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Masters Dissertation

An Ethical Dilemma:

Childhood Conversion in Christian Fundamentalism

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Abstract

The rise of religious fundamentalisms and the implications of the dividing polarity are a topic of increasing attention in scholarly literature. The induction of new generations into opposing world-views is a structural violence deeply embedded in widespread education and parenting systems. The implications of this phenomenon and in particular that the *childhood conversion* into fundamentalists' paradigms, range from psychological abuse to global threats driven by religious-identity ideologies. This paper approaches the topic as a dilemma: the pure intentions and passionate beliefs of fundamentalists, with violent consequences on individuals, society, and the world.

Extensive religious and secular scholarship and Australian case studies provide a basis for analysis and evaluation of this ethical dilemma. Perspectives of children, parents, fundamentalist leaders, and society, are examined and theoretical and practical solutions explored. A breach of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* is identified and ways of increasing education on religion and decreasing incidences of indoctrination are discussed. In order for a child to truly exercise their right to freedom of religion, it is the education of fundamentalist parents and leaders that is crucial. The paper concludes with an introduction to recent United Nations initiatives that look towards such solutions. Spreading awareness of the ethical dilemma is the first step to addressing this structural violence and its significant consequences.

Keywords: *fundamentalism; evangelism; fundamentalist Christianity; childhood conversion; religious education; indoctrination; transmission of faith; spiritual abuse; independent Christian schools; interfaith dialogue; Convention of Rights of the Child; UNESCO; peace education; Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilisations; Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy.*

Contents

Introduction: The Dilemma

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.[1]

Globalisation has placed world-views *en face* forcing belief systems that previously existed in isolation to confront the fact that other peoples worship other gods (or none) have their own holy scriptures, and also make claim to the one and only Truth. Although it has been the *modus operandi* throughout history, the transmission of beliefs and values from parent to child, is a practice that must now be challenged. One result of globalisation has been the development of tolerant and pluralistic attitudes toward the views of others, accepting that each person has a right to their own values, beliefs, and connection with the Divine. Another result has been a rise of radical movements in the world's major religions: Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and even Confucian. Fundamentalist strands within these faiths are claiming to revert back to what they claim to be the "fundamentals" of their religion. Consequently rather than moving toward a unity, global society is undergoing major division and new conflicts are arising.

This paper identifies two distinct but inseparable phenomena, *fundamentalism* and *childhood conversion,* that combine together to create and perpetuate a number of forms of violence across generations. By focusing on the fundamentalist strand of Christianity and approaching the topic as an *ethical dilemma,* the phenomenon can be analysed in the least obtrusive way. For the sake of simplicity, the term fundamentalist[2] will be used to refer to all groups that share the "fundamental" Christian beliefs in *sola scriptura*, that the Bible is the inerrant and authoritative "Word of God"; and *sola fide,* that salvation by "faith in Jesus" alone is the path to heaven.[3] These exegeses carry with them an *exclusivist* belief 'that theirs is the only true religion' and that 'their religion should be

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[1] Proverbs 22:6. King James Bible.

[2] This paper does not use the term 'fundamentalist' pejoratively, but uses it to group together new religious movements and new denominations that share these 'fundamental' exegeses.

[3] Hugh Mackay, 'Watching the Sparrow', in Schultz ed., *The Lure of Fundamentalism* (Sydney Australia: Griffith Review, 2005)., p. 73.

taught as truth.'[4] This includes many Christians of the Fundamentalist, Evangelical and Pentecostal movements, as well as number of conservative strands of other denominations.[5] Fundamentalist parents and leaders desire that their children are brought up in the Christian faith, and that they remain in it for the rest of their lives. This is not seen as unethical or immoral: it is an act of love – bringing their child up in "Truth", "guiding" the child down the "right" path and saving their eternal soul. It is however the violent ramifications of these peaceful intentions, as will be demonstrated in part 1, that drive an urgent need for immediate attention to be given to this issue.

As a former Christian Evangelical with continuing relationships within a Christian community, I am in a unique position to explore the issues and driving motives. My vision looks beyond a world of *negative peace,* 'the absence of war', and toward *positive peace,* that extends to 'any issues influencing quality of life: personal growth, freedom, social equality, economic equality, solidarity, autonomy and participation.'[6]

An inter-disciplinary approach is taken combining extensive scholarly research with a review of government and NGO initiatives, Australian case studies, and hermeneutics, to explore and examine a range of perspectives including that of the child, the fundamentalist parents, churches, schools, secular society, and experts of religion,

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[4] It is useful to distinguish this attitude from the *inclusivist* belief that one's religion is the true religion but some truth may be found in other religions, and the *pluralist* belief 'that all religions are true, when evaluated against their local culture'. See: B. A. Robinson, 'Teaching Religion & Teaching About Religion in U.S. Public Schools'. (Ontario: Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, 2000). <http://www.religioustolerance.org/ps_bibl1.htm>.

[5] A brief note on terminology taken from Cambridge Dictionary and Lorne L. Dawson, *Cults in Context : Readings in the Study of New Religious Movements* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1996). p. 2. *New Religious Movements* (NRM) are religious subgroups that have gained large numbers of adherents in the last hundred years, and often cross denominational lines. Some NRM affirm the values of the world, some reject the world and others accommodate it. Fundamentalism is classified as an NRM. *Sects* are religious groups that have separated from a larger religious denomination with views that have diverged from the mainstream belief. *Cults* are religious groups generally not connected to a larger religion, again with what is perceived by others to be extreme views. Cult is also used as a pejorative label for NRMs and sects. *Denominations* are religious groups with slightly different beliefs from other groups of the same religion for example Baptists, Anglicans and Methodists, and generally have begun as a sect of the major religion. See Appendices 1 and 2 for flowchart representations of the historical divergence and creation of new denominations and movements.

[6] J. Galtung, 'Violence and Peace', in Smoker, Davies, and Munske eds., *A Reader in Peace Studies* (London: Pergamon Press, 1990).

theology, psychology, law, and pedagogics. Literature from established religious and secular sources has been consulted to identify the consequences of fundamentalism on the globe (chapter 1), on society (chapter 2) and on the child (chapter 3); to explore the Christian fundamentalist paradigm and its foundations (chapter 4), and the underlying dynamics of childhood conversion (chapter 5). Primary data analysis of Australian schools is combined with secondary case studies to evaluate the ethical value of fundamentalists' intentions (chapter 6).

In working towards solutions, legal consideration is given to the rights of the child, parents and society (chapter 7), and existing guidelines for providing religious education without indoctrination are outlined (chapter 8). With the grand influence parents have on their children, methods of increasing the education and self-awareness of fundamentalist adults are considered (chapter 9). Finally a paradigm shift in the mainstream approach to education that focuses on cultivating a culture of peace, is introduced as a means of indirectly addressing the dilemma (chapter 10).

Due to the scope of this topic, I have concentrated on what I believe to be the most essential concepts and key issues. It is important to recognise that this study is inevitably rooted in my personal experience and social location; and that while this may provide access to valuable information and perspectives, these benefits come at a risk of personal bias. Endeavouring toward the most objective perspective possible, I attempt to explicate my influences throughout the discourse. In brief, I hold the "Truth" as an unattainable but worthwhile objective and classify my approach to the God as *panentheistic*, *pluralistic*, and *spiritual*. I approach the topic as a two-sided dilemma in the hope that it may opens up the matter for further exploration and discussion. I hope to provide insights into the fundamentalist paradigm often out-of-reach to non-Christian scholars, and hence contribute to existing academic, political and pedagogical efforts already working toward solutions. At the core of this thesis is a need for both religious and non-religious alike, to critically explore the accepted tradition of childhood conversion, to review education practices and work toward our common goal: peace.

Part 1: The Violence

Chapter 1: Global Impact

> Fundamentalists have gunned down worshippers in a mosque, have killed doctors and nurses who work in abortion clinics, have shot their presidents, and have even toppled a powerful government.[7]

World-view and identity

World-view conflicts are the result of conflicts between perceptions of how the world, locally or globally, should be defined or should function. Whether these conflicts turn into violence depends on the ability for people to communicate in ways that allow them to resolve conflict through non-violent means. When world-view conflicts are passed on between generations, they can become *symbiotic*, *habituated* into self-perpetuating conflictual interactions between participants.[8] This 'clash of two wholly irreconcilable world-views', both between religious ideologies and between religious fundamentalisms and secular society, leaves many feeling 'profoundly threatened by one another' and an exacerbated sense of estrangement and alienation.[9] In the early 1990s, Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby conducted an in-depth study into fundamentalist movements around the world, with contributions from hundreds of experts on religion and culture. Dr. Majid Tehranian describes seven common models that in different combinations motivate various fundamentalisms: anti-secularist, anti-elitist, anti-imperialist, anti-communist, anti-modernist, anti-feminist and anti-decadent; with many fundamentalist movements rejecting ideas of modern science, perceiving media and technology to be evil, and believing that in the current world climate, certainty can be found only in the inerrancy of the holy text that their religion prescribes. [10]

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[7] Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (London: HarperCollins, 2000)., p. ix.

[8] G. Tillett and B. French, 'Conflict and Its Resolution', Resolving Conflict: A Practical Approach (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2006)., pp. 11-13.

[9] Armstrong., p. 367.

[10] Majid Tehranian, 'Fundamentalist Impact on Education and the Media: An Overview', in Marty and Appleby eds., *Fundamentalisms and Society* (Chicago, USA: The University of

In his widely cited work *The Clash Of Civilizations And Remaking Of World Order*, Samuel Huntington posits that future world conflict will not be ideological or economic but will be cultural – a clash between "civilisations" with radically different world-views, and where allegiance to religious identity takes precedence over allegiance to nation-state.[11] Similarly Philip Jenkins, in *The Next Christendom: The Coming Of Global Christianity,* anticipates a 'new age of Christian crusades and Muslim jihads' with 'international religious-oriented alliances'[12] connected to the rapidly rising numbers in Africa, Asia and Latin America that have an 'even more fundamentalist, evangelical, apocalyptic and charismatic nature than Christianity in the West.'[13] Unforseen consequences of such movements can go as far as the child witch hunts in Nigerian Pentecostalism that are seeing children 'often incarcerated in churches for weeks on end and beaten, starved and tortured in order to extract a confession.'[14]

An important clarification to make is the distinction between a religious identity and the religion itself; it is the collective identity of its adherents that reifies the religion and allows it to be "used" or "abused".[15] As Garry Trompf puts it, 'do colligations actually "do" anything, and can they indeed be "causes"?'[16] It is only through human agency that crusades, jihads and other forms of violence may occur. The danger of connecting

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Chicago Press, 1993)., pp. 313-4. Tehranian is a peace specialist and director of the Toda Institute.

[11] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

[12] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom : The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)., p. 13.

[13] Ibid., p. 137.

[14] According to Gary Foxcroft, program director of Stepping Stones Nigeria, a non profit organization that helps alleged witch children in the region. Quoted in Faith Karimi, ' Abuse of Child 'Witches' on Rise, Aid Group Says '. *CNN.com/world* CNN, (May 18, 2009). <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/africa/05/18/nigeria.child.witchcraft/>. Said to be greatly influenced by movies produced by Liberty Films such as "End of the Wicked" and books such as H. Ukpabio, *Unveiling the Mysteries of Witchcraft* (Calabar: Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries, 1999). By which appear to be caught up in monetary motivations as seen on: ABC, *Saving Africa's Witch Children*, (Australia: Four Corners, 22/06/2009).

[15] Garry Trompf, 'Of Colligation and Reification in the Representation of Religion (and Violence)', in O'Grady and Scherle eds., *Ecumenics from the Rim* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007)., p. 179. Trompf is a professor of History of Ideas (and Religious Studies) at the University of Sydney.

[16] Ibid., p. 181.

identity and religion is that one's religious identity may become inseparable from their personal identity.

When questioned whether he would be offended if asked to separate his faith from his identity, Angus Belling stated:

> I wouldn't be offended; I would merely say that I cannot do that. It's not that I won't, I can't. A Muslim might also say the same thing, but from my point of view, I would say that you can because I do not feel that what you believe is the right way to God.[17]

In this situation the interpretation a religious authority preaches is often adopted by followers without questioning it, and henceforth defended as if it is a part of themselves. Conflicting ideas can transform into zero-sum games and depending on the closeness of the idea to mainstream interpretation this may lead to New Religious Movements and new denominations, sects and cults. The Jonestown Massacre is an extreme example of a cult leader manipulating his followers.[18]

It is not only religion that combines with ideology and creates such vulnerabilities and violence. Trompf suggests that secularism and scientism are themselves 'broad abstractions of religion itself', with the capacity to turn into 'living *bête noires,* ready to distort or endanger an otherwise ordered world.'[19] In *The Battle for God,* Karen Armstrong examines fundamentalism in Christian, Islam and Judaic religions, describing a perceived 'terror of extinction', a fear that secularists are trying to wipe them out. Feeling as though their identity is under attack, fundamentalists have undertaken a campaign to 're-sacralize' society, a cause that has become 'aggressive and distorted', initiating a 'dialectical relationship with an aggressive secularism which showed scant respect for religion and its adherents'. This has essentially trapped secularists and fundamentalists in the 'escalating spiral of hostility and recrimination' that is visible today.[20] This growing polarity between secularists and religious is causing a division

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[17] Belling is the president of the Evangelical Union at Sydney University. Eliza Blue, 'The New Campus Ideology', in Schultz ed., *The Lure of Fundamentalism* (Sydney Australia: Griffith Review, 2005)., pp. 189-190.

[18] Dawson., op. cit.

[19] Trompf., op. cit.

[20] Armstrong., pp. 370-371.

within nations, as if there are 'two nations: secularists and religious living in the same country cannot speak one another's language or see things from the same point of view.' She observes that 'what seems sacred and positive in one camp appears demonic and deranged in the other.'[21]

Extremist groups

Fundamentalist extremist groups such as the *Army of God* and *Christian Identity,* have allegedly undertaken direct violent actions including kidnappings, bombings, anthrax threats and shooting deaths, in order to make various political protests.[22] They are often motivated by a desire to bring God back into state and global politics.[23] Blaker notes that in their minds, 'those who refuse Jesus are not only dumb, but also different, dangerous, and possibly contagious.' Non-believers are seen as 'tentatively human' and hence dispensable.[24] On the most extreme side of Christian militia movements are the *Reconstructionists*, a group who desire a totalitarian society based on a literal interpretation of the Bible going as far as the reinstitution of slavery.[25] Although this is highly unlikely to happen, the collective impact of the voting Christians supporting the New Christian Right and the war in the Middle East, demonstrates the devastating impact childhood conversion can have on the world. It would appear that violent actions performed by extremist fundamentalists are committed from a mental state of true conviction – they truly believe they are doing what God wants them to do, a conviction generally derived from the fundamentalists' upbringing, education and life experiences.[26]

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[21] Ibid., p. 367.

[22] Kimberly Blaker, *The Perils of Fundamentalism and the Imperilment of Democracy*, Blaker, ed., (Michigan: New Boston Books, Inc, 2003b)., p. 10-11.

[23] Armstrong., p. xvi, ix, 4.

[24] Kimberly Blaker, *The Social Implications of Armageddon*, Blaker, ed., (Michigan: New Boston Books, Inc, 2003c)., p. 145.

[25] Ibid., p. 146.

[26] See: The Trade Values Coalition, *Traditional Beliefs Defined*, (Washington: 2009), <www.traditionalvalues.org/defined.php> (viewed: 18/6/09).

