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## Dueling Fundamentalisms: Christian and Islamic

### Cycles of Fear, Violence and Vengeance

by ROBERT FANTINA

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We hear a lot today about ‘fundamentalist Islam’, and the dire threats to civilized life that it threatens. This is mainly, today, focused on ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), with television viewers watching, horror-stricken, news reports of ISIL soldiers indulging in the barbaric practice of beheading their prisoners.

The government of Saudi Arabia, a ‘civilized’, wealthy country with which the United States has full diplomatic relations, has publically beheaded at least eighty people this year, but there isn’t much outcry, or even reporting, about that on the evening news. If ISIL should establish itself as a country on oil-rich lands, and establishes relations with the U.S., one can expect to stop hearing any news about beheadings.

So out of nearly 2 billion Muslims in the world, a few in France, Canada and the U.S. have committed serious highly-publicized crimes, in the name of some twisted version of Islam. ISIL is doing the same in the Middle East. Yet the U.S. and Canadian governments, at least, and the U.S., corporate-owned media, would have the world believe that those criminals represent Islam, and that it is a religion of violence, whose members are determined to take over the world.

In the U.S., for some inexplicable reason, fundamentalist Christianity has been established and enshrined as something respectable, yet for millions of Christians in the U.S., this peculiar brand of Christianity in no way represents them or their beliefs. Let's look at a few statements made by fundamentalist Christian leaders, and compare them to Christianity.

End Times broadcaster Rick Wiles made this prediction, should marriage equality become the law of the land: "I believe I am speaking under the unction of the Holy Spirit. I'm telling you there will be swift, sudden and devastating consequences for the United States of America."

Mr. Wiles' arrogance, to purport to be speaking 'under the unction of the Holy Spirit', is of itself offensive to people who truly seek to follow Jesus Christ. Where in scripture it talks about 'swift, sudden and devastating consequences for the United States of America' should the Supreme Court legalize marriage equality, he does not bother to state.

Franklin Graham, son and heir to right-wing nut job Billy Graham, has called for prayer rallies in all fifty states in 2016, hoping to get more conservatives to run for office. Said he: "LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) activists, abortion rights advocates, aggressive atheist groups, and others who ignore God's Word are trying to shove their agenda down our throats." Does it not appear, rather, that Mr. Graham and his followers, are, indeed, forcing "their agenda down our throats"? There are no laws proposed that require people to marry a member of the same sex; no legislation mandates abortion; churches are still open to anyone who wishes to worship, and there do not appear to be any proposals to close them.

Indeed, LGBT activists, rather than 'forcing their agenda down our throats', wish only to be allowed to marry the person of their choice, something legal in only 37 states today. If Mr. Graham were really concerned about preventing abortion, he might be on the forefront of efforts to bring sex education courses into all public schools, and to assist in making birth control available to anyone who wants it. Puzzlingly, he does not appear to be there. Atheist groups may object to taxpayer funding of religious displays on public buildings, but have never, to this writer's knowledge, attempted to prevent them from being displayed on church property, or at private homes. The concept of the separation of church and state, often dismissed by the religious right, is, in fact, a constitutional protection.

Mr. Graham accuses these people of ignoring 'God's Word'. Yet he does not show where in scripture God condemns the activities that he, Mr. Graham, is condemning.

Former Arkansas governor and current GOP (Generally Opposed to Progress) presidential wannabe Mike Huckabee has said that LGBT equality "is not a political issue ... It is a biblical issue." He further said that he will hold to that position "unless I get a new version of the Scriptures."

This writer is a Christian, actively involved in the religion he embraced in his twenties. He has, in Sunday School classes over the past couple of decades, and in individual reading, studied the Bible, both the Old and New Testament, in detail. He suggests that either Mr. Huckabee obtain that new version of the scriptures, or read the one he has more carefully. This writer has found nothing in the New Testament that can be construed as criticism of LGBT equality, and the few,

limited passages in the Old Testament that might somehow be twisted to do so would take a far more liberal and open interpretation than this writer is willing to make. And, lest Mr. Huckabee has forgotten, Jesus Christ tells us that, with his birth, death and resurrection, old things are done away, and all things are made new. This means, at the very least, the Law of Moses, wherein those isolated passages reside.

One might argue that this writer has attempted to compare brutal murder with verbal offenses. This brings up two additional points:

- 1) Christian fundamentalists encourage war, and vote for government officials who will perpetuate it. The number of people killed in their name and by their actions far exceeds anything ISIL has done or could do if it operated for a century.
- 2) Even domestically, the risk for greater violence exists, thanks to the Christian right. For example, in 2011, the Michigan state legislature attempted to pass an anti-bullying law, since it was one of the last states in the union that didn't have one. All the Democrats in the state legislature, who had worked for years to pass such a law, voted against it. The reason: it included a provision to exempt from penalty, 'religiously-motivated bullying'.

It is not this writer's intent to discuss this most peculiar oxymoron. Rather, he will simply point out that it generally is not a far stretch to move from bullying to physical violence.

It would be preferable, it seems to him, to work to prevent that violence, rather than attempting to stop it once blood has been shed.

The U.S. has not learned this important lesson. Rather than granting Palestinians, for example, the basic human rights and dignity that Jesus Christ certainly accorded to every human being, the U.S. would rather provide Israel with the means of killing them, thus increasing anger towards, and violence against, the U.S. Rather than seeking peaceful, diplomatic means to bring Russia's war with Afghanistan to an end in the 1980s, the U.S. preferred to finance the 'rebels' opposing Russia, and thereby armed the Taliban. Many ISIL weapons captured by the U.S. and its allies have been U.S.-made.

So it seems that both Christian fundamentalists and fundamentalist Muslims all operate on fear, encouraging their followers to flout law in the name of a god of their own creation. Both cause death and suffering, fundamentalist Muslims on a small scale, with Christian fundamentalists drowning in the blood of their millions of victims.

The cycle perpetuates itself; the U.S. and its allies bomb countries with large Muslim populations, creating more hostility and hatred towards the U.S., and causing the numbers of recruits of ISIL to swell. The Christian right sees this growth, and clamors for more bombs against Muslim countries. More deaths of Muslims causes more hatred and acts of violence, to which more U.S. bombs are the answer.

How will it stop? Only when people of all religions and no religion are able to accept that not everyone believes as they do, and that differing beliefs must be respected, will there be any

change. And that will only be the start; corporate-owned media must be seen for what it is: an advertising tool for the government. And the corrupt U.S. regime, which values profits over people and political expediency over human rights, will continue to be a major impediment to peace. Regime change there is vital.