2009, (*http://www.churchofengland.org/media/57990/assisteddyingpdfmar09.pdf*). Pope John Paul II warned of a 'Promethean attitude' in contemporary culture which leads people to think that they can control life and death themselves; so life becomes a mere thing that we can dispose of rather than the gift of God (*Evangelium Vitae*, pp. 70, 98).

Hans Küng provides a theological counter-argument, stressing that *the sovereignty of God* must be balanced by an understanding of *human life as gift* which makes *human living our task and responsibility* (Küng & Jens, 1995, pp. 26-38). He claims that God has given men and women freedom and responsibility for their lives, and so has left to dying people the responsibility for making a conscientious decision about the manner and time of their deaths. Küng also denies the claim that euthanasia is a rejection of the value of each individual life. For him the opposite is true: it is because human beings remain fully human to the very end of life that they have the right to a dignified dying. Others simply point out that if we do not believe God sends any particular

disease, illness or accident, why do we think he controls our death? God seems happy to give us responsibility for all other stages of our physical life (when to have an operation, or take medicine) so why should it be different at the end of our lives?

What is the *role of God in human suffering?* Does suffering ever have a purpose? Can it be a positive experience? For many in the Church it is clear that God accompanies us in our suffering and therefore that we can be closer to him and learn from him in such situations. Pope John Paul set out a view of *redemptive suffering* to which he adhered to the very end of his own life, and which he advocated to the Catholic faithful (*Evangelium Vitae*, pp. 70, 98). It can be argued that in suffering we can encounter the divine in unique and revelatory ways; so we cannot just 'bail out' of this life. Those who are suffering also provide the opportunity for us to demonstrate in practice the love of God (Pitcher, 2010, pp. 126-130). But should the vocation of redemptive suffering chosen by the Pope become the norm for all Christians, or those with no belief? There are also theological objections to redemptive suffering from both traditional evangelical Protestantism (Christ's sacrifice was entirely sufficient) and from liberal theology (the horrific notion of Christ's sacrifice to placate God). If we take seriously the message of Jesus that 'God is love', can we believe that God requires us to suffer? (Badham, 2009, pp. 83-86). It is obvious that for many suffering is a destructive and negative experience.

Should *suffering only be equated with physical pain?* Those who claim that human autonomy has gone too far (see above) would claim that this is reflected in the fact that many people who actually undergo PAS point to loss of control and dignity as key factors in taking this decision. However, this is a real concern for the terminally ill; as is the inability to engage in enjoyable activity, and the impact of their illness on family and friends. Other physical symptoms such as breathlessness, incontinence, choking, nausea, confusion and bedsores can also be severely distressing. Some people may not want to become dependent on opiates for pain relief at the end of their lives; seeing it as an addiction. It seems that what is unbearable suffering to one person may not be for another. But who is best placed to judge this?

If a person *believes in life after death* should this affect how she views euthanasia? The 'anti' argument is that we must value and use all of this life to the very end and not just rush into the next (better) life. The 'pro' side would argue that surely knowing we have a life with God beyond death means we would not want to cling on to this life when it has become unbearable. Another consideration is *the Kingdom of God.* Christians believe that they should create here and now a society which reflects God's intentions, so the Kingdom of God is to be realised at least partially on earth. Can euthanasia be present in such a society?

Links

http://www.dignityindying.org.uk/
(Campaign for Dignity in Dying)

http://www.livinganddyingwell.org.uk/
(Living and Dying Well, LDW)

http://www.carenotkilling.org.uk/
(Care Not Killing Alliance)

http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/assisteddying.html
(House of Lords, Assisted Dying Bill, 2013-2014)

Discussion points

1. Opponents of assisted dying have the right to say 'this is not for me' or that 'I want no part in helping people to end their lives'. But do they have the right to deny others this choice?
2. If we adopt any form of PAS/VAE will it inevitably be extended (because we accept that there are situations where life is not worth living)? Do you think that the slippery slope is not just a practical slope, reflecting the difficulty of providing safeguards, but a logical slope?
3. Does the *sanctity of life* mean that any form of euthanasia should be resisted?

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The Zionist Movement

Gareth Lloyd Jones

This article outlines the rise of Zionism as a secular movement in continental Europe and the opposition it engendered, the development of religious Zionism as a result of the Holocaust and the Israeli-Arab conflict, and the justification given by both secular and religious Zionists for the appropriation of Palestinian land.

Specification link: WJEC RS3 WR: Western Religions (A2), Studies in Judaism, 4. Significant Issues and Events.

The Roots of Zionism

Zionism as a political movement developed from two not unrelated phenomena: *Haskala* (Jewish Enlightenment) and anti-Semitism. To be more precise, it sprang from the failure of the one and the success of the other.

Haskala

The eighteenth century ushered in a new era: the Age of Enlightenment. Gradually the cry for liberty, equality and fraternity was heard across Europe, especially during the French Revolution in 1789. A prominent German Jew, Moses Mendelssohn, realised that if Jews were to benefit and have more than a marginal existence, shunned by neighbours and suffering civil disabilities, they had to leave the security of the ghetto and mix with Gentile. They would have to speak a language other than Yiddish, study subjects not covered by the Talmud and apply reason to their religion. They would have to feel as German as their fellow citizens. His message to his fellow Jews was: If you want to succeed, integrate.