The rapture and its implications

Another extreme yet widespread conviction among fundamentalists is that of the 'rapture', a day that all Christians, living and dead, will disappear in an instant to be taken directly to heaven to be with Jesus. This interpretation of Revelation predicts a horrible future for those who do not conform to fundamentalism; these "non-believers" will remain on earth to suffer a great deal of pain and destruction. The belief in eschatology is spreading throughout the fundamentalist Christian community through popular Christian literature such as the *Left Behind* series.[27] PEW research has shown that 83% of Protestants believe in the second coming of Jesus, 23% believing it will happen in their lifetime.[28] Millenarian and eschatological expectations are not unique to Christianity but are ideas shared across all religious fundamentalisms, often with irresponsible undertones that imply that 'solving global problems is beyond humanity's powers.'[29] Reverend Lester says he and others:

> are looking forward to "nuclear war to hasten the return of Jesus." He has confided,
> "I'm kinda looking forward to all this stuff [nuclear destruction], to the whole thing
> because once the rapture takes place the church is glorified."[30]

This attitude has an impact not only on the likelihood of nuclear war but also gets transferred to a justification for destruction of the planet, believing that God gave us the resources to use so we may as well use them.[31] In the minds of these Christians, what is the point in fixing the world if Jesus is going to come tomorrow? The next chapter explores the impact fundamentalist attitudes have on society.

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[27] Tim LaHaye and Jerry B Jenkins, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale Hous Publishers Inc, 1998).

[28] PEW, *Many Americans Uneasy with Mix of Religion and Politics: Section Iv - Religious Beliefs*, (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2006), <http://people-press.org/report/?pageid=1084>. See Appendix 3.

[29] Garry W. Trompf, 'The Attitude and Response of Religions in Population Planning', in Polunin ed., *Population and Global Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)., p. 227.

[30] Blaker, *The Social Implications of Armageddon*., p. 141.

[31] Adam Curtis, *The Power of Nightmares - the Rise of the Politics of Fear*, (UK: BBC, 2004).

Chapter 2: Impact on Society

Lack of reproductive choice, educational and career opportunities, spousal abuse, rape, sexual and mental disorders, and welfare dependency are all highly related to Christian fundamentalism.[32]

The seeds of violence

Fundamentalists have moved from many of the core values of their religion, bringing their children up to reject some of the most positive values of modern society. Armstrong notes that 'all have neglected the more tolerant, inclusive, and compassionate teachings and have cultivated theologies of rage, resentment, and revenge.'[33] Even many of the most peaceful and law-abiding Fundamentalist Christians are 'perplexing', often rejecting the values of 'democracy, pluralism, religious tolerance, peacekeeping, free speech, or the separation of the church and state' as well as rejecting a great deal of scientific progression and discovery.[34] Christian fundamentalism prioritises submission to authority over questioning and critical thinking, and many of their teachings foster 'authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and in-group out-group stereotyping.'[35] Christian fundamentalists believe that all people of different religions, be they Muslim, Jew, Hindu or Buddhist, or even those with a different interpretation of Christianity such as Jehovah's Witnesses, and Catholics, have been mislead and (unfortunately) will go to hell unless they come to embrace the "real" Christianity.[36] Fundamentalists either discourage interaction with "non-believers" in order to protect their community from "temptations"; or in the case of evangelists they set out on missions to convert them. As Mackay puts it, 'at their best fundamentalists are inclined to regard the rest of us with pity; at their worst, they see the "unsaved" as inferior beings who will pay an eternal price for their obstinacy.'[37] Both the protectionist attitudes driven by fear, and the

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[32] Blaker, *The Perils of Fundamentalism and the Imperilment of Democracy.*, p. 11.

[33] Armstrong., p. 366.

[34] Ibid., p. ix.

[35] Blaker, *The Social Implications of Armageddon.*, p. 130.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Mackay., p. 77.

missionary attitudes driven by love, contain elitist elements that lead to separation from the rest of society.

Discrimination

A group of people suffering particularly high levels of condemnation and discrimination from Christian fundamentalists are homosexuals. Blaker points out that fundamentalist groups:

> are responsible for preventing policies offering equity to gays and lesbians and for torturous hate crimes against homosexuals, whom they perceive as wicked and immoral inhabitants of society.[38]

The Evangelical Union (EU) at Sydney University does not allow homosexuals to be members. Belling explains that:

> those people with biblically unacceptable lifestyles are barred from the community. While the EU's God loves all human beings, He does not condone "sinful behaviour"… homosexuals cannot be Christians; the Bible is clear that homosexual sex is sinful.[39]

Ex-gay Ministries, with more than 100 conversion clinics in the United States, are committed to "curing" gays employing techniques ranging from self-hypnosis CDs, Pavlovian conditioning (electric charges with photos of the 'wrong' sex), to smashing a tennis racket to deal with repressed memories from as far back as the womb.[40] Liberty Christian Ministries Ltd. is an Australian ex-Gay ministry based in Summer Hill, NSW, with similar techniques and objectives.[41] These organizations have driven many homosexuals to commit suicide when they fail to change sexes. Rev. Mel White, told Foreign Correspondent reporter Mark Simkin:

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[38] Blaker, *The Social Implications of Armageddon.*, p. 120.

[39] Blue., p. 188-189.

[40] Mark Simkin, *USA - Gay Conversion*: ABC TV - Foreign Correspondent, 22/8/2006).

[41] Liberty Christian Ministries, *'Our Aims' and 'Our Beliefs'*, (Summer Hill, NSW, <www.libertychristianministries.org.au>.

> We have all kinds of people that I have buried who've left suicide notes that said I didn't know how else to settle this? I couldn't make it right with God and I can't make it right with myself.[42]

It is estimated that even though only four to ten percent of the population are homosexual, they comprise 30% of teen suicides.[43] This is unacceptable in a society that accepts homosexuality as something some people are born with, not a disorder or a sin.

Crime

Studies have demonstrated a connection between fundamentalism and crime. For example an investigation into twelve mass murderers and serial killers found that 'the common link among eleven was either a very religious upbringing or belief in demons and devils.'[44] It is also interesting that in areas where abortion is legalised, societies experience significant reductions in crime. It seems that unwanted children are often subject to neglect and are subsequently more likely to be involved in crime. Blaker states that this idea 'is close to heresy to fundamentalist Christians.'[45] Sex crimes also correlate with fundamentalism with the fact that 'nearly thirty percent of all nuns have experienced "sexual trauma" from within the church,' and that for Southern Baptists '14.1 percent of their clergy have sexually abused members.'[46] Furthermore, 'studies have found incest rates to be higher among fundamentalist fathers… it is estimated between 6.1 percent and 16.3 percent of priests are paedophiles.'[47]

Lower level moral maturity

A fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible leads to an externalisation of moral and ethical bases emphasising obedience to God's orders rather than appreciating the intrinsic value of the moral itself. Kohlberg identified the development of moral maturity

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[42] Simkin., op. cit.

[43] Susan Rose, 'Christian Fundamentalism and Education in the United States', in Marty and Appleby eds., *Fundamentalisms and Society* (Chicago, USA: The University of Chicago Press, 1993)., p. 125.

[44] Blaker, *The Social Implications of Armageddon*., p. 139.

[45] Ibid., p. 137.

[46] Ibid., p. 138.

[47] Ibid., p. 138.

as having six stages within three levels. The pre-conventional level involves *punishment* and *pleasure-seeking orientation* enforced by authority and observed mostly in early childhood. At the conventional level is where most of society resides with a *good girl/boy* and *authority orientation* stages, behaviour guided by a desire to please others, obey the law and gain approval of higher authorities. The post-conventional level involves *social-contract orientation* and *morality of individual principles*, whereby decisions are controlled internally going beyond self-interest and law to be based on rational thought, justice, dignity, and equality.[48] The behaviour of Christian fundamentalists most commonly resides at the pre-conventional level, as they are deeply motivated by the desire to avoid the punishment of hell and be rewarded with glories in heaven. The externalization of morals creates an ongoing battle of good versus evil, of obedience versus temptations, in the minds of fundamentalists, with moral abominations such as sex-crime the result. In order to move toward a state of peace with justice, humanity must rise beyond self-interest and into *post-conventional* levels of morality. The following chapter focuses on the individuals born into Christian fundamentalist environments, identifying the short-term and long-term effects of childhood conversion on these people.

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[48] Ibid., pp. 146-7. Lawrence Kohlberg was a Harvard University professor authored landmark work on moral development.

Chapter 3: Impact on Individuals

> Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations.[49]

Freedom of thought

Christian fundamentalist homes and schools place limitations on a child's freedom to think, question, imagine and create, hence limiting both the psychological and physical realisations of the child. Rose states that in this environment, children are often:

> not permitted to question what they are taught on any subject or to express any opinion contrary to the orthodox views that teachers, school administrators, and pastors aggressively impress upon them.[50]

An authoritative relationship between teacher and student fosters rote learning with 'no attempt to move toward creative, critical, or integrative thinking.'[51] The acceptance of the Bible's absolute authority on science, politics, history and morals, causes a suppression on a child's ability to critically evaluate and ability to draw his or her own conclusions.[52] In today's fast-paced world, the scientific method of drawing conclusions from observation, testing those conclusions and abandoning them if they do not work, is an essential skill not just for scientists, but for all people.[53] The compounding effect of such an approach is a community of non-thinking, conforming citizens, a vulnerable position for any democratic society to be in.[54]

Psychological damage

Childhood conversion into fundamentalist beliefs sometimes harms deeper levels of the human psyche. The theology of Original Sin, that is, the fundamentalist belief that all humans inherit the sin of Adam and are born sinful, leads to an inculcation of children

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[49] Galtung., pp. 9-14.

[50] Rose., p. 463. Rose says these patterns have been shown by many case studies in the US.

[51] Ibid., p. 463.

[52] Bobbie Kirkhart, 'Little Ones to Him Belong ', in Blaker ed., *The Fundamentals of Extreme: The Christian Right in America* (Michigan: New Boston Books, Inc, 2003)., p. 74.

[53] Ibid., p. 67.

[54] Ibid., p. 74.

into 'a self-image of insignificance, powerlessness, and sinfulness as humans,' teaching them that they are only worthy 'as submissive, completely dependent children of God.'[55] This has a detrimental effect on the individual as they are moulded to believe they are inherently evil, which in turn diminishes self-esteem and love for one's self.[56] *Spiritual abuse* is the act of making a person believe they will be punished in this life and/or 'tormented in hell-fire forever' if they fail to live the way God requires.[57] An example of spiritually and psychologically abusive theology is the 'doctrine of eternal punishment' in which 'a literal theological interpretation emphasizing a strong dose of eternal hell-fire and damnation.'[58] Spiritual abuse extends from passive subtle forms to extreme overt forms referred by psychologists as *spiritual terrorism*.[59] Although psychological abuse of this nature is not unique to Christianity, instances of spiritual terrorism have been strongly connected with the rise of fundamentalist Christianity. Spiritual abuse has emotional, mental, spiritual and potentially physical consequences for victims.

Sexual repression and abuse

Another violence is apparent in the form of sexual repression and protection of children from sexual knowledge, which can have a long-term effect on emotional and sexual health of the individual.[60] Often women raised in fundamentalist homes 'never find enjoyment in the act of sex', treating it as an 'obligation they must fulfil to procreate and satisfy their husband's sexual desires.'[61] Millions of women remain in physically abusive marriages as they have been taught to be 'doormats for Jesus' and have been told by their church that they do not have 'biblical grounds' for divorce.[62] The effect of this emotional abuse can lead to depression, suicide and worse. Why do so many women

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[55] James G. Dwyer, *Religious Schools V. Children's Rights* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998)., p. 37

[56] Ibid., p. 38.

[57] Boyd C Purcell, 'Spiritual Abuse', *The American Journal of Hospice & Palliative Care*, July/August, no. 15 (1998)., p. 227.

[58] Ibid., p. 228.

[59] Ibid., p. 227.

[60] Kimberly Blaker, *Eternal Subservience Created from Man for Man*, Blaker, ed., (Michigan: New Boston Books, Inc, 2003a)., p. 101.

[61] Ibid., p. 101.

[62] Purcell., p. 230.

accept this way of life? Blaker attributes this to 'childhood indoctrination, social isolation through home schooling, instilled guilt, and promises of gratification.'[63] Instances of fathers abusing their daughters have been connected with father figures who are 'autocratic, patriarchal, or dictatorial,' and where the mothers of incest victims are 'submissive or subservient.'[64] Studies have shown that the more rigid a church's teachings on gender roles, the higher the probability of abuse.[65]

These first three chapters have identified a number of direct and indirect forms of violence that result form childhood conversion in Christian fundamentalism, establishing the need for this structural violence to be given attention and address. The next few chapters deconstruct Christian fundamentalism and childhood conversion, to develop a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the ethical dilemma.

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[63] Blaker, *Eternal Subservience Created from Man for Man*., p. 83.

[64] Bobbie Kirkhart, 'Little Ones to Him Belong ', Ibid., p. 56.

[65] Kimberly Blaker, *Eternal Subservience Created from Man for Man*Ibid., p. 92.

Part 2: The Causes

Chapter 4: Christian Fundamentalism

'While others grapple with meaning of their lives fundamentalists KNOW the meaning of theirs, much to do with the afterlife and assured place, and the Bible is a roadmap.'[66]

This chapter provides an overview Christian fundamentalism in the world and historical context. A hermeneutical appreciation for the fundamentalist paradigm takes a look at the world from the perspective of a fundamentalist and examines the roots of the fundamental exegeses.

The current status of Christianity

Christianity is the largest religion with about one-third of the world's population, over 2 billion, adherents. Islam, its closest contender, reports 1.2 billion.[67] No consensus exists on the classification of the estimated 34,000 separate Christian faith groups. The Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance (OCRT)[68] describe Christianity as falling into 'four to seven meta-groups'[69]; 'two or three wings'[70]; 'fifteen religious families'[71]; 'dozens of denominations';[72] and 'many systems of belief'.[73] Of these divisions, many are

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[66] Mackay. , p. 79. See Appendix 1 for a flowchart of the history of reform movements, showing how the main categories of Christianity developed.

[67] B. A. Robinson, 'Current Status of Christianity'. (Ontario: Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, March 2009). <http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_prac2.htm>. (Viewed 15/6/09)

[68] The Religious Tolerance website, run by Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, is recommended by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and in the TOLEDO Guiding Principles (which will be discussed in chapter 8) as a reliable source of information on religion. Their aims include: disseminating accurate religious information exposing religious fraud, hatred and misinformation, and promoting religious tolerance.

[69] Meta-groups: Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Oriental Orthodox, Protestantism and some optional others.

[70] Wings: early and emerging, or conservative, mainline and liberal.

[71] Families: Adventist, Baptist, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Methodist, Reformed-Presbyterian, etc.

[72] Denominations: Amish, Jehovah's Witnesses, Brethren, United Pentecostal, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mormon, The Way, etc.

[73] Systems of Belief: Arminianism, British Israelism, Calvinism, Christian Identity Movement, Progressive Christianity, Dominionism, etc.

exclusivist, that is, consider their church to be the only "true" Christian church, and desire their religion be taught as truth.[74] Recent studies have discovered that the largest growth in Christianity is in Africa, Asia and Latin America with predictions that by 2050 'only about one-fifth of the world's 3 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic Whites.'[75] Jenkins notes that the form of Christianity rising most rapidly is:

> fresh hybrid of Pentecostal fervor, mainstream evangelicalism, and Bible-believing millennialism distributed by modern means: innovative megachurches and parachurches, televangelism and computerized crusades.[76]

Some powerful political leaders in Africa and Latin America have expressed their 'overt support for prosperity ideas,'[77] that is, the idea of God promising material and economic prosperity to Christian believers, which is proving to be a large motivating factor when it comes to religious conversion.[78]

Motivations

Motivations for religious conversion are different for every situation, with segmentation into its 'affluent' form and its 'peasantry' form providing for some of these motivations to be identified. The 'affluent' form is driven mainly by *fear*: the fear of uncertainty, of death, and of eternal suffering in hell. These fears are met with the certainty of the fundamentalist absolutes and the promise of God's love and everlasting life in heaven. In *Fundamentalism and Its Motivation*, Scott Appleby explains that 'people feel out of control and vulnerable when they don't have simple answers to life's questions.'[79] Fundamentalism provides these simple answers about where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. Fundamentalism fills a gap of emptiness that persists even

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[74] B. A. Robinson, 'Religious Identification in the U.S.: How American Adults View Themselves'. (Ontario: Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, 2007). <http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_prac2.htm>. (Viewed: 15/6/09)

[75] Jenkins., p. 3.

[76] Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford, and Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel : Global Christian Fundamentalism* (New York London: Routledge, 1996). Backcover.

[77] Simon Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity : Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)., p. 239.

[78] Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose., p. 84.

[79] Edwin F. Kagin, *The Gathering Storm*, Blaker, ed., (Michigan: New Boston Books, Inc, 2003)., p. 45.

after the individual pursuit of happiness has been fulfilled, adding meaning and value to lives, and providing a social outlet and sense of belonging within a supportive community.[80] The 'peasantry' form of fundamentalism on the other hand, is motivated by a desire to make the suffering and inequalities of life easier to bear. In this case fundamentalism provides comfort for 'the poor, the handicapped, the uneducated, and discriminated,' teaching that if they accept the fundamentalist Christian doctrine as truth, they will transform from victims and rejects into 'the chosen, the elite of God.'[81]

Fundamentalism in its historical context

Christianity has experienced an extraordinary journey with the fundamentalist movement one of the most recent movements of a long series of schisms, disagreements and reformations dating back as far as c. 2000 BCE the Abrahamic monotheism within the Akkadian sphere of influence. As Appendix 1 shows these movements often correlate with changing social, political, and economical environments.[82] Christian fundamentalism is a movement within Protestantism, a Reformation initiated by Martin Luther's 95 theses, which challenged the authority and actions of the Catholic Pope and Church. Marcus Borg points out that the idea of the Bible being inerrant and infallible first appeared in the 1600s,[83] as the recent invention of the printing press placed translated copies of the Bible directly in the hands of the people. The Scientific Revolution of the 16th-17th centuries presented new challenges to the authority of the Church as it questioned the accuracy of the Bible and the non-moving earth it described.[84] The idea of Biblical inerrancy grew with the Enlightenment's elevation of *reason* to be the primary source of authority.[85] In the nineteenth century the Bible's

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[80] Ibid., p. 45.

[81] Ibid., p. 43. Motivations, for the 'peasantry' form of Christianity in particular, could benefit from further research outside the scope of this paper.

[82] McNeill., op. cit.

[83] Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003)., p. 12.

[84] With the work of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton in the 16-17th century. The Bible that stated 'The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved.' (Psalm 93:1). Also see 1 Chronicles 16:30 and Ecclesiastes 1:5. Also the geologic processes such as the creation and erosion of mountains emphasised just how wrong the 6000-year biblical chronology had been.

[85] Borg., p. 12.

condoning of modern slavery was rejected and humanity rose to higher levels of morality as people questioned how the Bible could condone such unethical behaviour. As the Bible was exposed to further scientific and historical review, Jewish interpretation techniques, collectively known as *Midrashim,* and the factors concerning the translation process from Arabic that Jesus spoke, to Hebrew, Greek and English were argued to be factors necessary in order to discover the intended meaning of the Bible books that were written by Jews.[86] Biblical criticism increased and a renowned *Quest for the Historical Jesus* began.[87] Prior to the 18th century it was not so much the literal meaning of the Bible that was of concern, but the 'more-than-literal' meaning that mattered most. A Bible story could be true without being factually true.[88] When Darwin published his theory of evolution, it was taken to be antagonistic to religion appearing at the time to as if there were 'two theories of physical life, each of which was true, but the truth of each incompatible with the truth of the other.'[89] A 'period of intellectual ferment' followed as each person felt they had to choose: science *or* religion.[90] In 1909 two Christian laymen financed the distribution of *The Fundamentals: A testimony to the truth* to ministers and missionaries around the world.[91] This series acted as a 'new

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[86] John Shelby Spong, *Liberating the Gospels : Reading the Bible with Jewish Eyes : Freeing Jesus from 2,000 Years of Misunderstanding* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

[87] An academic pursuit to create a verifiable account of Jesus using historic methodology that has spanned the last 300-years, with the book by David Strass called *Das Leben Jesu* (The Life of Jesus) triggering a search to re-discover who Jesus really was. Inquiry into books from the time that were not included in the Bible, along with the moral implications with regards to women and slavery were re-evaluated, and reconciliation with further scientific discoveries was attempted. The quest includes extensive works of Schweitzer, Reimarus, Wrede, and continues in the work of historical, archaeological, and religious academics today.

[88] Borg., p. 12.

[89] Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son : A Study of Two Temperaments* (Harmondsworth: Penguin in association with William Heinemann, 1949)., p. 102. This memoir provides Gosse's true narrative of his Plymouth Brethren upbringing, journey experienced in the process of rejecting his father's fundamentalism, and his spiritual discoveries. Gosse also demonstrates the journey of his father, a marine biologist, from reason into dogma, in the years that followed Darwin's 1956 *Abstract of an Essay,* (which developed into *The Origin of Species*), and Wollaston's *Variation of Species.*

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ruben Archer Torrey and Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The Fundamentals a Testimony to the Truth*, Aisbitt, ed., (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, 1910). Preface. Available at: www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/6528/fundcont.htm *The Fundamentals* followed from the 1895 "five points of fundamentalism". See: Mackay., pp. 73-4.

statement of the fundamentals of Christianity'; condemning 'Darwinism, Higher Criticism, liberal theology, modern philosophy, socialism, materialism, atheism, spiritualism, Romanism, Mormonism, and Christian Science;' and affirming 'the virgin birth, atoning death, bodily resurrection, miracles, and a second coming of Christ, together with Scriptural inerrancy.'[92] These "fundamentals" looked back to the premodern paradigm but using modern scientific rationalist approach – which has had significant consequences on the beliefs of fundamentalists today.

A *new* interpretation

Armstrong explains the difference by way of the premodern conceptions *mythos* and *logos* both of which were regarded as essential, 'complementary ways of arriving at the truth' each with 'its special area of competence.' While logos was concerned with practical matters, rational and scientific thought; mythos was concerned with meaning and was used to understand those things 'timeless and constant in our existence'. Armstrong notes that with the coming of modernity, mythos was discounted in favor of logos, and as a result fundamentalists turned 'the mythos of their faith into logos.'[93] Modern interpretation also altered the definition of "faith". In the pre-modern Western world, everyone accepted the "fact" that earth was created four to six thousand years BCE, that is, a denial of evolution was not a matter of "faith". Faith was a matter of putting one's trust in God and living one's life in accordance with His will. It is only with the coming of modernity that the definition of faith changed from the previous a state of one's heart to the present a statement of a conformed mind. To have a fundamentalist faith, one must accept a set of absolute doctrines, and put one's trust in an institutionalised dogmatic formula that has been developed and distributed by man.[94]

One final misinterpretation of pre-modern paradigms to be discussed is that of the new *apologetic*[95] "science" known as *creationism*. Creationists point out that "facts" do not

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[92] Stuart Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia 1996)., pp. 79-80.

[93] Armstrong., p. xv.

[94] Borg., pp. 25-42.

[95] *Christian apologetics* refers to defending the faith against objectives – through scientific, historical, philosophical argument.

See: answersingenesis.org, *About Us*, (Brisbane: 2009), <www.answersingenesis.org/about>.

speak for themselves but are interpreted, hence they set out to interpret fossil discoveries, DNA, geology, astronomy, anthropology etc. in a way that "proves" everything mentioned in the Bible is a literal fact, a historical event, and that the earth really is less than 6000-years old and that the Genesis account of a six day creation must mean six 24-hour periods.[96] These fundamentalists argue that to 'consider the possibility that God used evolutionary processes to create over millions of years' presents them with 'serious consequences: the Word of God is no longer authoritative, and the character of our loving God is questioned.'[97] Although not all fundamentalists are creationists, a literal interpretation of the Bible is a foundational element of their faith. Christian fundamentalists interpret the Bible as 'not just true, but literally true,' and that 'we should, wherever possible, understand it to mean exactly what it says.' Garvey notes that the 'combination of inerrancy and literalism makes the Bible accessible to the average person'[98] and that the fundamentalists believe that 'surely God would not speak to us in a language that only a few academics could understand.'[99] It seems that for a fundamentalist, either it is everything, or it is nothing.

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[96] For a comprehensive account of the creationist opposition evolution theory in historical context see: Arthur McCalla, *The Creationist Debate : The Encounter between the Bible and the Historical Mind* (London: T & T Clark International, 2006). Also see: Tim M. Berra, *Evolution and the Myth of Creationism : A Basic Guide to the Facts in the Evolution Debate* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990). And John H Garvey, 'Fundamentalism and American Law', in Marty and Appleby eds., *Fundamentalisms and the State* (Chicago, USA: The University of Chicago Press, 1993b)., p. 32.

Young earth creationism is on the most extreme pole of religious approaches to creation, which moves through to *old earth creationism* (for example the *day-age theory* - that questions the quantity of time a 'day' referred to before the existence of a sun, the *gap theory* - a belief in micro-evolution but not macro-evolution, and *progressive creationism*- that throughout history God intervenes to create new forms of life) and through to *theistic evolutionism* also known as *Christian Darwinism* - the belief that evolution is a tool that God used and continues to use to create the universe.

The *creationist* theory has gained particularly attention in the United States where a 'substantial majority' of Americans see evolution as a controversial and where antievolutionists have widespread campaigns for creationism to be taught at schools alongside evolution, as equal theories. See Eugenie C. Scott, 'Antievolution and Creationism in the United States ', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 26 (October 1997)., pp. 263-289.

[97] Ken Ham, 'Couldn't God Have Used Evolution?'. (Brisbane: answersingenesis.org, 2007). <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/nab/couldnt-god-have-used-evolution> (viewed 15/6/09).

[98] Garvey., p. 32.

[99] See Ibid., pp. 32-33.

Through the eyes of a fundamentalist

A fundamentalist evaluates everything in the world in on the basis of one decision: to accept God (the Bible as His word, Jesus as His son) and be rewarded in heaven; or to reject God (indulge in worldly evil) and be punished in hell. In it's "classic" form it is simple. Black and white. There is Good and there is Evil.[100] Fundamentalists are often unable to see that non-fundamentalists are also making legitimate attempts to understand the world, and instead they think that non-believers are trying to justify their rejection of God. The theologies of liberal theologians such as Spong and Borg are written off as 'flagrant breaches of faith and order,'[101] "compromises" undertaken in order to 'make the Christian message more acceptable to secular Westerners.'[102] This defensive stance is taken before any consideration is given to the actual theological perspective.

In the fundamentalist paradigm if Jesus was not the *physical* Son of God, *physically* born of a virgin, and if He did not *physically* rise from the dead and *physically* ascend into heaven – then the whole of Christianity is based on a lie and the entire religion is worthless.[103] Some fundamentalists take a similar approach to reject the theory of evolution, stating that the 'only reason the theory held any credibility, was that it gave

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[100] I have drawn this evaluation combining analysis of extensive literature on Christian fundamentalism, from 20 years of personal experience as a fundamentalist in the Sydney Anglican community and attending a reformed independent parent-controlled Christian school, and from my interactions within the fundamentalist community. Also demonstrated in Gosses interactions with his father and the 'sad indulgence' with which he saw his son. Gosse., p. 5.

[101] Archbishop Peter Jensen, 'The 2008 Presidential Address'. (Sydney: Sydney Anglicans, October 13th, 2008).
<www.sydneyanglicans.net/archive/missionthinking/the_2008_presidential_address/> (viewed 13/6/09).

[102] Jeremy Halcrow, 'It's a Miracle: Aussies Embrace Supernatural Jesus'. (Sydney: Sydney Anglicans, April 10th, 2009).
<www.sydneyanglicans.net/news/ozanalysis/its_a_miracle_aussies_embrace_supernatural_jesus > (viewed 13/6/09).

[103] Directly drawn from conversations with fundamentalists and can be confirmed throughout all fundamentalist literature.

people an "out" from being accountable to God.'[104] It seems obvious that liberal theologians are, like all theologians, trying to deepen their understanding of God and His relationship with man; and that evolutionists are legitimately trying to explain the origins and developments of life. The difference is a matter of opinion, however fundamentalist leaders do not present it this way, presenting everything from a seemingly sincere conviction that there is only one true God and that God is the Christian God *of their interpretation*.[105] It is this authoritative dismissal of other's beliefs as "wrong" and "evil", be they the liberal interpretations of Christianity or the beliefs other religions or science, that sows the seeds for intolerance and discrimination and lead to forms of violence outlined in part one of this thesis.

A study into adolescent Christian theology found that 'parents are frequently unable to articulate their own religious beliefs and less able to help their children apply religious beliefs to their lives.'[106] Many fundamentalists Christians do not realise their beliefs are "fundamentalist" as they see themselves being a part of a standard Christianity that has existed for two-thousand years, unaware they are part of a recent movement with a new interpretation.[107] Fundamentalist leaders and teachers seem to fail to provide their congregations and students with an accurate perspective their beliefs in the context of Western culture, world history and in relation to other religions, to other denominations, and alternative interpretations.

The 'emerging' wing of Christianity

There are reports of an emerging paradigm within many mainline denominations that

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[104] Albert Van Leeuwen, *Leaves of the Fig Tree* (Sydney: Self Published, 2008). Van Leeuwen is a Christian whose beliefs presently align with Creationism, and whom I enjoy many interesting dialogues with. p. 45. See www.indefenceofthegospel.com

[105] Mackay., p. 73.

[106] Ellen T Charry, 'Countering a Malforming Culture: Christian Theological Formation of Adolescents in North America', in Yust, et al. eds., *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspectives from the World's Religious Traditions* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2006)., p. 438.

[107] Learning that the Christian beliefs of my past were classified as "fundamentalist" and part of a new movement a shock to me when I began researching this paper. It is astounding just how little knowledge about Christianity I had after 20 years of being a devout Christian. More detail regarding my education into fundamentalism and the subsequent discoveries that led me to reject it may be found in Appendix 9.

interprets the Bible in its historical context. Although 'liberal' theologies have been visible for well over a hundred-years, in the last 20-30 years these theologies have experienced 'major grassroots movement among both laity and clergy in "mainline" or "old mainline" Protestant denominations.'[108] It seems that the two "wings" of Christianity are increasingly becoming 'quite different visions of what it means to be Christian.'[109] The next chapter explores the methods by which the 'early' paradigm, that is the fundamentalist version of Christianity, perpetuates itself. Fundamentalist leaders and teachers who often were themselves born into the fundamentalist paradigm, repeat the transmission process and bring their children up in the fundamentalist paradigm.