Mendelssohn's dream was that Jews, after centuries of oppression and exclusion, would eventually be accepted as rightful members of society. So he pioneered the *Haskala* movement, a word which literally means to be 'wise', 'cultured', or even 'successful'. By 1800, thousands of western European Jews had become *Maskilim*, followers of *Haskala.*

But Mendelssohn's message of success through integration soon began to lose credibility. When another German Jew, Moses Hess, who lived much of his life in France, returned to Germany in the late 1850s, he was astonished by what had happened to the Jewish communities. By embracing the Enlightenment, German Jews seemed to be doing their utmost to deny their culture and heritage through assimilation.

For Hess, *Haskala* was a mistake. In his view, it had failed because the price of acceptance into German society was too high. The Jew could never integrate without losing his identity. His only salvation, Hess insisted, was to return to the land his fathers had left eighteen hundred years previously. In his book, *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862), he became the first Jew to put forward philosophical and political arguments for a Jewish national state. His book became the Zionist's Bible.

So the *Haskala* movement failed to win general support among Jews because it asked too much of its adherents. The price of integration was too high.

Anti-Semitism

In 1881 the Russian Tsar Alexander II was assassinated and the blame pinned on Jews. Without delay, laws were passed undermining life in centuries-old Jewish communities. Russian Jews were barred from certain professions, denied state education and prevented from leaving their own locality. There were savage pogroms and public trials. Systematic terror was unleashed by bands of vigilantes worthy of comparison with the Nazi SS. Jews were officially declared 'enemies of mother Russia'. Mediaeval Jew-hatred had returned with a vengeance.

This renewed persecution prompted a Jewish physician, Leo Pinsker, to publish a pamphlet anonymously in 1882 entitled: *Auto-emancipation: A Russian Jew's warning to his brethren.* The pogroms had convinced Pinsker that Jews would never find genuine equality and freedom from oppression while they lived among other nations. In his opinion, anti-Semitism was a hereditary psychosis which was incurable. Jews must find a home of their own – anywhere.

Pinsker's fears were echoed in western Europe. In 1894 a Jewish captain in the French army, Alfred Dreyfus, was convicted of being a German spy and sentenced to life imprisonment. He spent five years in jail before an influential fellow Jew, Emile Zola, convinced the authorities that the accusation was false. But the damage had been done. The slogan 'Death to the Jews' began to appear in all major French cities.

One of the journalists covering the Dreyfus affair was a non-practising Viennese Jew called Theodore Herzl. As a young man he had been attracted to the *Haskala* movement. But as he listened to the crowd outside the Paris courthouse, he witnessed the resurgence of anti-Semitism. Those ordinary French citizens were not calling for the death of the traitor, they were baying for the blood of the Jews. Herzl concluded that if this could happen in France within a century of the Revolution, it could happen anywhere. Jews would be at risk while they lived in someone else's country. They would never be allowed to integrate.

He expressed his views in a pamphlet *The Jewish state* (1896) which he describes as 'a little essay on the solution of the Jewish question' (Jaffe, 1960, p. 12). When he wrote the book he knew nothing of Hess or Pinsker, but he found willing supporters among their disciples.

So to summarise. One of the roots of Zionism is the failure of *Haskala* to ensure that, having abandoned the ghetto in order to integrate, Jews would retain their identity. The *Maskilim* didn't. To curry favour with their Gentile

neighbours, they quickly became assimilated. But Zionism developed also because anti-Semitism, which had been relatively dormant for a couple of centuries, returned. Consequently the early Zionists concluded that Diaspora life would eventually lead to catastrophe, a conclusion tragically borne out by the Holocaust. The solution to their plight was the recovery of Jewish national identity and the establishment of a Jewish state. Jews would flourish only in their own land.

Secular Zionism

In 1897 Herzl organized the First Zionist Congress in Basle. (Annual congresses followed, each one larger than the former.) It concluded that a rightful home for the Jewish people should be established in Palestine. On 31 August 1897 Herzl wrote in his diary: 'At Basle I founded the Jewish state. If I said this out loudly today, I would be greeted by universal laughter. Perhaps in 5 years, and certainly in 50, everyone will know it' (Patai, 1960, Vol. II, p. 581).

The *Jewish chronicle* for 17 January 1896 gave extensive coverage to Herzl's views. But the editorial was sceptical: 'We hardly anticipate a great future for a scheme which is the outcome of despair'. Its disparaging tone emphasised how forlorn a cause Zionism at first seemed. But it was to be proved wrong. The British government's support for the plan was outlined in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. On 28 November 1947, the UN passed a resolution calling for the partition of Palestine. Herzl's Jewish state had been born within three months of the time-frame he had predicted.

The Zionist movement was primarily secular in inspiration. It had much in common with other nineteenth-century nationalist movements. Herzl had little time for religion, but he spent much energy visiting international heads of state seeking political backing for the Jewish enterprise. He was very successful for at least two reasons.

An empty land

There was sympathy for European Jews because of Gentile persecution. In the face of violent rejection by several countries, what else could the Jews do? They needed a haven. Furthermore, was not the Zionist dictum, attributed to Lord Shaftesbury, true: 'A land without a people for a people without a land' (Goldman, 2009, p. 23)? Palestine, so it was believed, was virtually uninhabited. Land would therefore be available to form Jewish communities without prejudice to Palestinians.

But the land wasn't empty. In 1905 not only was there a small indigenous Jewish community, there were about 700,000 Arabs whose ancestors had been there time out of mind. The Zionists knew this. So when they said 'A land without a people', what did they mean?

Perhaps Israel Zangwill, one of the Zionist pioneers, provides an answer. In the early 1920s he wrote: 'If Lord Shaftesbury was literally inexact in describing Palestine as a country without a people, he was essentially correct, for there is no Arab people living in intimate fusion with the country, utilizing its sources and stamping it with a characteristic impress; there is at best an Arab encampment' (Zangwill, 1920, p. 104). Palestinian Arabs had no distinct identity. They were simply 'Arabs', not a recognisable national group. This perception was used to justify Zionist colonisation and gain international support.

The transfer concept

Surely, world leaders believed, the Jews could bring only benefit to this benighted land. They would make the desert bloom. They would not harm the Arab population; far from displacing it, they would live in harmony with it. This was widely believed by western political leaders who supported Zionist aspirations.

But when we look at Zionist literature, a different picture emerges. In the very early years Herzl wrote in his diary: 'When we occupy the land we must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discretely and circumspectly' (Patai, 1960, Vol. I, pp. 87-88).

In the generation following Herzl, a leading Zionist was a Polish Jew, Vladimir Jabotinsky. He declared that 'the first aim of Zionism is the creation of a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan river' (Mendes-Flohr & Reinharz, 2011, p. 671). To make room for Jews emigrating from Europe, the Arab population would have to find a new home. In the words of Israel Zangwill, 'We cannot allow the Arabs to block so valuable a piece of historic reconstruction. … And therefore we must gently persuade them to "trek"' (Morris, 2004, p. 41).

Religious Zionism

The dream of Hess, Pinsker and Herzl was firmly rejected by the Orthodox Jews of the day on religious grounds. In their eyes, the return to the Holy Land was contrary to Scripture. The issue centred on whether it was divine or human intervention which should save the Jewish nation.

The Orthodox argued that it was God's task to bring his chosen people home. The Jewish state could be inaugurated only by the Messiah, God's own representative who would come in God's good time. Auto-redemption contradicted the religious tradition. So they adopted an a-political attitude. To this day groups of Ultra-Orthodox Jews, though they live in Israel, refuse to recognise the existence of the state. They choose to isolate themselves in ghettos.

But during the second half of the twentieth century Zionism began to appear as a compelling alternative, even for many Orthodox Jews. The Holocaust, the founding of the State, the Six Day War of 1967, all contributed to the Orthodox determination to make common cause with the Zionists. They brought politics into line with their theology. Appealing to Bible and Talmud, they provided secular Zionism with a theological basis. They concluded that the founding of the state was the first step in the coming of the Messiah. For many Orthodox Jews, the Torah now legitimised the state. They recognised that the Bible, in Ben Gurion's words, is their 'sacrosanct title-deed to Palestine'.

So we move from a secular to a theological rationale for Zionism. The claim to territory made by the religious Zionists is biblically-based: the right to the land, the extent of the land.

The right to the land

Ownership of land is a major theme of biblical faith. The land was promised by God to Abraham, conquered by Joshua, but lost to the Babylonians and the

Romans. But despite every setback, Jews refused to believe that exile was permanent. The Passover liturgy ends with the words, 'Next year in Jerusalem'.The Bible's legitimisation of the Jewish state was confirmed by a former Israeli Chief Rabbi. On 18 December 1993 he distributed leaflets to synagogues in the Occupied Territories emphasising that Jews had a God-given right to the land. When he was accused of fomenting rebellion, he replied: 'Any orders which contradict the orders of Moses are a rebellion against Moses, against the Torah, against Judaism. There does not exist any kind of rebellion if the refusal is based on obeying the laws of Moses' (Prior, 1997, p. 168). The command to colonise the promised land appears frequently in the Bible. So the Jew's dream becomes the Palestinian's nightmare.

Territorial dimensions

The current dispute is about defining borders as well as rights to territory. How is the 'land' to be defined? The Bible provides the answer: 'Every place where you set the soles of your feet shall be yours. Your borders shall run from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the river Euphrates to the western sea' (Deut. 11:24). The biblical map reference is quite explicit, but it does not require much imagination to appreciate how much political dynamite it contains if taken literally. Just as politicians might refer to historically conditioned frontiers, Orthodox Jews speak of theologically conditioned frontiers. The Holy Land has a supernatural boundary. But in any discussion of boundaries what counts, historical and political reality or an ancient biblical text?

On this issue of Judaism's link with a specific piece of land, a prominent American Jewish academic, Jacob Petuchowski, writes: 'When pro-Israeli apologists refer to the importance of "land" in biblical religion, our first question should be whether these apologists really want to set Judaism back to its biblical phase, i.e. whether they also long for the reintroduction of animal sacrifices, the official toleration of slavery, the death penalty for certain ritual transgressions, and the constitution of a theocratic state. Or do we have here simply an emphasis on the role of the "land" for biblical religion torn right out of its context – as though in its further Jewish development this religion had not gone through a variety of stages which finally led to an independence of the Jewish religion from the land?' (Küng, 1992, p. 562).