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[108] Borg., p. 6. Including the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Presbyterian Church USA, the American Baptist Convention and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Catholic Church.

[109] Ibid., p. 7.

Chapter 5: Childhood Conversion

'Children are the constructors of men whom they build, taking from the environment, language, religion, customs and peculiarities not only of the race, not only of the nation, but even of a special district in which they develop.'[110]

Fundamentalists consider the faith education of children to be 'the shared responsibility of parents and other family members at home and lay leaders, teachers, ministers and educators in the church.'[111]

Christian schooling

Many fundamentalists believe Christian schooling is important in order to protect their children from the outside world, to the extent that some believe it is a 'sin for "true believers" to send their children to a public school.'[112] Some evangelicals, on the other hand, see public schools as a mission field hence it would be unchristian to abandon them.[113] The hope of fundamentalist parents is that their children become devout believers and consequently they 'sometimes (often?) put their child's salvation before their child's material interests and life prospects in this world.'[114]

Success of conversion

The methods fundamentalists use to convert their children appear to have a high success rate. ARIS surveys into trends of religious preferences and 'religion switching' have found that 84% of American adults remain in the same faith for their entire lifetime.[115]

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[110] Maria Montessori, "The Child, the Forgotten Citizen," *Montessori Insights* 2008. These are excerpts from Montessori's 1947 letter to all governments., p. 19.

[111] Elizabeth F. Caldwell, *Making a Home for Faith: Nurturing the Spiritual Life of Your Children* (Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 2000)., p. 73.

[112] Rose., p. 465.

[113] Ibid., p. 454.

[114] Rex Ahdar, 'The Child's Right to a Godly Future', *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, Vol 10 (2002). (p 60, 83)., p. 91.

[115] Robinson, 'Religious Identification in the U.S.: How American Adults View Themselves'. Refers to an American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) conducted in 2001 - FEB to APR. which included telephone interviews of 50, 281 persons who were 18 years of age or older. This particular question asked its American subjects whether they had changed their religious identification during their lifetime; Robinson interprets that 16% of adults answered they had

Similarly GSS surveys reported that 90.4% of children brought up Protestant in America, remain Protestant; and 73.7% of children brought up of Fundamentalist denomination, remained Fundamentalist.[116] A summary of this breakdown may be found in Appendix 4. The degree of socialisation in the religion was found to have a large influence on the religious mobility of the child.[117] The more exposure to the religion, through church, school and social groups, the greater the chance a person will remain in the religion of their parents. The frequently cited work of Dr. Edwin D. Starbuck demonstrated that 'conversion does not occur with the same frequency at all periods in life,' but in fact 'belongs almost exclusively to the years between 10 and 25.'[118] The period prior to conversion, between ages 0 and 10, is the focus of Dr Maria Montessori, who spoke and wrote of the 'absorbent mind' of the child: where even in its 'post-natal period of his embryonic life' a child 'absorbs from the world about him the distinctive patterns to which the social life of his group confirms.' Montessori notes:

> once the patterns have become established within him, they remain as fixed characters, just like his mother tongue. Later on a man may develop himself indefinitely, but it will always be on this foundation.[119]

The education and experiences from birth until the age of 25, determine the child mental abilities and the child's confidence to define their own identity, hence determining whether or not a child accepts or rejects their parents religion as their own. In order to

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changed their denomination or religion, and for the largest group, the change was abandoning all religion. Note that the ARIS's margin of error is ±0.3 percentage points for the main questions. Additional questions were asked at a smaller sample of 17,000 households; the margin of error for those questions is ±0.77%. The U.S. census relies on the Aris study when it reports on religious makeup of the country.

[116] Tom W. Smith, 'Counting Flocks and Lost Sheep: Trends in Religious Preference since World War Ii', Revised January 1991. *GSS Social Change Report* (Chicago: NORC, 1988, February), 90. <http://publicdata.norc.org:41000/gss/DOCUMENTS/REPORTS/Social_Change_Reports/SC26.pdf> (viewed 24/05/09). Whistle noting that this data is almost 20 years old, it is the most recent data on religious switching available. See Appendix 4, Table 29.

[117] Ibid. See Appendix 4, Table 31.

[118] Edwin D Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion* (London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1911). as cited in Ruqayya Sulaiman-Hill, 'Kiwis on the Straight Path: Muslim Conversion in Nz ', *Aotearoa Ethnic Network Journal*, 2, no. 2. Available at www.aen.org.nz/journal/2/2/Sulaiman-Hill.html

[119] Excerpt from Maria Montessori's paper *The Absorbent Mind* cited in Allyn Travis, "Universal Moral Development: The Basis for Human Unity and Peace," *Montessori Insights* 2008., p. 8. Montessori was a peace educator with a background in medicine, psychology and anthropology in the early 20th Century.

understand the relative impacts of these factors, the discourse will draw upon the Fowler's widely known *Stages of Faith*.

Stages of Faith

James W. Fowler separates the process of conversion into six stages.[120] The first stage is *Intuitive-Projective faith*, where 'imaginative processes underlying fantasy are unrestrained and uninhibited by logical thought'. This stage contains a danger of the child's imagination being 'possessed' by 'unrestrained images of terror and destructiveness' and 'reinforcement of taboos and moral or doctrinal expectations.' The second stage, a *Mythic-Literal faith,* occurs when the person adopts 'the stories, beliefs and observances that symbolize belonging to his or her community', these 'symbols are taken as one-dimensional' and the 'meaning is both carried and "trapped" in the narrative'. Stage three is a stage of *Synthetic-Conventional faith* where the person is influenced by people outside the family, and one's faith is used to 'provide a coherent orientation', to 'synthesize values and information' and 'provide a basis for identity and outlook'. At this stage faith is more of an ideology; the person has not yet stepped outside the paradigm to reflect on it and 'in a sense is unaware of having it'. People who have different outlooks are perceived as a different "kind" of person. Authority comes from 'traditional authority roles (if perceived as personally worthy)' or also from the 'consensus of a valued, face-to-face group.' The danger at this stage is that the 'expectations and evaluations of others can be so compellingly internalized (and sacralized) that later autonomy of judgment and action can be jeopardized' also there is the possibility that 'interpersonal betrayals can give rise either to nihilistic despair about a personal principle of ultimate being'. The different faith stages generally progress with age although Fowler notes that some adolescents and adults never make it past stage two or three, where 'for many adults it becomes a permanent place of equilibrium.'

Fowler calls the fourth of his stages *Individuative-Reflective faith*, which he describes as a 'demythologising' stage, which with it brings 'unavoidable tensions' as the person

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[120] James W. Fowler, 'Stages in Faith Consciousness', *New Directions for Child Development*, no. 52 (1991). The discussion that follow is based on J. W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981). Fowler claimed to find these six stages after 359 individuals aged from 4 to 84 in 1981. PDF available: http://www.diabasis.cz/_data/attachments/814b3dfeb0aaa50d818933715e304491/Fowler_Stages _of_Faith.pdf

faces the dilemmas of: individuality versus the comfort of group identity; subjectivity versus objectivity; and relativity versus absolute certainty. The person 'now claims an identity no longer defined by the composite of one's roles or meanings to others'. They define their own identity with their 'own boundaries and inner connections' and with an awareness of the separation from 'self (identity) and outlook (world view)'. The outcome of this stage is dependent on the person's 'capacity for critical reflection' and the influences of 'a childish past, images and energies from a deeper self, a gnawing sense of the sterility and flatness of the meanings one serves any or all of these may signal readiness for something new.' Stage four is commonly faced in adolescence, although Fowler notes that for a 'significant group it emerges only in the mid-thirties or forties'.

At stage five, *Conjunctive faith,* 'symbolic power is reunited with conceptual meanings' and the person undertakes a 'new reclaiming and reworking of one's past', and an opening up to the inner voices of one's 'deeper self'. This stage involves:

> a critical recognition of one's social unconscious-the myths, ideal images and prejudices built deeply into the self-system by virtue of one's nurture within a particular social class, religious tradition, ethnic group or the like.[121]

At this stage a person also 'strives to unify opposites in mind and experience' and becomes committed to justice in a way that is free from the 'confines of tribe, class, religious community or nation.' Often life becomes dedicated to the 'cause of conserving and cultivating the possibility of others' generating identity and meaning.' At this stage the person still 'remains divided' living 'between an untransformed world and a transforming vision and loyalties'. At stage six, the stage of *radical actualisation,* a person feels a 'sense of an ultimate environment is inclusive of all being', acting as 'incarnators and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community.' Fowler calls these people 'universalizers' and describes them as liberators from the 'social, political, economic and ideological shackles we place and endure on human futurity.' Often these liberators 'die at the hands of those whom they hope to change' and become 'more honored and revered after death than during their lives.' Universalizers love life but hold it loosely, living it as participants 'in a power that

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[121] Fowler, *Stages of Faith*., op. cit.

unifies and transforms the world' in a community that is 'universal in extent'. Fowler notes that stage six is a stage that is very rarely reached.

The journey through the stages of faith bear some relation to Kohlberg's six stages of moral maturity described in Chapter 2. Studies have found that while mainline Protestant and Catholic Churches are focussed on moral maturity, fundamentalists place priority on 'conversion and personal religious life.'[122] Argyle describes the majority of religious educators as aiming at an *Individual-Reflective* faith, (Fowler's four stage of faith) with the Episcopalians focussing on stage five with their commitment to 'ecumenism and social justice'. Fundamentalists on the other hand only aim at a *Conventional* faith (stage three).[123] In Gosse's *Father and Son* the younger Gosse's journey can be traced through Fowlers stages, from his early struggles with the dogmatic conformity of his childhood, through to individualist thinking and eventually his discovery of a true connectedness to 'God', with a sense of inner-peace, strength, security, and real faith.[124] Gosse describes his first transition as the 'thunderbolt' discovery that his 'Father was not as God, and did not know everything'. Fowler identifies the earlier transitions are often influenced with the discovery of 'implicit clash or contradictions in stories', 'serious clashes or contradictions between valued authority sources'; 'marked changes, by officially sanctioned leaders, or policies or practices previously deemed sacred and unbreachable'; and encounters with 'experiences or perspectives that lead to critical reflection on how one's beliefs and values have formed and changed', and a realisation that their beliefs are relative 'to one's particular group or background.'[125] For everyone the transition is different.[126] Appendix 9 provides an additional case study with a brief account of my own "thunderbolt" discovery and journey through Fowler's stages of faith.

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[122] Michael Argyle, *Psychology and Religion : An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000)., p. 179.

[123] Ibid., p. 179. Note that the fundamentalist group of this study was Southern Baptists.

[124] Gosse., p. 56.

[125] Fowler, *Stages of Faith*.

[126] For personal accounts of people leaving religion see: *Losing My Religion*, <www.losingmyreligion.com> (viewed: 18/6/09). There are now support groups and online forums to assist people in the process of leaving their religion. See: *Ex-Christian.Net*, <http://ex-christian.net/> (viewed: 18/6/09), *Leaving Relgion*, <www.leavingreligion.org/> (viewed: 18/6/09), *Losing My Religion*.

Although outside the scope of this paper it is important to briefly give recognition to the fact that not all people that convert to fundamentalism do so as a result of childhood conversion. A multitude of catalysts later in life can draw people into the security and sense of purpose that fundamentalism offers. Be it through relationships with evangelists, near-death experiences, illness and healing, divorce or a number of other crises. In particular with the changing demographics of Christianity, that is the rise in Africa, Asia and Latin America, many later-in-life conversions are occurring for a great number of reasons. Also it is important to note that the results of such a conversion are not all negative, with studies on conversion into fundamentalism finding immediate benefits can include a feeling of 'more purpose in life' and alleviation of problems with 'drugs, gambling, alcohol and sex.'[127]

A missing link

Christians understand that as a child our 'image of God is formed before we know we are forming it.'[128] Fundamentalists do not think twice about teaching their young children to sing the popular Sunday school hymn "Jesus loves me":

> Jesus loves me yes I know; Cause the Bible tells me so; Little ones to Him belong;
> They are weak, but He is strong … He will wash away my sin, Let His little child
> come in … Thou hast bled and died for me, I will henceforth live for Thee.[129]

These simple lyrics effectively transmit the two fundamentalist exegeses along with a number of other fundamentalist doctrines deep into the child's deep unconscious. Fundamentalists, although somewhat aware they are transmitting their faith, still believe it is the child's own choice whether or not to believe. Stonehouse states that although 'many children seem to easily love Jesus and readily accept the premises of faith given to them,' this faith is 'not a transplant of their parent's or their Sunday school teacher's

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[127] Argyle., pp. 179-180.

[128] Catherine Stonehouse, 'After a Child's First Dance with God: Accompanying Children on a Protestant Spiritual Journey', in Yust, et al. eds., *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspectives from the World's Religious Traditions* (Maryland USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2006)., p. 99.

[129] Words by Anna B. Warner, 1860; Music by William B. Bradbury, 1862. Anna B. Warner, *Jesus Loves Me*, <www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/j/e/jesuslme.htm> (viewed: 19/6/09). Words to the song justify the Bible as the Word of God, the divinity of Jesus, the theology of Original Sin and the theology of Atonement – concepts far too complex for a child's mind to comprehend.

faith,' but is 'the set of beliefs and values the child puts together from his or her interpretation of what has been taught, their life experiences, and their encounters with God.'[130] The question to be considered is how to distinguish between a transplant of faith and a child's capacity to interpret what they have been taught. Has the child's conversion been derived from education, or indoctrination?[131]

Snook deconstructed this question in *Indoctrination and Education,* identifying and evaluating four main criteria for distinguishing indoctrination from moral education: the rationality of the *method* used to teach, the *content* and *consequences* of what is taught, and the *intention* of the teacher.[132] After each criterion is analysed in detail, Snook concludes that method, content and consequences are susceptible to other influences and although useful to analyse they cannot alone identify indoctrination or education. It is only the criterion of intention that may conclude immoral indoctrination. Hence he defines indoctrination as:

> the teaching of any subject matter with the intention that it be believed regardless of
> the evidence.[133]

Education on the other hand he defines as:

> a transformative process in which pupils are encouraged to question the established
> social and personal goals of society by engaging with substantial meta-critical
> questions.[134]

Evaluating the intentions of fundamentalist parents and churches in the faith education of their children requires detailed primary research outside the scope of this paper. Schools, on the other hand, publicise their intentions on their websites and in throughout

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[130] Stonehouse., pp. 99-100.

[131] Indoctrination once referred to the entire education process since it became associated with coercive education methods of totalitarian regimes, the meaning of this word evolved to carry pejorative overtones. The discourse to follow hence refers to indoctrination as an unethical and undesirable practice.

[132] I. A. Snook, *Indoctrination and Education*, Tibble, ed., (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972)., pp. 16-44.

[133] Ibid., p. 75. Also see Michael Hand, 'Religious Upbringing Reconsidered', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 36 (2002).