The religious dimension of Zionism raises important moral questions: What happens when the divine promise of land conflicts with the rights of those who already occupy it? Can one take a verse out of context and apply it directly, and without interpretation, to the twenty-first century? Can one dismiss the historical and political developments of 2,500 years, and make specific territorial demands, simply by appealing to the Bible? The answers will depend on how one handles a holy book.

Discussion points

1. What prompted the Zionist pioneers to call for a Jewish homeland?
2. Why have Zionists, past and present, faced opposition from fellow Jews?
3. How do religious Zionists justify the movement's policies?

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Fundamentalism as a Response to Biblical Criticism

Paul Wilson

This article outlines the nature and origin of Christian fundamentalism as a western post-Enlightenment phenomenon.

Specification links: WJEC RS1/2 CS: Introduction to Religion in Contemporary Society (AS), 3. Religion and Community; RS4 HE: Studies in Religion and Human Experience (A2), 1. Religious Authority.

What is Christian fundamentalism?

In the UK, the word 'fundamentalism' is most often used as a term of opprobrium by its critics. This is less true in the USA, though there are Christians on both sides of the Atlantic who wear the badge with pride. There are also some whose theological position seems identical to that of self-confessed fundamentalists, but who distance themselves from that name, preferring to be called 'conservative evangelicals'

In order to make sense of fundamentalism, we need to see it in its historical context. Medieval society in Europe was held together by respect for authority, with Church and State supporting each other in a power alliance which we now call Christendom. Widespread corruption in the Church – perhaps inevitable because of its link with the State – gave rise to grass-roots Christian protest movements, such as the Waldensians in France and the Lollards in England. But it was not until the invention of printing that such protests gathered momentum in the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

However, it was the Enlightenment two centuries later which dealt a fatal blow to Christendom. Now it was corruption in the State (kings and nobles) that was exposed. The divine right of kings was replaced by the Social Contract, in which government was by consent of the people. Reason, rather than unquestioning respect for authority, was now the characteristic of the age, which we now call modernity.

The intellectual freedom of modernity enabled scientific theories such as natural selection to develop, though not without some controversy. The potential conflict between science and the Bible, along with issues of historicity, authorship and internal discrepancies, gave rise to biblical criticism, particularly

in Germany but also in England and North America.

The conservative response in America was vigorous. In 1910 the USA Presbyterian General Assembly published what it considered the essentials of Christian faith. These were circulated in twelve books ('The Fundamentals') between 1910 and 1915, and reaffirmed by the Assembly in 1916. They were:

- the inerrancy of Scripture,
- the Virgin Birth of Jesus,
- the substitutionary character of Jesus's death as a 'sacrifice to satisfy divine justice',
- His bodily resurrection, and
- the authenticity of His miracles. (Schlect, 2004)

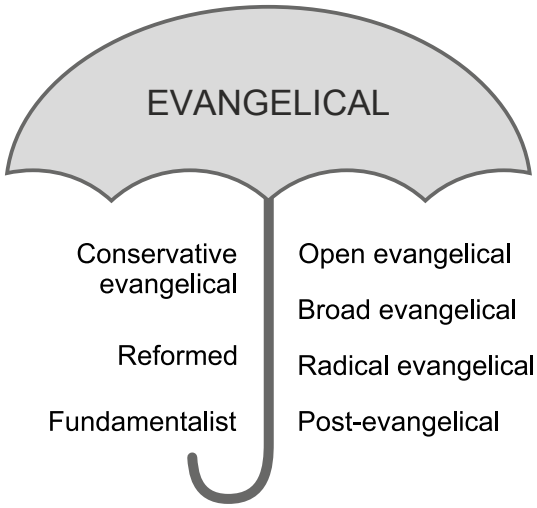
Although there were minor variations in the 'five points', the inerrancy of Scripture always headed the list.

In popular usage, Christian fundamentalists are characterised by 'taking the Bible literally' (Barr, 1981, p. 1; Edwards & Stott, 1998, p. 91). James Barr has argued that this is not the case; his view is that a commitment to inerrancy, rather than literal interpretation, is the characteristic feature of fundamentalists, who 'twist and turn back and forward between literal and non-literal interpretation' (Barr, 1981, p. 40) in order to preserve the Bible's inerrancy.

Responding to David Edwards' charge of a 'lingering tendency towards fundamentalism', Stott contrasts the *historical* features of fundamentalism, which he sees as noble, with some tendencies of *modern* fundamentalism, including a mechanical 'dictation theory' of biblical inspiration, which he claims evangelicals reject (Edwards & Stott, 1998, pp. 89-91).

Nevertheless, any theory of the origin of Scripture even remotely resembling a mechanical view is liable to be hostile to historical-critical scholarship. Even without such a doctrine, there are groups on both sides of the Atlantic who *treat* the Bible *as if* God had dictated it, thereby rendering critical scholarship at best a dangerous activity, akin to touching the ark (2 Sam. 6:1-7).

So where does that leave us? Alan Jamieson adopts an umbrella view of 'Evangelicalism' as now mainstream, under which a variety of sub-types can be recognised (Jamieson, 2002, pp. 22-23).



This allows people to describe themselves as evangelical without being called conservative evangelicals or fundamentalists (Barr, 1981, p.61; Jamieson, 2002, p. 22). Equally, it allows fundamentalists to call themselves evangelical, though not all would wish to do so: Harold Lindsell thinks that 'the term *Evangelical* has become so debased that it has lost its usefulness', and suggests that 'those who believe in

the strict use of the word "inerrant" should call themselves fundamentalists' (Lindsell, 1979, pp. 319-320; Webber, 2002, p. 35).

For the purpose of this article, I intend to side with Lindsell and Barr (unlikely bedfellows), as belief in inerrancy seems to me to be the crucial divide. So I have sliced down the middle of Jamieson's umbrella, and put John Stott's conservative evangelicalism in with fundamentalism, whether he likes it or not.

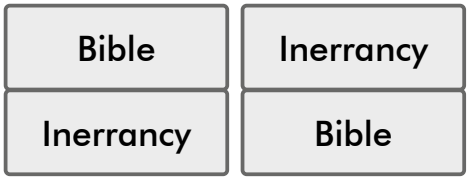
Approaching the Bible as a fundamentalist

The doctrine of inerrancy was formulated to increase people's confidence in the Bible. But it is a fragile and vulnerable doctrine, particularly if it is used as a foundation on which other (arguably more important) doctrines are built. It only takes one error or contradiction in the Bible to bring the whole structure crashing to the ground. Ironically, therefore, a doctrine put forward to defend the Bible is itself in much need of defence, as (alleged) errors and discrepancies are not difficult to find. (Edwards & Stott, 1998, pp. 63-65)

One way of addressing this is to claim that 'inerrancy' only applies to the original texts, not to the copies of copies that we have today. In fairness, the fundamentalist statements on inerrancy have generally limited it to 'the original autographs'. Ultimately, the criterion by which texts are thought to be faithful copies of the originals could only be 'what seems reasonable' (which is not sufficient to separate fundamentalists from liberals), or the denial (at an axiomatic level) of any possibility of discrepancies in the autographs.

But to take too much shelter here leads only to the conclusion that we don't know what the Bible says, because nobody has one. So much effort has gone into interpreting Scripture in a way that is consistent with inerrancy, without resort to the ultimate 'get-out clause'. In the case of internal (alleged) discrepancies – for example, between parallel accounts in the Gospels, or in Kings and Chronicles – the priority has been harmonisation of the accounts. For example, Luke's account of the healing of a blind man places it as Jesus approached Jericho, whereas Matthew and Mark place the healing as Jesus was leaving Jericho. (Compare Matt. 20:29, Mark 10:46, Luke 18:35). Nothing hangs on this, *other than the doctrine of inerrancy*, but it has been a preoccupation of fundamentalist interpretation (e.g. Matt. 20:29 in Gaebelein, 2006).

The result is a reversal of roles: whereas the idea of inerrancy was introduced (or made explicit) *in order to support the Bible*, the Bible is now being interpreted *in order to support the idea of inerrancy*.



Once the idea of sources was recognised, the scope for such discrepancies increased, as they could be seen not only between parallel books, but also between parallel sources within a single book.

James Barr refers to the story of Hagar and Ishmael (Barr, 1981, pp. 46-47, 56). Gen. 21 has Hagar carrying Ishmael on her shoulder into the desert, and throwing him under a bush; the impression is that Ishmael is a small

child. But according to Gen. 17 Ishmael was 13 when Isaac was born, making him perhaps 17 in the desert episode. It is not surprising that scholars see separate sources behind the story, incompatible in detail. To fundamentalists, this seems doubly offensive, not only because 'incompatibility in detail' precludes harmonisation, but also because support for Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch precludes sources.

Fundamentalism: a form of foundationalism.

Although the Reformation of the sixteenth century and fundamentalism of the twentieth century both seem to be 'back to the Bible' movements, they lie on opposite sides of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. This is significant because the Enlightenment (the Age of Reason) gave rise to modernity, which revived a way of thinking called foundationalism.

Foundationalism, in its strongest form, relies on basic beliefs (foundations) which are regarded as true without requiring justification. Examples are the axioms of Euclidean Geometry, or the 'self-evident truths' of the American Declaration of Independence. Further beliefs are then derived from these by logical reasoning (deduction). Clearly, the belief system one derives depends on the starting point(s). For example, if the axioms of Geometry were slightly different, we would end up with a different (non-Euclidean) Geometry.

Foundationalism was known to Aristotle, who regarded it as the most satisfactory theory of knowledge, but it declined in popularity until the Enlightenment gave it a boost. Descartes' famous *'Cogito, ergo sum'* pronouncement was part of his quest to find a reliable foundation for knowledge. Although the Enlightenment questioned traditional authorities, it did encourage a quest for basic (foundational) beliefs in experience. This became the basis for modern (experimental) science. Although scientific theories (explanations of observations) were always tentative, they did have the advantage (unlike Geometry) of saying something about the real world.

The shape of Christian theology for a foundationalist depends on what is regarded as an unquestionable foundation. Simplifying things a bit, different forms of Christianity arise, depending on whether the Bible, Church tradition or experience is treated as a reliable foundation. The early fundamentalists, concerned that liberal theologians were giving higher regard to secular theories than to the historical basis of the faith, chose an inerrant Bible as the basis of their theological system. Systematic theologies in this tradition begin, tellingly, not with the doctrine of God, but with the doctrine of Scripture (e.g. Grudem, 1994; Milne, 1998).