[134] Andrew Wright, *Religion, Education and Post-Modernity* (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004)., p. 173.

their pamphlets, reports and other forms of documentation. In order to evaluate the legitimacy of faith education in fundamentalist communities within the given time limit, scope will be narrowed to focus on the intentions of fundamentalist Christian schools in Australia. The following two chapters will show that many schools in the 'Independent Non-Denominational school' sector in Australia are in explicit breach of the *Convention of the Right of the Child.*

Chapter 6: Australian Case Studies

> Those who control what young people are taught, and what they experience – what they see, hear, think, and believe – will determine the future course for the nation.[135]

Limited literature and case studies are available on fundamentalist Christian schools in Australia; schools that the following discourse identifies as being schools classified as "non-denominational" new independent Christian schools. Research was therefore confined to the primary analysis of school websites and the few secondary case studies that could be acquired. Following identification of school's intentions, preliminary deductions are drawn regarding the intentions of fundamentalist parents and churches. These are then evaluated according to Snook's criteria as to whether they are forms of ethical education or unethical indoctrination.

Background

Christian fundamentalist schools comprise only a small percentage of Australian schools. The pie chart below shows the distribution of three and a half million students between kindergarten and year 12 split between the Government system, Catholic system and Independent system.
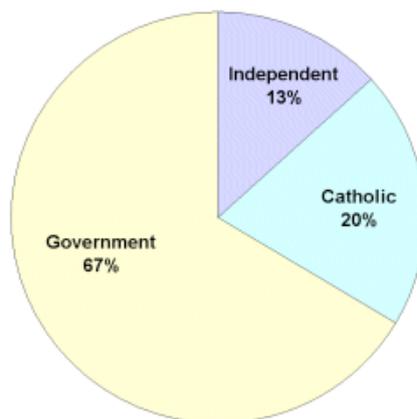
Full-Time Equivalent Enrolments at All Schools 2007 [136]

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[135] James C Dobson and Gary Lee Bauer, *Children at Risk* (Waco, TX: Word Publishing Group, 1990)., p. 27.

These independent schools[137] are set-up as not-for-profit institutions, governed independently, and receive 41% of funding from the Australian government.[138] Fundamentalist schools, as will be demonstrated in the analysis that follows, are a niche sector of non-denominational independent schools. These schools comprise over 18% of Australian independent schools, which equates to more than 2.4% of all Australian students.[139] Nondenominational schools are often members of one of three associations: Christian Schools Australia (CSA)[140] Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS),[141] or Christian Parent Controlled (CPC) Schools Ltd.[142] Known as the *New Christian School Movement*, CPC, CSA and AACS schools have arisen only in the last 50-years, adapting the Dutch parent-controlled schools model that arrived with migrants

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[136] ICSA, *About Independent Schools: Full-Time Equivalent Enrolments at All Schools 2007*Independent Schools Council of Australia, <www.isca.edu.au/html/school_about.htm> (viewed: 2/10/08).

[137] Independent schools range from Christian Private schools (Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian), to non-denominational Christian schools, to Islamic, Jewish, Montessori, Rudolf Steiner, Aboriginal communities and schools for special needs and disabilities.

[138] According to ICSA, *Independent Schools Council of Australia Website*, <www.isca.edu.au> (viewed: 28/10/2008). This government funding is distributed using the Socio Economic Status (SES) that takes into account income levels, occupations and educational attainment within these communities. Remaining 59% of funds are sourced privately.

[139] A modest estimate based on CSA and AACS figures alone because while membership of CSA and AACS is mutually exclusive, membership of CPC sometimes overlaps AACS. Therefore by adding the numbers reported on their websites and included in the three footnotes below, a minimum of 83,000 students attend independent nondenominational schools - out of a total of 457,236 in Independent schools and 3,416,523 fulltime students enrolled in Australia in 2007. In addition a number of independent schools continue without membership of any association. ABS, *Table 9: Full-Time Students, by Category of School and Level and Year of School Education 2007*, (Sydney: Australia Bureau of Statistics, </www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4221.0Main%20Features52007?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4221.0&issue=2007&num=&view=> (viewed: 27/10/08).

[140] Over 150 independent Christian schools members and over 50,000 students. See: CSA, *Christian Schools Australia Website*, <www.csa.edu.au/christian_schooling.php> (viewed: 15/10/08).

[141] With around 100 member schools and 33,000 students. See: AACS, *Australian Association of Christian Schools Website*, <www.aacs.net.au/about_Formation.asp> (viewed: 15/10/2008).

[142] With 86 schools and over 23,000 students. See: CPCS, *Christian Parent Controlled Schools Website*, (Sydney: 2008), <www.cpcs.edu.au/about_us.htm>.

in the 1950s to create an alternative to high cost private denominational schools.[143] Unlike religious schools established by various Christian denominations, fundamentalists call their schools 'Christian Schools' in order to emphasise a distinction fundamentalist's draw between themselves, the 'saved' and everyone else, the 'unsaved.'[144] These schools are fundamentalist, charismatic, and/ or neo-evangelical: '

> all whom share basic evangelical tenets, including belief in Christ as personal saviour and the necessity of a conversion experience in order to be saved, the Bible as the inerrant word of God, and the necessity of spreading the gospel and converting others to Christ.[145]

The fundamentalist nature of schools of the new Christian school movement and more liberal nature of denominational schools, and the implications on faith education of these two approaches, are the focus of the following analysis of case studies and websites.

Case Studies

An ABC TV Compass broadcast, *A Christian Education,*[146] featured interviews with principals and teachers of two 'Christian' schools, and two denominational schools. Community Christian Academy (CCA) and Chairo Christian School (CCS),[147] conveyed a strong conviction in the authority of the Bible and the need to teach children a literal interpretation of it. Alan Greenwood, the principal of CCA says:

> In the Academy we don't waver from what the bible says. We believe that there is plenty of scientific evidence which backs up creation. So we don't see the bible as being just a bunch of myths and fables. We in fact see it as being a scientific text

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[143] Note that the New Christian School Movement arose simultaneously in America, but there it was driven in response to a loss of control Protestants had over public education, reflected by the 1962 Supreme Court ruling to prohibit prayer and Bible readings and devotions in public schools. Schools have minor differences in creeds, particularly those set up by Christians outside the Reformed churches who adopted an 'educational creed' in place of the 'Reformational "church" creed.' See: ACHNF, *Australia's Christian Heritage National Forum*(2008), <http://www.australiaschristianheritageforum.org.au/achnf-resources/story-view.aspx?id=175> (viewed: 28/10/08).

[144] Rose., p. 453.

[145] Ibid., p. 453.

[146] Compass, *A Religious Education*, (Sydney Australia: ABC TV, 2008a), <www.abc.net.au/compass/s2365157.htm>.

[147] Noting annual fees between $1000 and $4000, and establishment within the last 30-years.

> book… the Bible is the manual and the ultimate truth, wisdom, guide for the staff and for the students and that's where we get our absolutes from. [148]

The mission statement of CCA is:

> to make disciples of each student who leaves from this place. Just as Jesus sent his disciples out. We would see ourselves as being modern day disciples.[149]

Interviews with staff and teachers at CCS demonstrated similar fundamentalist values. In contrast the other two schools of the Compass case study provide an example of education without indoctrination. St Aloysius College and St Andrews Cathedral School,[150] Chris Middleton of St Aloysius College notes the critical difference between his school and smaller newer Christian schools: 'essentially I think we encourage our students to question, and we don't see questioning of faith as a bad thing.' Middleton also notes that at St Aloysius, 'We have a strong view that the world itself is essentially good, and that we shouldn't be suspicious of human reason or human creativity.' This attitude toward the world is antithetical to the fundamentalist theology of original sin. At St Aloysius College and St Andrews, students are taught evolution in science classes, and creation in religious classes. Tim Bowden of St Andrews states:

> I don't see a contradiction between the theory of evolution and belief in God. In the sciences we believe that this is god's world. He may have chosen to make it through a big bang, through processes of evolution.

This approach reflects a less conservative branch of Christianity that embraces critical thinking, a historical interpretation of the Bible and understands science as complementing religion not contradicting it. Introducing childhood converts to liberal Christian ideas has potential to breakdown absolutism, providing more tolerant, critical thinking Christians.

Observation of the websites of non-denominational independent Christian schools and the denominational private schools immediately validates this difference between fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist Christian schools. The four foundational values

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[148] Compass. op. cit.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Noting annual fees between $11,000 and $19,000 and establishment since the 19th century.

of these schools are: Christian parents controlling the direction and purpose of their children's education; a curriculum that is 'thoroughly and distinctively Christian' with the Bible 'the foremost guide in all areas of schooling'; Christ being 'central to, and honoured in all school activities'; and Christian teachers all whom must declare belief in Bible inerrancy, original sin, physical resurrection and future return of Jesus.[151] Justins notes that CPC schools share many values with CSA and AACS, with the main distinction and reason for separation the emphasis on 'parental control,' a concept AACS and CSA do not 'active support.'[152] See Appendix 5 for AACS's Statement of Affirmation and mission statement, confirming this evaluation. The results from Justin's research were confirmed by observing over 50 websites of a random selection of schools associated with CSA, AACS and CPC. To provide an example, Covenant Christian School (CCS) is a parent-controlled fundamentalist Christian school, a member of both CPC and AACS, who on their website state their mission to be:

> assisting parents in the nurture of their children, providing a Bible-based, Christ-centred, culturally engaging, academically rigorous education which equips the children to live for God's glory.[153]

At CCS 89% of students 'come from active Christian families,' and their teachers are 'all Christian fully qualified' with a prerequisite that all employment applicants are 'Christians of a reformed evangelical faith.' Curriculum are tailored to present all subjects 'through the lens of the Gospel' in ways that 'challenge students to think Christianly about what they are learning,' and reflecting on 'how God wants us to treat our fellow human beings, even our enemies, reflecting and responding to our call to be

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[151] Charles Justins, Tony d'Arbon, and Shukri Sanber, *Keeping the Faith: A Case-Study of the Foundational Values of Christian Parent Controlled Schools in Australia.*, AARE Conference - Problematic Futures: Educational Research in an Era of Uncertainty, (Brisbane, Australia, 2002)., p. v. The study involved questionnaires with 23 pioneers and early leaders from 12 CPC schools; and surveys responses from 82 parents, 296 teachers, 405 senior students and 70 graduates.,, p. 153.

[152] Charles Francis Roy Justins, 'Christian Parent Controlled Schools in Australia - a Study of the Relationship between Foundational Values and Prevailing Practices' (PHD, Australian Catholic University, 2002)., p. 28.

[153] CCS, *Covenant Christian School Website*, (Sydney: 2008), <www.covenant.nsw.edu.au> (viewed: 30/10/08). 'Why Covenant: Our Uniqueness' On page titled 'Why Covenant: Our Uniqueness'. I had a personal interest in comparing CCS to the other independent Christian schools because CCS for all 13-years of my schooling between 1986 and 1999.

radical disciples.'[154] Teaching children that they have "enemies" in need of radical conversion sows the seeds of violence outlined in part 1. Following the airing of *A Christian Education*, an online public forum allowed viewers to comment and discuss the program. Of the fifty or so comments, not one approved or applauded the schools. Instead viewers described the schools as:

> very destructive, negative, extremely punitive and abusive, separating, isolating, inculcating, indoctrinating, brainwashing, dogmatic, aggressive, arrogant, misogynistic, racist… they [the schools] destroy self esteem, self respect, demonise the world outside of themselves, they are elitist whilst at the same time being sado-masochistic ... places of mental and physical abuse.[155]

Comments emphasised the first two independent Christian schools, not the private denominational ones.[156]

Education or indoctrination?

The cases and data discussed above have demonstrated an explicit intention of fundamentalist Christian schools to educate students in a way that moulds them into Christian disciples. Supporting this intention the schools admit to tailoring their content, using only Christian teachers, and encouraging acceptance of the Bible's absolute authority without questioning or critical thinking. According to Snook's criteria, schools with this intention are indoctrinating their students. In order to make a preliminary deduction as to the intentions of the parents who choose to send their child to these schools. Justin's surveys confirmed this hypothesis when asking parents for the reason they chose to send their child to a CPC school. Appendix 6A shows the reasons, with 87% of parents sending their child because 'the school seeks to put Jesus at the centre of everything' and 96% because the Christians are teachers.[157] Appendix 6B shows the perspectives on the importance of seeing the Bible as a guidebook for life, with 94% of parents stating they believe that the Bible is 'essential for students to understand the

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[154] Ibid.

[155] Comment made by Julie Hay of Perth was reflective of the other responses. Compass, *A Religious Education - Public Forum*, (Sydney Australia: ABC TV, 2008b), <www2b.abc.net.au/guestbookcentral/list.asp?guestbookID=81> (viewed: 30/09/2008).

[156] From a search on AACS and CSA member school search functions.

[157] See Appendix 6A.

world / human society.'[158] These results also found that 80% of graduates agreed the Bible is essential to their understanding of the world. This would infer that the parent's and teacher's intentions, content and methods have led to a successful and immoral indoctrination of students into a fundamentalist Christian paradigm.[159]

With this preliminary conclusion there is still one very important factor that must be addressed: the *indoctrination paradox*. Is indoctrination immoral if 'a person [is] working within a system in which certain ideas are generally accepted as beyond question, although in a wider connection they are subject to dispute?'[160] Snook holds that:

> if the teacher has himself been indoctrinated, his intention will be the same as that
> of any good educator… to hand on the truth in a reasonable manner.[161]

However, in the case that the teacher is 'inculcating beliefs which [he] believes are certain but which are substantially disputed,' foreseeing that the topics being taught are likely to be believed regardless of evidence, then an immoral indoctrination *is* occurring.[162] The question that logically follows: are fundamentalists aware their beliefs are substantially disputed? Although they know there is some dispute over their beliefs, the statistics on Christians in the world could possibly infer otherwise. From a fundamentalist's perspective, although many of these other so-called Christians are less committed to God and more compromising of the world's evils, they still share a belief in the same God. In the mind of a fundamentalist, the beliefs they teach are not *so* substantially distributed, but reflect the beliefs of the largest religion in the world.

How can this challenging conundrum, this sincere ethical dilemma, be addressed? How can indoctrination be avoided? Do fundamentalist parents have a right to indoctrinate

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[158] See Appendix 6B.

[159] To refer to my own case, the well-meaning intentions of my parents, school teachers and church leaders, to have me adopt their religion was also a success. I was fully committed to the Christian narrative, believing 100% in the Bible as the Word of God, and Jesus as His son who died and rose again.

[160] Snook., p. 42. This is a valid question for wider situations including a Communist teacher in a Communist country, a Muslim teacher in a Muslim school, a Christian teacher in a Christian school etc.

[161] Ibid., p. 42.

[162] Ibid., p. 42.

their children? Do children have a right to choose a faith for themselves? What does the law say? Should the government intervene? Can students learn about religion without being indoctrinated into it? How can the awareness of fundamentalists be increased so they have perspective on where their beliefs fit into the historical, theological and global context? How can they develop confidence to question without fear of punishment or loss of identity? How can all of humanity work towards higher levels of Fowler's stages of faith and Kohlberg's levels of moral maturity? These questions form the basis of part 3, a discussion that looks towards solutions.

Part 3: Towards Solutions

Chapter 7: Rights of Child, Parent and Society

> Based on the affirmation of the child's dignity, we have to ensure the child's right and freedom to grow and develop wholesomely, so that he can contribute to human progress with all his faculties, thus fulfilling the task assigned to him by nature.[163]

Parents have a right to bring up their children how they see fit and to send them to a school that supports their values and beliefs; but how do these rights fit with rights of the child and rights of society?

Liberalism

Living in a "liberal" society dictates a high level of tolerance to another's views and actions, including freedom for parents to bring their children up in whatever religion they choose, and the freedom to choose a school that supports their values. Karl Popper's 'paradox of tolerance' proposes that unlimited tolerance cannot exist without bringing about the end of tolerance itself:

> it may easily turn out that they [the intolerant] are not willing to meet us on the level of rational argument… we should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant.[164]

The Rights of a Child

James G. Dwyer, in *Parents' Religion and Children's Welfare,* criticises a

> failure of political theorists… to see children as separate persons with distinct interests rather than as appendages or belongings of their parents or instruments of social reproduction.[165]

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[163] Maria Montessori, *The Forgotten Citizen - Message to Unesco on the Occasion of the Third Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights*, in 1951, Educateurs sans Frontieres, (Burgos, Spain: Association Montessori Internationale, 2004)., p. 4.

[164] E. Hulmes, *Commitment and Neutrality in Religious Education* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979)., op. cit., p. 21.

[165] James G Dwyer, 'Parents' Religion and Children's Welfare: Debunking the Doctrine of Parents' Rights', *CALIFORNIA LAW REVIEW*, 82, no. 6 (1994)., p. 152.

Dwyer argues that parenting should be seen as a privilege, and greater respect given for children as persons in their own right.[166] The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), ratified in 1989 by every country in the world besides Somalia and the United States, outlines the fundamental freedoms and inherent rights that human beings are born with, and the measures necessary to ensure protection and realisation of those rights.[167] Article 14 and Article 29 are the most relevant to the issue of childhood conversion into a fundamentalist paradigm and the full articles have been included in Appendix 7. Article 14 declares respect for the child's 'freedom of thought, conscience and religion,'[168] and respect for the parent or the legal guardian's right and duty to 'provide direction to the child… in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.'[169] Parental rights are however subject to a condition:

> Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.[170]

The rights of fundamentalist parents are limited to the rights of the child and society, not the other way around. Part 1 demonstrated that the directions provided by fundamentalist parents to their children are in breach of the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; and that the indirect implications of their directions are in breach of society's right to public safety, order and morals. This identifies one breach of the CRC, by fundamentalist parents, that state parties have an obligation to address. In evaluating the education provided at schools, Article 29 states that a child's education must be directed at developing 'the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential'[171] as well as preparing:

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[166] Ibid., p. 101.

[167] CRIN, *Child Rights Information Network*, (London: 2009), <http://www.crin.org/resources/treaties/CRC.asp?catName=International+Treatie>.

[168] United Nations, *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989)., op. cit.. Article 14.1.

[169] Ibid., Article 14.2.

[170] Ibid., Article 14.3.

[171] Ibid., Article 29.1(a).

the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.[172]

Implementation of Rights

The investigations into fundamentalist schools in Australia in chapter 6 identified another two breaches of the CRC. Fundamentalist schools in Australia state their priority is for students to adopt a fundamentalist world-view, and in doing so they effectively prevent the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities from reaching their fullest potential – a clear breach of Article 29.1(a). The fundamentalist schools also described people from other religions as 'enemies' in need of discipleship, an intolerant and elitist attitude in breach of Article 29.1(d). State Parties have a responsibility to address these shortfalls of the CRC, to enforce the rights of children and society as breached by fundamentalist parents per Article 14 and by fundamentalist schools per Article 29.

The question that follows is how State Parties might approach this requirement. Dwyer argues for a decisive government response to 'eradicate the repressive features of religious schools,'[173] and suggests actions may include 'requiring exposure to competing world views, training in critical thinking, and elimination of sexist messages from instruction and curricular materials.'[174] In Australia, with the government funding 41% of the school's resources, it would seem a necessary step for a critical review of independent school curriculum. Addressing the breach caused my fundamentalist parents in their homes is a more complicated issue and will be discussed in chapter 9. The next chapter addresses the later two breaches of the CRC, identifying some existing sets of guidelines that may assist in the transformation of indoctrination into an education that meets the CRC requirements.

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[172] Ibid., Article 29.1(d).

[173] Dwyer, 'Parents' Religion and Children's Welfare: Debunking the Doctrine of Parents' Rights'., p. 165.

[174] Dwyer, Religious Schools V. Children's Rights., p. 59.

Chapter 8: Avoiding the Indoctrination of Children

> Indoctrination would be avoided if the teacher, regardless of his own commitment, taught with the intention that the pupils form their own conclusions on the basis of evidence.[175]

This chapter will suggest that the prevention of religious indoctrination does not come from avoiding religious education, but by shifting the aims, approach and content of what is taught. In Europe and in state schooling in Australia, guidelines already exist that distinguish between religious indoctrination and religious education. It is possible that these guidelines may assist in aligning education at fundamentalist schools with the CRC.

Enculturation

Before looking at these guidelines it is important to recognise that some *enculturation*[176] is essential for a child's development, and necessary for human progression. Each new generation is a 'merciful heir' to a great store of 'cultural capital' of 'intellectual, moral, technological, physical, political, social, aesthetic and spiritual (or religious) achievements' that has compounded throughout the history of human civilisation.[177] This store of knowledge provides a stepping-stone for the future. When it comes to moral enculturation, the impending question is who decides what is moral and what is not? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, accepted by all religions and cultures around the world, may be an appropriate place to start. Ultimately, Children should be taught not *what* to think, but *how* to think. Each individual person should have the right to decide what they shall think, not have their thoughts imposed by *force majeure*.[178] Wright, in *Religion, Education and Post-modernity*, suggests that education should transmit the 'best cultural package available' and also 'insist that pupils also learn to

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[175] Snook., op. cit., p. 86.

[176] Enculturation is defined as the process whereby individuals learn their group's culture, through experience, observation, and instruction.

[177] Basil Moore, *Religion Education: Issues and Methods in Curriculum Design* (University of South Australia: Texts in Humanities, 1997)., p. 76.

[178] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam Press a division of Transworld Publishers, 2006)., p. 327.

engage critically with alternative options.'[179] Then, 'as pupils gradually gain self-mastery and learn to discipline themselves, so the authority of the tutor may be progressively relaxed.'[180] This would progress into an engagement of students with the virtues in which they have been inducted.

Educating on Religion

In 2007 the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) developed of the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*.[181] Identifying the increasing importance for 'young people to acquire a better understanding of the role that religions play in today's pluralistic world' as more 'different cultures and identities interact with each other through travel, commerce, media or migration.' The Toledo principles were developed to 'address the root causes of intolerance and discrimination' by promoting a 'greater understanding of and respect for different cultures, ethnicities, religions or beliefs.'[182] The Toledo guidelines are based on the principle that 'teaching *about* religions and beliefs can reduce harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes' and 'has the valuable potential of reducing conflicts that are based on lack of understanding for others.' The Toledo principles recognise that 'although a deeper understanding of religions will not automatically lead to greater tolerance and respect,' a lack of education, or 'ignorance' will increase 'the likelihood of misunderstanding, stereotyping, and conflict.[183] These principles, an outline can be found in Appendix 8, may assist Australia in their revision of the education of religion in all Australian schools. The Toledo Principles also recognise the essential role of the

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[179] Wright., op. cit., p. 174.

[180] Ibid., p. 135.

[181] ODIHR, *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching About Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*, ODIHR Advisory Council Of Experts On Freedom Of Religion Or Belief (Toledo, March 2007). Developed by ODIHR, OSCE together with input from experts and leading scholars, policy makers, educators, lawyers, and representatives of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations.

[182] Decision No.13/06 on Combating Intolerance and Non-Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, para. 5, 14th OSCE Ministerial Council, Brussels, 4-5 December 2006, available at http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/2006/12/22565_en.pdf.

[183] Decision No.13/06 on Combating Intolerance and Non-Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, para. 5, 14th OSCE Ministerial Council, Brussels, 4-5 December 2006, available at http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/2006/12/22565_en.pdf.

teacher, the teacher's education, and the importance of teachers adopting the 'basic attitudes towards or commitment to human rights in general and freedom of religion or belief.'

A post-postmodern theory

Emphasising the importance of the basic attitude of the teacher, leads into an important question posed by E. Hulmes: 'how far is it possible for a believer to pretend to espouse a philosophical neutrality which is alien to his deepest convictions and experience?'[184] Answering his own rhetoric Hulmes suggests, 'the only sensible way forward is to accept this limitation as inescapable, and not to insist on a neutrality which is unattainable.'[185] The solution to this dilemma is not to attempt to immunize the education process from the play of power. A more effective approach is to recognize the inevitability of it and open an agenda that encourages dialogue about the relationship between science and religion. Rather than religious educators teaching one under a 'veil of neutrality', by making their faiths, values and commitments as visible as possible, 'pupils can make judgments based on knowledge rather than ignorance.'[186] Even if power structures, authorities and indecision of the student still exist, the result will shift from power over knowledge, to one of knowledge over power. The process will be grounded in an 'intellectual curiosity driven by a sense of awe, wonder and mystery in the face of the richness and complexity of the natural world.'[187] Some scholars are attributing this new theory to a new age, one that might be labelled *post-postmodernism* or *neo-modernism*.[188] This 'multifaceted hermeneutical approach' driven by a 'rich holistic notion of wisdom,' which is 'simultaneously knowledgeable, informed,

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[184] Hulmes., op. cit., p. 48.

[185] Ibid., p. 48.

[186] Wright., op. cit., p. 186.

[187] Ibid., p. 172.

[188] Ibid., op. cit., p. 52. Wright describes the theory as combining 'a modernist concern to engage with the actual order-of-things with a post-modern recognition of the limits of our knowledge and understanding' and 'the post-modern philosophy of difference, with commitment to keep alternative horizons of meaning open.' Wright provides the following list of scholars who have been developing similar ideas: Bernstein 1983, Gadmer 1979, Gellner 1992, Habermas 1985, Held 1980, MacIntyre 1985, Nagel 1986, Norris 1993, Polanyi 1958, Taylor 1992, Wiggershaus 1995, and Williams 2002.

reflective, rational, affective, virtuous, responsible, imaginative and practical,'[189] effectively opens up new avenues for 'substantial and significant rejuvenation of religious education'[190] and results in education that transforms the cultivation of an ignorant conformity into cultivation of citizens who contribute to the progression of society.[191] This new theory may contain an opportunity to draw fundamentalists out of the modern-pre-modern paradigm and to share the same paradigm as the rest of humanity in the 21st century.

Increasing exposure to alternate world-views

Surveys findings discussed in chapter 5, discovered that more exposure to the religion, through church, school and social groups, the greater likelihood of a child converting into their parent's religion. Therefore, increasing exposure to other world-views would assist in maximising the likelihood of a child having freedom of religion. This could be done at school and through various forms of media, however the school the child attends and the media he or she is exposed to, the ability to increase such exposure ultimately depends on the parents – the subject of chapter 9.

This chapter has identified an important strategy on the part of governments and pedagogy that will assist in the implementation of the rights of the child in fundamentalist schools. It is however important to note that coercive legalities will only address the symptoms of dilemma of childhood conversion, not the source. As part 1 demonstrated, the directions provided by fundamentalist parents to their children do, by their nature explored as explored in part 2, cause restrictions on the mental and physical realisations of the child's life and prevent the child from truly having freedom of religion, and cause harm to public safety as both a direct and indirect repercussion of this process. It would appear that a breach of the CRC Article 14 has occurred. Imposing restrictions on the rights of parents is likely to increase fears and intensify polarities between secularism and religion; hence when it comes to this particular breach of the CRC, legal solutions are not the answer. Instead answers come from increasing the awareness and understanding of fundamentalists of themselves in historical and global

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[189] Ibid., pp. 176-7.

[190] Ibid., pp. 219.

[191] Ibid., p. 162.

context. The next chapter proposes some ideas as to how such awareness might be increased, as well as identifying some initiatives already underway, and considering the role of secular society in de-escalating the divisions.

Chapter 9: Expanding the Awareness of Adults

> The citizens of a pluralist society and multicultural world should be able to accept that their interpretation of situations and problems is rooted in their personal lives, in the history of their society and in their cultural traditions; that, consequently, no individual or group holds the only answer to problems.[192]

As the discourse so far has identified, the conversion of a child into a religion is a breach of the right of the child. The success of childhood conversion corresponds with the power to influence the child, a power that most often lies with the child's parents. The direction fundamentalist parents provide their children will inevitably be guided by their own beliefs and values. But what if a parent's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion was obstructed during his or her own childhood? How might one un-indoctrinate a person who has been in a mental state of indoctrination their whole life? How might a narrow-minded approach to life based on non-questioning conformity and group-identity, be transformed into one of open-mindedness, critical thinking, and individual identity? In essence, how might one encourage fundamentalists to aspire to higher levels of Fowler's Stages of Faith than the *synthetic-conventional faith* that their churches presently encourage them towards? This chapter explores just a few ideas from which extensive research and development might follow. Peace building strategies such as *Multi-Tracked Diplomacy* may assist in resolving the conflict by approaching solutions as involving a 'web of interconnected parts', requiring input from the government, to citizens and the media; encouraging communication between fundamentalists, liberals and scientists, across age, gender and national boundaries; and including strategies that range from governmental policy, funding, research, activism and advocacy – all operating together toward 'a common goal: a world at peace.'[193]

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[192] UNESCO, Framework of Action on Education, Article 8.

[193] Louise Diamond and John W. McDonald, *Multi-Track Diplomacy : A Systems Approach to Peace* (West Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 1996). Also see: K. F. Brand-Jacobson and C. G. Jacobsen, 'Beyond Mediation: Towards More Holistic Approaches to Peacebuilding and Peace Actor Empowerment', in J., Jacobsen, and Brand-Jacobsen eds., *Searching for Peace: The Road to Transcend* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

Dialogue among civilisations

The *General Agenda for Dialogue among Civilisations* comprehensively sets out the foundations, principles, objectives and a program of action that appears to effectively address the fundamentalist mentality.[194] As set out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), this agenda aims to:

> bridge the gap in knowledge about other civilizations, cultures and societies, to lay the foundations for dialogue based on universally shared values and to undertake concrete activities, inspired and driven by dialogue.[195]

This global agenda recalls the United Nations Millennium Declaration which considers tolerance to be a fundamental value essential to international relations, and one which 'should include the active promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations,' based on:

> human beings respecting one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language, neither fearing nor repressing differences within and between societies but cherishing them as a precious asset of humanity.[196]

Is the Christian fundamentalist belief that other religions are 'wrong' compatible with these principles of tolerance and respect? Can the differences in opinions ever be "cherished" from within a fundamentalist paradigm? Out of fear and misguided conviction, fundamentalists try to repress the differences and convert others to their beliefs. In order to break down this lack of respect and tolerance, the agenda suggests dialogue between and within civilisations based on:

> a collective desire to learn, uncover and examine assumptions, unfold shared meaning and core values and integrate multiple perspectives.[197]

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[194] United Nations, *Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations*, Fifty-sixth session, 56/6 Agenda item 25 (November 2001). Reaffirmed at the 2005 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation World Summit.

[195] UNESCO, *Strategic Planning - Dialogue among Civilizations*, (United Nations: 2009), <http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=37084&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html> (viewed: 11/05/09).

[196] *Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations.,* op. cit., p. 2.

[197] Ibid., Article 1., p. 3.