Although earlier teachers, like Augustine and Luther, had a high view of Scripture, interpretation was usually subject to revision in the light of new information. Fundamentalism, essentially a defensive movement, became 'hermetically sealed', suspicious of the world, and impervious to new information. It is not uncommon, for example, for fundamentalists to hold to the view that the cosmos is less than 10,000 years old, regardless of how much evidence is brought to challenge this.

What about the future?

Many of the most vibrant, growing churches in the UK could be described as fundamentalist. Because there has been a clear boundary between those

who are in the world of fundamentalist Christianity and those who are outside, crossing the boundary has often been by crisis conversion, leading to induction into the total package, including biblical inerrancy. But, despite this distancing from the (secular) world, fundamentalism is essentially a form of foundationalism, and therefore bound to modernity. We are now in an era in which modernity itself is crumbling. Along with it, foundationalism as a theory of knowledge has been found wanting, both because genuinely basic beliefs are in short supply and because those that can be found do not necessarily lead anywhere.

This has had two consequences for conversions. One is that conversions into Christianity are often more like a process than a crisis, with time to reflect on the ingredients of the faith (Finney, 1992, ch. 3; McLaren, 1992, chs. 13-14). The other is that there is a conversion the other way – not from faith to atheism, but from the closed world of fundamentalism to a process of deconstructing and examining the ingredients of the faith which had previously been embraced as a package deal (Jamieson, 2002; Tomlinson, 1995, 2008).

Glossary

Axiom is a statement that is taken to be true without needing to be proved.

Enlightenment is a philosophical movement, mainly in eighteenth-century Europe, in which people were encouraged to reach their own conclusions by reason.

Inerrancy is a view of the Bible in which the text was preserved from error, and is therefore reliable. This usually means that internal discrepancies are ruled out, as are contradictions with history and science.

Modernity is the way of thinking brought about by the Enlightenment. Initially it was thought that modernity would solve all the world's problems.

Postmodernity: as modernity has proved inadequate, a shift in western thinking is underway. Features like authenticity have become more important than reason alone.

Substitutionary: Jesus' death is seen as 'substitutionary' (or 'penal substitution') by those who believe that he was suffering punishment in the place of sinners. This is not the only way of understanding Jesus' death, but it is the most common view amongst evangelicals.

Links

http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-difference-between-original-autographs-and-original-texts/ (M. J. Kruger explains 'original autographs')

http://mb-soft.com/believe/text/fundamen.htm (C.T. McIntyre (1984). Fundamentalism. In *Evangelical dictionary of theology*. Ed. W. A. Elwell, Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan & Scott)

http://www.credenda.org/archive/issues/16-4historia.php (Schlect, C. (2004) Fundamentalism and Presbyterianism. *Credenda*, *16*(4))

http://www.iep.utm.edu/found-ep/ (Ted Poston on foundationalism, *Internet encyclopedia of philosophy*)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euclidean_geometry (Euclidean geometry - an example of an axiomatic system)

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html (The American Declaration of Independence)

Discussion points

1. The author suggests that different forms of Christianity arise, depending on whether the Bible, Church tradition or experience is treated as a reliable foundation. How would you label these different forms of Christianity?
2. If the Bible is not without errors, is it any use?
3. 'The Bible is too good and too important to be left to those who won't think critically about it. And frankly, it is too dangerous' (Brian McLaren, *http://www.patheos.com/Topics/2014-Religious-Trends/Progressive-Christian/The-Problem-Isnt-the-Bible-Brian-McLaren-06182014.html).* Discuss.

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The Concept of *Jihād* in Islam

Declan O'Sullivan

This article defines the term jihād and other related words, explaining how their meaning can change over time. It discusses the greater jihād and the lesser jihād, what is understood by 'holy war', and the idea of jihād as the 'sixth pillar' of Islam.

Specification links: WJEC RS1/2 WR: Western Religions (AS): Introduction to Islam, 3. Beliefs and Practices; RS3 WR: Western Religions (A2): Studies in Islam, 4. Islam in Contemporary Society; RS3 ETH: Studies in Religion and Ethics (A2), 3. The Ethics of War.

Definition of *jihād*

Both the main branches of Islam, Sunni and Shi'a, seem to approach their understanding of *jihād* in a very similar manner. The term comes from the Arabic verb *jāhada*, meaning 'to struggle', 'to endeavour' and 'to strive' (Middleton, 1992; see also Nygard, 1996; Hoveyda, 1998; Knapp, 2003). *Jāhada* is also the root of the term *mujahideen*: *'Jihād*, both linguistically and as a technical term, means "struggle" and is etymologically related to the words *mujahadah*, which also means struggle or contention' (Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2009).

Changes in meaning

Over time, however, the specific meaning of words can change, especially through their employment by the mass media and in colloquial and vernacular usage. *Jihād* has now become generally understood as a *violent* struggle; *Mujahideen*, deriving from 'a person who fights a *jihād*', has become the term for 'guerrilla fighters in Islamic countries'; and *jihādi* is defined as 'a person involved in a *jihād*; an Islamic militant' *(http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/mujahideen*

http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/jihadi). These words are thus now directly related to terrorist groups who themselves appear to have deliberately usurped them in order to support their own agendas: using *jihād* and related terms to describe acts of terror, carnage, death and destruction undertaken by militant groups who fight against authority figures they despise, while using a religion as their source of motivation. Extremists and radicals in

both Sunni and Shi'a Islam have adopted such language to promote their causes. Ayatollah Khomeini (1902-1989), during his Cultural Revolution in Iran in 1979, propagated his view that education in 'true Islam' will motivate 'the entire population to become *mujāhids*' [literally, 'strugglers for God'] (Knapp, 2003, p. 89).