The agenda includes 'promotion of confidence-building at local, national, regional and international levels,'[198] encouraging global participation that would be 'open to all people from all civilizations,' noting the important role of 'scholars, thinkers, intellectuals, writers, scientists, people of arts, culture and media and the youth,' as well as 'individuals from civil society and representatives of non-governmental organizations.'[199]

The emphasis of this agenda is education and communication; which will in turn lead to empathy, respect, tolerance and understanding. For communication to be effective people must *want* to communicate, they must *want* to understand each other, and this desire only comes once a person is confident in their understanding of themselves. It is therefore necessary to raise the critical consciousness of society, to expand the world-view of all people so they may understand the interrelationship between themselves and all beings on the planet.[200]

Discerning religious experience from ideology

Lederach describes cross-ethnic conflict as one that operates often from a position of preservation and defensiveness where each group feels a deep threat to its identity and wellbeing. This insecurity often paradoxically protects itself by lashing out at the perceived threat that is also often equally insecure, creating a mutually reinforcing and destructive cycle. In order to break the cycle, it is necessary to become conscious of it,

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[198] Ibid., Article 4., p. 3.

[199] Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilisations., op. cit. Article 5., p. 4-6. The 'programme of action' in this global agenda suggests a number of initiatives to promote and encourage this dialogue including: advancing research and scholarship to achieve an objective understanding of each civilization and their differences, and ways to enhance understanding among them; promoting mutual meetings of experts; sponsorship of conferences, symposiums and workshops; utilization of communication technologies, including audio, video, printed press, multimedia and the Internet, to share progress and publicize historical instances of constructive interaction; incorporation of other cultures and civilizations into educational curriculum; supporting cultural festivals and sports competitions; promotion of historical and cultural tourism; and utilizing existence of migrants to bridge gaps of understanding. Many of these innovative mediums might also be utilised to educate fundamentalists on the history of their religion, and to foster inter-faith dialogue.

[200] Leonisa Ardizzone, 'Towards Global Understanding: The Transformative Role of Peace Education', *Current Issues in Comparative Education, Teachers College, Columbia University*, 4, no. 2 (2002). p. 17. Also in reference to Paulo Freire's (1970) concept of "Conscientization."

developing an awareness of self in context, that is, *conscientization*.[201] It is important for fundamentalists and for all citizens of the global society to be aware of their location on the world stage, geographically and historically, and be aware that indoctrination into fundamentalist world-views is a structural violence harming to children and with implications for the whole world.

Awareness begins with education. The rights of every human under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the rights of every child as ratified in the CRC, could benefit from a wider publication. Citizens of State Parties who have not ratified the CRC may consider encouraging their government to do so and citizens of States Parties who have signed it might consider notifying them of the breach and holding them accountable 'to see they are met.[202]

Trompf establishes the important need to 'discern between the true and false representatives of great traditions, and sift ideals from disfigurations.'[203] This is a task required of both fundamentalists and the wider society, including the media. To search for the meaning intended by the Bible authors requires an understanding of the historical context, the purpose and for Jewish writers, some understanding of Midrashim. As has previously been noted, many fundamentalist Christians are often unable to articulate their beliefs; this lack of education often acts as a barrier to intelligent and critical discussion, constructive communication required to resolve ethical and religious conflict. With the right church leadership, Christian film, literature, short courses, Bible study groups, and creative mediums such as film, books and the Internet, the education of Christians can greatly be increased. Efforts of this nature are already underway. The Centre for Public Christianity (CPX) is 'an independent research and media organization' that seeks 'promote the public understanding of the Christian faith in Australia and beyond employing the best of scholarship via the best of media.'[204] CPX

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[201] J P Lederach, 'Facing Multicultural Settings', *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995c)., pp. 109-118.

[202] Noting a 2009 campaign and symposium *The Convention on the Rights of the Child: Why It is Time to Ratify* details may be found at www.childrightscampaign.org. Cited 15/05/09.

[203] Trompf, 'Of Colligation and Reification in the Representation of Religion (and Violence)'., p. 186.

[204] Dr John Dickson and Dr Greg Clarke, *Centre for Public Christianity* (North Sydney: 2009), <www.publicchristianity.com/about.html>. CPX is based in Sydney and has international

engages in dialogue with science and history seeking communication and to further Christian thinking. Dickson's his books, documentaries and short courses, such as *The Christ Files,* provide a means for Christians to increase knowledge of their religion with minimal time and effort.[205] As fundamentalists increase their knowledge, a sense of security increases and self-identity detaches from religious identity, fears and polarities decrease leading to a much higher chance of productive dialogue among people of different beliefs.

For fundamentalists to discern whether their interpretation is a true or false representation of Christianity, it requires them to question – to question the authority of their Church and of their Bible. Questioning one's beliefs is an overwhelmingly threatening task, particular to a fundamentalist with whom one's beliefs are so intrinsically connected to their identity and to their entire basis for understanding reality. Questioning requires strength, and the confidence to distance oneself from the fear of loosing one's faith and being punished forever in hell for it. Contrary to fundamentalists' expectations, questioning is not a "rejection of God" but is an *embracement* of God, and it would be beneficial for this point needs to be communicated to them. Choosing to break away from autocratic institutions that cajole the divine, and instead, seeking "the real thing", is hardly something that the God described in the New Testament would punish. The Christianity we know today originates with Paul doing exactly that – making a stand against the class religiosity[206] and presenting a "faith" that, as Jesus modelled in his life, was about the direct relationship between man and God.[207]

It seems, as chapter 4 suggested, often fundamentalist leaders let down their congregations, failing to provide them with an accurate perspective of their beliefs in context. The lines of power and authority within church institutions and the paradigm of the fundamentalist leaders would be an interesting area for further research. Have these leaders arrived in this position following a process of critical thinking and freedom of

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presence, with Dickson's scholarly approach simultaneously respected in Christian communities and in academic and secular society.

[205] Dr John Dickson and Dr Greg Clarke, *The Christ Files*, (Australia: Channel 7, March 2009).

[206] Trompf, 'Of Colligation and Reification in the Representation of Religion (and Violence)'. op, cit., p. 186.

[207] For example, as Jesus is said to have healed the sick on the Sabbath – an action that disobeyed Jewish law.

thought, or were they indoctrinated themselves? Would the intentions of their sermons be considered one of indoctrination or education? Does bureaucracy interfere with moral education and critical thinking? It is possible that individuals and society would benefit from a shift in the church methods from *preaching* one interpretation of the Bible, to *sharing* a number of interpretations of it – effectively enabling people of the congregation to discuss theologies amongst themselves and take ownership of their own faith. Might this be a more moral approach to sharing religious values?

Interfaith dialogue such as *Abrahamic peacemaking* is another path opening up for deeper understandings of religious traditions, through discovering the beliefs and historical contexts of Islam and Judaism. By focussing on the shared values, and correcting biases and distortions of the identity and ideology-driven past conflict between them, new opportunities for peace may arise. [208]

Creative mediums such as documentaries, films, novels and music, are seen to be the most effective forms of interfaith sharing.[209] A developing field known as Big History, appears to be an effective method at helping increase one's understanding of self in context.[210] The issue is how to get these into the hands of fundamentalists, who often restrict their reading to Christian books and media. Aiming to increase fundamentalist's confidence to question, to increase the critical thinking skills of all citizens, and to making the questioning process easier through various creative mediums is a potential avenue that governments could assist with funding or resources as an indirect approach to implementation of the CRC.

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[208] D. Smock, 'Building Interreligious Trust in a Climate of Fear: An Abrahamic Trialogue'. *Special Report* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, February 2003). <www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr99.html> (viewed 5/9/08). The US Institute of Peace suggests teaching materials on the three traditions should be developed for all levels of education.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Books such as: Jared M. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel : The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997). and David Christian and ebrary Inc., *Maps of Time : An Introduction to Big History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). These were useful to me in my attempt to understand myself in context.

Increasing awareness and decreasing polarities

Methods of raising awareness are best done in ways that develop empathy and decrease polarities between various fundamentalisms and secularist society. Richard Dawkins book *The God Delusion* has been very popular in the mainstream market and has raised awareness of secularists to the problems associated with childhood conversion into religion causes. Dawkins highlights the harm caused in calling a child a 'Christian child' or 'Islamic child,' recommending instead to:

> speak of a child of Catholic parents' if you like; but if you hear anybody speak of a "Catholic child", stop them and politely point out that children are too young to know where they stand on such issues, just as they are too young to know where they stand on economics or politics.

A child is not 'a Muslim child, but a child of Muslim parents. There is no such thing as a Christian child.'[211] This shift in perception of one's child is beneficial to the child. The role of parents in bringing up the next generation of adults one that is often highly under-estimated. There is an opportunity here for governments to communicate with new parents on the rights of their child, the responsibilities they have to maximise the child's potential and prove the child freedom of thought. Suggestions in particular in regard to religious education, could be provided, warning parents of the dangers of the religious concepts that have been shown to cause long-term psychological harm to the child's mind.

Dawkins, along with other prominent atheists labelled as the "new atheists"[212], may have a positive impact in raising awareness, but fundamentalists simply dismiss the words of atheists as wrong or evil. The new atheists have been criticised for creating their own scientific fundamentalism,[213] and for 'fanning the flames of bigotry on this planet' in a pursuit to convert the world from belief to unbelief.[214] It is crucial that instead of taking

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[211] Dawkins., p. 3.

[212] Such as Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris.

[213] Tina Beattie, 'The End of Postmodernism: The "New Atheists" and Democracy'. (London: Open Democracy, 20/12/2007). <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/faith_ideas/the_new_atheists> (viewed 16/05/09).

[214] Words of Australia's best-known atheist Phillip Adams on Compass, *The Atheists* (Sydney Australia: ABC TV, 2009), <http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s2517600.htm>.

an aggressive approach to fundamentalism, non-fundamentalists try to empathise with, as Armstrong puts it, the 'fears, anxieties, and needs which so many of their fundamentalist neighbours experience but which no society can safely ignore.'[215]

What did Jesus actually mean when he talked of the "Kingdom of God" and "salvation"? To many people, this refers to the development of a state of peace on earth, not a place you go when you die.[216] Is it possible that this message of peace also has relevance to non-religious people in the world-climate today? I believe it does. To read the Holy Books of a number of religions, observing the evolving relationship of man and the Divine, the evolving moralities and developing creative expression of the mind, body and soul of humankind; and to learn from the principles that these books and wise teachers of the past have to offer for us in the 21st century; is one way that wider society can help build up the confidence of fundamentalists and contribute to addressing the peace process.

Many scientists do not see a conflict between science and faith. Some scientists, such as Francis S. Collins, the director of the human-genome project, have converted from atheism to Christianity as a result of their scientific research. Some scientists even argue that quantum physics 'challenges any attempt to maintain a strict distinction between scientific and philosophical or theological knowledge.'[217] The theory of evolution is still a theory that contains many gaps.[218] By admitting to these gaps, unknowns and uncertainties, science may clarify for fundamentalists the perceived scientific grand-narrative that they find so threatening. This approach de-escalates the side of scientific fundamentalism, while non-fundamentalist religious interpretations, such as liberal and

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[215] Armstrong., pp. 370-371.

[216] The original word recorded in the Bible was the Greek word 'basileia.' Jesus spoke Aramaic not Greek, and the word he probably actually said is 'malkuth', a word with meaning close to the Hebrew word 'shalom' which basically means a condition of state of peace and harmony. So, a common non-fundamentalist interpretation is that God's kingdom is a condition of humanity in the world - being in a state of harmony in God's presence. See: David Seccombe, *The King of God's Kingdom – a Solution to the Puzzle of Jesus* (UK: Paternoster Press', 2002).

[217] Beattie., op. cit.

[218] See: Michael A. Cremo and Richard L. Thompson, *Forbidden Archeology : The Hidden History of the Human Race* (San Diego: Bhaktivedanta Institute, 1993).

progressive Christian theology,[219] de-escalate the polarity on the religious side. These approaches expose the perceived zero-sum game of religion *or* science, and provide a paradigm that transcends into a positive-sum game of religion *and* science; opening up windows of opportunity for communication and conflict resolution.[220] Just as mythos and logos played important roles in re-modern thinking, religion and science both have important roles to play in our understanding of the world today. Religion explaining the *why,* the reason God the created the world, and science explaining the *how,* that He did it through an ongoing creative process of evolution. Many perceive there is a 'void at the heart of a society based on scientific rationalism.' For children born into an atheist paradigm, progression to higher levels of Fowlers stages of faith may also be hindered in ways not so dissimilar to that of fundamentalist Christians.[221] Finding ways that accommodate the spiritual in secular culture, that open up the non-religious education system to allow more children and adults to connect with deeper levels of themselves and the universe, may be another part of the peace process. [222]

Investigating this ethical dilemma has pointed to a number of factors not only applicable to childhood conversion in Christian fundamentalism, but also relevant to a wider education context. The UNESCO model of peace education appears to be a solution with many local and global benefits, including addressing the dilemma incurred by fundamentalists. This is the subject of next and final chapter of this paper.

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[219] See TCPC, *The Centre for Progressive Christianity*, <www.tcpc.org>. And see John Shelby Spong, *A New Christianity for a New World*, <www.johnshelbyspong.com>., op. cit.

[220] Here I have applied Galtung's Transcend model of conflict resolution. See: Johan Galtung, *Transcend & Transform: An Introduction to Conflict Work* (Colorado USA: Paradigm Publishes, 2004).

[221] A deduction drawn from personal communication with Atheists and the speakers of the documentary on Compass, *The Atheists*

[222] Wright., op. cit.

Chapter 10: Educating for Peace

'What is necessary is a paradigm shift that shapes content and pedagogy by incorporating issues of human security, equity, justice and intercultural understanding through the promotion of global citizenship, planetary stewardship and humane relationship.'[223]

Education systems all around the world are under a state of reformation, responding to the rapidly changing economic, technological and cultural situation.[224] At the most recent *World Conference on Higher Education* (WCHE) in Paris 2005, UNESCO laid the fundamental principles for the in-depth reform of higher education which aims at:

transforming higher education, in its material and virtual manifestations, into an environment for lifelong learning, for cultural debate, for the affirmation and safeguarding of diversity, and for forging and confirming the values and principles laid down in the constitution of UNESCO.[225]

Education plays an important role in establishing cultures of violence and cultures of peace.[226] Solutions do not come from the 'add good education and stir' approach, but require transformative solutions that 'change the underpinning logic and structures of behaviour.' This is a challenging proposition as it is 'fundamentally a political threat in the sense that it challenges structures of authority dominance and control.'[227]

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[223] Ardizzone., op. cit., p. 16.

[224] Reform of the education of teachers themselves had been a focal point for industrial countries since the 1980s. See: Nelly P. Stromquist and Karen Monkman, *Globalization and Education : Integration and Contestation across Cultures* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). and Thomas S. Popkewitz, *Changing Patterns of Power : Social Regulation and Teacher Education Reform* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

[225] See UNESCO, *Unesco Constitution*, (London: UNESCO, 1945). and UNESCO, *Reform and Innovation in Higher Education*, (Paris: 2005), <http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1935&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html> (viewed: 16/6/09).

[226] Education has a deep connection with power and economic, social and political privilege; it can be used as a weapon for cultural repression and denial of education can be used as a weapon of war. Segregated education causes inequality, inferiority and stereotyping; history can be manipulated for political purposes; and textbooks can be used to oppress child imaginations, diminish self-worth, and encourage hate. See: UNICEF, 'The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Toward a Peacebuilding Education for Children', Bush and Saltarelli Ed. *Innocenti Insight* (Florence Italy: Innocenti Research Centre, 2000). <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight4.pdf> (viewed 11/05/09).