But the term 'Islamic militant' cannot be found in a theological context within Islamic literature. Indeed it is an oxymoron (a contradiction in terms). World religions such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism or Buddhism cannot sit in the same phrase next to the word 'terrorist' or 'militant' if the two terms represent diametrically opposed ideologies. It is for these reasons that it became very clear to politicians and journalists, at the start of 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, that they should not refer to the IRA (Irish Republican Army) as 'Catholic terrorists', nor Unionist and Loyalist militant groups as 'Protestant terrorists' (Armstrong, 2005; Taylor, 2013). '*Islam',* we should note, comes from the Arabic term *'islām* which translates as 'submission' and this derives from the term *'aslama*: 'to submit oneself to Allah/God'; and '*Muslim'* comes from the same root and implies one who is an active participant of *'aslama*.

'Wicked' is a secular example of colloquial use changing the definition of an English word to become something that is diametrically opposed to its original meaning. The word is traditionally defined as something 'evil or morally wrong' that is 'extremely unpleasant'. Over recent decades, however, the very same word developed a brand new meaning to refer to something that is perceived to be 'excellent' or 'wonderful' (*http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/wicked*). Something similar has happened with jihād, but the other way round!

Greater jihād and lesser jihād

Two levels of *jihād* are referred to in Arabic as greater *jihād* (*al-jihād al-akbar*) and lesser *jihād* (*al-jihād al-aṣghar*) (Firestone, 2003; Schuett, 2006). Muhammad Sa'id 'Ashmawy, the former chief judge in the High Court in Cairo, defined the broad scale of meanings of *jihād* in various elements 'which can be either internal, as in the struggle within oneself to live an upright life or external to defend Islam' (Fluehr-Lobban, 1998; see also O'Sullivan, 1999). *Jihād* in the Qur'an and in the *hadith* (Prophetic traditions) means one's self-control and self-refinement. This meaning of the word is reported to have been described by the Prophet Mohammed himself as being 'the greater *jihād'*. It is the spiritual struggle within oneself against sin. One *hadith* in the collection of Ibn Majah cites how the Prophet described the best way in which Muslims should perform *jihād*, a manner that is often referred to as 'the *jihād* of the tongue': 'The best form of *jihād* is to utter a word of truth to a tyrannical ruler' (Ibn Majah, 1981; see also Firestone, 1999 and The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2009).

The internal 'struggle' to question one's own life-style, aiming at both piety and humility and following God's code of conduct, has far more importance as a daily task than what is perceived to be the 'lesser *jihād*,' which relates to self-defensive physical protection when under attack by an enemy. In terms of war, *jihād* is only to be implemented against oppressors or invaders, as an act of self-defence. Should it be

interpreted as anything more than this, 'Ashmawy declares that the act is not *jihād* but provocative aggression – which is forbidden by the verses and spirit of the Qur'an.

Further, it is accepted by moderate Muslims that the most significant and important *jihād* is consistent and continual in life. It is based on an ethical, moral and spiritual 'struggle.' 'Ashmawy explains that:

> this *jihād* is a strenuous effort, or series of efforts, to discipline oneself against greed, avarice, cowardice, fear, tyranny, ignorance, submission to negative elements, yielding to evil desires and giving way to passion. This *jihād* avoids a meaningless existence and an empty, if not easy and comfortable, life. (O'Sullivan, 1999)

Every devout Muslim is mandated to live according to the guidance given by Allah/God and the Prophet Mohammad, and to promote the message of Islam through his or her words and actions. This means that each individual must exert themselves in the utmost, in order to follow personally the teachings of Islam and to work for their establishment in society. Hence:

> Commitment to God involves commitment to sacrifice one's time, energy and wealth to promote the right cause. It may be necessary at times to give one's life in order to preserve Truth. *Jihād* implies readiness to give whatever one has, including his life, for the sake of Allah. (Islamic Foundation, 1981)

It is this depth of dedication that has lent itself rather easily in recent years to the cause of what is perceived to be 'Islamic fundamentalism'. As *jihād* is not one of the five pillars of Islam, this 'one-sided stress placed on "holy wars" and fighting is a historical distortion of the real concept of *jihād* and is due to political interests' (Ibn Majah, 1981).

'Holy war' in Arabic

Critics should be aware when analysing Islam that the examples used to attack Islam are often drawn from very limited resources. The western media's definition of *jihād*, in terms of a 'holy war', is one clear example, as the term literally means the diametrically opposed notion of a 'struggle' between the individual Muslim and Allah (O'Sullivan, 1999). This misrepresentation is the result of either negligence or deliberate misinterpretation of the Arabic. A literal translation of the English phrase 'holy war' into Arabic would need to use different Arabic words: 'war in Arabic is *harb* and holy is *muqadassa*' (Knapp, 2003); and 'to translate "holy war" back into Arabic we would have *al-harb al-muqaddas*, a term which does not exist in any form in the Islamic tradition' (Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2009). Linguistically, the Arabic word *jihād* cannot be either directly or indirectly translated to mean 'holy war'.

Jihād as the 'sixth pillar' of Islam?

The concept of *jihād* is often regarded as being completely affiliated with the established five pillars of Islam:

1. *Shahāda*: The expression of public witness that 'there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is his Prophet.'

2. *Salāt*: The daily prayers, or worship rituals, performed five times a day.

3. *Zakāt*: The obligation to offer almsgiving (charity) based on the value of one's income or total wealth.

4. *Sawm*: Fasting that particularly relates to avoiding water and food during the daylight hours in the month of Ramadān.

5. *Hajj*: The sacred pilgrimage to Mecca that a Muslim may undertake at least once in their lives, if it is deemed physically and financially possible (Nygard, 1996).

These five pillars are the basic requirements for participating in *'aslama* – to become obedient to Allah. There is no real disagreement over the five pillars among the Sunni and Shi'a Muslim communities.

The major source of the claim that *jihād* is a legitimate sixth pillar of Islam is based on the seventh-century extremist Muslim group, the Kharijites (Middleton, 1992; Nygard, 1996; Van der Krogt, 2010). The group received their title because they were dissidents and reluctant to accept much of the orthodox religious beliefs and practices (*Khawārij* literally means 'those who went out': (*http://www.cyclopaedia.info/wiki/Khawarij*). This aggressive sect emerged in the late seventh century around the time of the wars of succession among the early Muslims. The Kharijites held the view that any pious and devout Muslim could be elected to lead the faithful community. The group refused to link leadership with being dependent on any family lineage or other ties, and the elected man could remain as leader as long as he lived without sin.

> More important, they treated *jihād* as the sixth pillar of Islam, using the sword to spread their vision of the truth. Their fanatical adherence to those ideas made them intolerant of most Muslims, declaring war on virtually everyone else and remaining in a permanent state of rebellion against the ruling Caliphate. (MacFarquhar, 2009; see also Middleton, 1992)

Due to their consistent violence as dissident rebels, they eventually lost all their influence towards the end of the seventh century, and the call to make *jihād* the sixth pillar simply faded away. As the Qur'an does not view *jihād* as a legitimate 'holy war', nor cite it as a fundamental 'article of faith' within the five pillars of Islam, the Kharijites seemed to be the only significant group in history to have insisted that *jihād* should be respected as the 'sixth pillar'. However, in recent years 'most militant fundamentalists consider it an essential duty of the 'true' believer' (Hoveyda, 1998). A clear manifestation of this is the 'Islamic State' Sunni militant group (formerly ISIS, the 'Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant'), together with al-Qaeda cells located in many countries and the Taliban, who are mainly found in Afghanistan and Pakistan (BBC News, 2013, 2014). These groups promote their mission in life as to fight for Allah, and potentially to die as a martyr while undertaking their personal *jihād*.

Other Qur'anic texts relating to jihād

As one significant verse in the Qur'an clearly indicates, *jihād* cannot be used to enforce non-Muslims to convert to Islam, for 'there is no compulsion in religion' (*Al-Baqarah*, 2:256). Another verse indicates that saving one life is equal to saving all of humanity, whereas killing

one person is equivalent to killing all of humanity:

> whoever kills a person unless for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one life – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. (*Al-Ma'idah*, 5:32)

Suicide is also prohibited in the Qur'an; so it would appear impossible to be able to defend suicide bombers who take their own lives – and aim to kill other innocent people in doing so – despite their belief that they are martyrs for undertaking *jihād* and offering their life 'in the cause of Allah'. The message in the Qur'an is clear:

> O you who have believed, do not consume one another's wealth unjustly … And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful. (*An-Nisā'*, 4:29).

Links

http://tirnscholars.org/2013/07/16/book-war-and-peace-in-islam-the-uses-and-abuses-of-jihad/ (*War and peace in Islam: the uses and abuses of jihād*, 2013)

http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=gov_fac_pubs(*Encyclopaedia of jihād: Islamic jihād,* 2001)

http://www.grotius.hu/doc/pub/CRMSRP/2014-05-24_devenyi_the-struggle-for-faith-in-islam.pdf (Kinga Dévényi. *The struggle for faith in Islam: The theory and practice of jihad*, 2014)

http://pages.uoregon.edu/aweiss/IslamGlobalForces/Esposito%20Week%201.pdf (John Esposito. *Islam: The straight path*, 2005)

http://www.unaoc.org/repository/Esposito_Jihad_Holy_Unholy.pdf (John Esposito. *Jihad: holy war or unholy war?*)

Discussion points

1. If the concept of *jihād* is truly spiritual, to encourage one to be humble and pious, why have various militant groups used it to justify their acts of terrorism?
2. How might one formulate a concrete connection between the established five pillars of Islam, so as to argue that the concept of *jihād* is the Sixth Pillar because it supports the five?
3. If the lesser *jihād* permits a devout Muslim to kill the oppressor in self-defence, can it be used as a legitimate justification to kill 'western colonising forces'?
4. To what extent can Muslims argue that martyrdom is justified as suicide is prohibited in Islam?

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