[227] Ibid., p. v. Quoting Mehr Khan, Director of UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Peace education,[228] consists of people 'consciously striving to educate their successors not for the existing state of affairs but so as to make possible a future better humanity.'[229] UNESCO aims to develop citizens with the ability to cope with difficult and uncertain situations, and the ability to resolve conflicts through non-violent means. This will be achieved by developing 'inner peace in the minds of students so that they can establish more firmly the qualities of tolerance, compassion, sharing and caring.'[230] A component of peace education is 'global education' which incorporates a range of themes[231] into a conceptual model that comprises four dimensions: a temporal dimension linking the past, present and future, a spatial dimension creating an awareness of the interdependent nature of the world, an issues dimension that studies connections between contemporary issues, and an inner dimension that identifies the connection between resolving world issues and the developing of an inner self and spiritual awareness.[232]

It has been proposed that peace education is also a form of indoctrination, an enculturation into Western culture and a reflection of Western hegemony. This notion presupposes a mainstream acceptance of peace pedagogy, not the resistance it actually faces.[233] On the contrary, peace education challenges Western hegemony, questioning

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[228] D. Hicks, *Education for Peace* (London: Routledge, 1988).

[229] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (San Diego: NuVision Publications, 2007). p. 95. Peace education is also known as: education for democracy, civic education, tolerance education, human rights education and education for sustainable development, are ultimately education for creating a culture of peace. Growing out of works of Johan Galtung, Elise and Kenneth Boulding, John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Paulo Freire and many others, peace education is a holistic, dynamic, transformative, and multi-disciplinary field, that calls for long-term responses to conflict from intra-personal to international levels in order to create more just and sustainable futures

[230] UNESCO, *Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy.* (November 1995). II.6-II.12., p. 9. Declaration of the 44th session of the International Conference on Education (Geneva, October 1994) endorsed by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eight session (Paris, November 1995).These qualities lead to the 'ability to recognize and accept the values which exist in the diversity of individuals, genders, peoples and cultures'; and the ability 'to communicate, share and co-operate with others' to solve problems and work toward a just, peaceful and democratic community.

[231] Including the environment and ecology, peace, tolerance, conflict avoidance, personal health, cooperative skills, multiculturalism, comparative views on human values, and human and child rights

[232] Susan Fountain, *Peace Education in Unicef* (New York: UNICEF Staff Working Papers 1999). p. 10-11.

[233] Ardizzone., op. cit., p. 22.

dominant structures and institutionalised oppression, it moves power out of the teacher's hands and into the hands of students, thus taking proactive action in hope of preventing any form of unethical indoctrination. Its intention is for students to question, critically analyse, think independently, and make informed choices based not only on analysis of the present, but also with a vision of a preferred future. It encourages students to engage with, and if necessary to challenge, religious, political, national, scientific, economic, and pedagogical, values, ideologies and structures. Peace education hence not only promotes positive international relations but also transforms society into one of 'critical, informed citizenry that is prepared to work for the common good.'[234]

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[234] Ibid., p. 23.

Conclusion

> The child is the forgotten citizen, and yet, if statesmen and educationists once came to realise the terrific force that is in childhood for good or for evil, I feel they would give it priority above everything else. All problems of humanity depend on man himself; if man is disregarded in his construction, the problems will never be solved.[235]

In addressing the scenario posed in Huntington's Clash of Civilisations of a war between cultures, the accepted practice of enculturation must be considered. Recognising that some enculturation is a necessary basis for education it is critical that it is combined with cultivating the student's ability to question traditions and to challenge the status quo should it be required. A fundamentalist paradigm transmits beliefs without engaging in critical thinking, with priority placed on conforming to a state of mind that combines belief in a single absolute truth with a complete trust placed on an authoritative book or person. In the case of Christian fundamentalism, this paradigm translates to the conviction that there is one True God, the Bible contains His authoritative word, and of a single exclusive path to salvation found only by conforming one's mind to the narrative the church prescribes. As a consequence any person who does not conform to this narrative is seen as having "rejected God", choosing instead to live life by their own rules and worship "fake" gods. These are their beliefs and consequently they bring their children up to believe the same thing; creating a perpetuating cycle of violence.

Many fundamentalists are not aware that their unchanging truth is in fact a new interpretation of a truth shaped by theological debates and politics over the last two millennia. Most are unaware that their interpretation of the Bible has been distorted by the modern paradigm from which they see it. They do not realise that by adopting a simplistic literal interpretation, without regard for Jewish *midrashim* and the role of *mythos*, prevents fundamentalists from understanding the "more-than-literal" meaning that the authors embedded in their writings. When children are brought up with in a fused premodern-modern paradigm based on a single unchangeable truth, they struggle to interact with the postmodern world and its many truths and constant change. Insecurities grow as the now adolescent or adult fundamentalist feels that the basis from

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[235] Montessori, The Forgotten Citizen., op. cit.

which they understand reality is under threat. If there is no absolute truth then how is one to distinguish what is good from what is evil? How can one evaluate all the conflicting truths that surround them? These fears lead to an even more distorted version of their religion, one caught up in identity and ideology.

At the heart of this challenging dilemma are the loving intentions of parents who only want the best for their child. Most are not aware of the violent repercussions of their fundamentalist beliefs and methods of education. Part 1 identified a number of ways these peaceful intentions cause direct harm to the lives of children and indirectly pose a threat to the future of humanity. Part 1 justified the need for urgent attention to be given to the ethical dilemma.

Part 2 explored the Christian fundamentalist paradigm and how children are brought into it. Fundamentalist schools in Australia, the "new independent Christian schools", were examined according to Snook's criteria of intention, and evaluated to be explicitly committing an unethical indoctrination of children into the Christian fundamentalist paradigm. Surveys showed that that the majority of parents share the school's intentions, hoping that by sending the child to the school, the child will lead a life that focussed on Jesus. Surveys with graduates provided for an estimate of around an 80% success rate.

Part 3 gave consideration to how such a dilemma might be resolved. Conflict analysis and conflict resolution tools were drawn upon and four key solutions identified. The *Convention of the Rights of the Child* was examined and from a legal perspective it was identified that the fundamentalist schools in Australia are in breach of the rights of the child. As a signatory on the CRC, the Australian government has an obligation to see that this breach be addressed and to protect student from indoctrination at schools. It was suggested that indoctrination could be avoided by shifting from "education into religion" to "education about religion" and some existing guidelines were provided. Although addressing indoctrination at schools is an important step, it was recognised that the ultimate power to convert the young lies in the hands of parents. For fundamentalist parents to change their approach to childhood conversion they must first see a need to change, and then they will need the strength, capability and resources to do so. Fundamentalists respect the authorities of the church leaders and by engaging with higher levels of leadership, major paradigm shifts are possible. Education on the history of one's own beliefs is essential, as well as providing people an accurate perspective on

how their beliefs compare to the beliefs of others. Aside from the fundamentalist leaders, the government as well as institutions, media and individuals can help with the education process.

Increasing awareness of self in context will begin to build up the confidence of fundamentalists and allow them to deconstruct their faith and question parts that require questioning. Without this understanding fundamentalists remain in the early stages of faith development, and their religion remains an identity-driven ideology. With a broader education, fundamentalists will be more willing to enter inter-faith dialogues and dialogues between civilisations, replacing the sympathy with empathy and replacing an exclusive approach with an inclusive one; this would be a big step towards developing a more peaceful culture on the world-stage. Encouraging beliefs to be based on a personal evaluation of available evidence, held open to change in the light of new evidence, allows for one's understanding of "God" and "His" creative process of our evolving and expanding universe to be more deeply understood and appreciated,[236] moving humanity to higher levels of faith and morality.

The closing chapter provided an introduction to UNESCO's model of peace education, a possible new approach to education that by its nature addresses any elements of indoctrination in schools and homes. A pedagogy for peace education cultivates a sense of inner peace in each child and helps them come to their own understanding of themselves in the context of the universe. Peace education invites teachers and parents to become students again, engaging with the child in developing the skills to think critically, to adapt to changes, and to continue life-long learning; skills that are essential for ingredients for self-determination, inner peace and a sense of confidence that every person needs in this rapidly-changing global society.

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[236] I think it is important for me to briefly note my understanding of the concept of "God" (or call it Allah or Jehovah or the Father or Dios or The Universe). I see "God" as a personification of the ultimate power behind every aspect of life. "He" is everywhere, from the quantum atom to the macro universe. "His" purpose creative expression though the ever expanding universe and through every life form his power animates. As humans become more conscious of our consciousness, our participation in the creation process grows. There is value in personifying this force, as it more comprehensible for our human mind to communicate with a "God", than an abstract undefinable energy. All life is synchronistically interconnected– humans completely reliant on each other and on other life forms to survive. Each one of us has a separate consciousness, but ultimately each is an expression of the single, all-connecting, all-powerful, awe-inspiring, power of God.

Might we be able to transcend the zero-sum games of this world? Move from science *or* religion to science *and* religion? From Jesus *or* Buddha to Jesus *and* Buddha? From us *or* them to us *and* them? If we work together*,* try to understand each other, learn from each other, and appreciate our differences, might we avoid the impending clash of civilisations? Can we empathise with each other's journeys? Can we see that we all share the same pursuit for Truth? Time and word constraints have led this discourse to be suggestive rather than conclusive but I hope it has provided some useful insights into the fundamentalist perspective and some clarity on this significant and challenging dilemma. Each new generation is a blank slate – an opportunity to create a world of violence or a world of peace. As I see it, the choice is up to us.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Flowchart – History of Christianity

The Christian movement followed the ministry and crucifixion of a Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish carpenter c. 30 CE in and around Jerusalem. The first division appeared between Judaic and Pauline-Christianity over the requirement of gentile Christians to observe of the Jewish law, and the destruction of Jerusalem saw Pauline-Christianity grow increasingly distant from Judaic-Christian tradition. The Great Schism of 1054 saw Christianity split into Catholics in the West and Orthodox in the East, and nearly 500-years later Martin Luther's ninety-five theses initiated the Protestant Reformation away from Catholicism. Another big influence on fundamentalism was that of the evangelical Revivalist and Pietistic Christian movements of the 1730-40s led by George Whitefield, John Edwards and John Wesley.[237]

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[237] Compiled from relevant literatures.

Appendix 2: Flowchart – Christianity in Australia

Christianity arrived in Australia with the First Fleet in the form of an evangelical Church of England carrying missionary visions of a reclaimed criminal class, converting the Aborigines, and setting up a new base for evangelising to other islands in the South Seas.[238] Protestant values have remained central to Australian culture, evolving along the two major strands: the Anglican Church (Church of England renamed in 1981)[239] with a particularly fundamentalist strand prevalent in the Sydney Diocese; and the Uniting Church (Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalists joined together in 1972), who take a more liberal and historical approach to the Bible. Conflicts within denominations led to the present four dominating headings of fundamentalisms visible in Australia: reformed evangelicalism, left-wing evangelicalism, right-wing evangelicalism and the charismatic and Pentecostal movements.[240] See flowchart on the next page.[241]

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[238] Piggin.

[239] Justins, 'Christian Parent Controlled Schools in Australia - a Study of the Relationship between Foundational Values and Prevailing Practices'. p. vi.

[240] Piggin. p. 175. See Appendix 2 for a flowcharted history of Christianity in Australia.

[241] Compiled from relevant literatures.

Appendix 3: PEW Survey – Second Coming

	Believe in 2nd coming	Time of Christ's return... Is revealed in Bible	In your lifetime
	%	%	%
Total	79	33	20
Total Protestant	83	36	23
White evangelical	95	39	33
White mainline	60	19	7
Black Protestant	92	53	34
Total Catholic	70	27	12
White non-Hispanic	69	23	8
Bible is...			
Literal word of God	95	52	37
Word of God, not literal	76	24	11

Opinions of Christians about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

Appendix 4: Religious Mobility

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Table 29
Indicators of Religious Mobility
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	% Stable	Gain/Losses	Net Change (Base = 100%)
A. Major Religions			
Protestant	90.4%	.705	97.2%
Catholic	82.3	.562	92.3
Jewish	86.6	1.000	100.0
Other	70.5	1.720	121.2
None	45.4	3.133	215.0
B. Major Protestant Denominations			
Southern Baptist	71.8	.677	90.9
United Methodist	63.0	.902	96.4
Lutheran	80.0	1.633	112.7
Presbyterian	56.7	1.156	106.7
Episcopalian	71.6	1.257	107.3
Interdenominational	47.1	2.292	168.3
Disciples of Christ	63.9	.884	95.8
Mormon	90.8	3.270	120.3
Fundamentalist	73.7	.889	97.1
Moderate	57.0	.600	82.8
Liberal	46.4	.450	70.5
C. Fundamentalism/Liberalism			
Fundamentalist	80.3	.825	96.3
Moderate	81.9	.683	94.5
Liberal	71.6	2.020	128.2

Source: GSS 1984–1987

'Table 29 presents three measures of religious mobility. In the first column, the percent of people raised in a particular religion who are currently still members of that faith is shown. In the second column, the ratio of converts to disaffiliators is given. In the last column, the net change between the number raised in a religion and the number currently preferring that religion is shown. (This ratio has to be greater than one if net change is greater than 100%.) For example, 90.4% of respondents raised as Protestants are still Protestants. For every 10 disaffiliations there are only 7.05 converts so the number of current Protestants falls below the base total (97.2% of the base or a loses of -2.8 percentage points).'[242]

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[242] Smith., op. cit.

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Table 31
                Probabilities of Parents Attending Church Services
                      by Religion Respondent Raised In
                        (Average of Mother/Father)
A. Major Religions
   Protestant                                                .551
   Catholic                                                  .619
   Jewish                                                    .318
   Other                                                     .461
   None                                                      .061
B. Major Protestant Denominations
   Southern Baptist                                          .565
   United Methodist                                          .541
   Lutheran                                                  .572
   Presbyterian                                              .509
   Episcopalian                                              .572
   Interdenominational                                       .388
   Disciples of Christ                                       .448
   Mormon                                                    .620
   Fundamentalist                                            .599
   Moderate                                                  .547
   Liberal                                                   .432
C. Fundamentalism/Liberalism
   Fundamentalist                                            .591
   Moderate                                                  .589
   Liberal                                                   .426
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Source: GSS 1984-1987

'In general, more exposure (as measured by frequency of parental attendance of services) increases the likelihood that people raised in a religion will stay in that faith. For parents who attended church less than 38% of the time 79% of their children remained in the parental religion, for those who attended 39-85% of the time the retention rate was 90%, and for those who attended over 85% of the time the retention rate reached 91.5%.'[243]

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[243] Ibid., op. cit.

Appendix 5: AACS Annual Report 2003

STATEMENT OF AFFIRMATION

1.   About the Supreme Authority of the Bible

We affirm that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are God's infallible and inerrant revelation to man. It is thus the supreme standard by which all things are to be judged, and the authoritative guide for all life and conduct.

2.   About the Lordship of Christ

We affirm that Jesus Christ is from eternity God's only begotten Son; He was born of a virgin and is therefore truly God and man. Through Him God created and sustains the world. Jesus suffered and died for our sins and rose again for our salvation. He ascended into heaven where He now sits on the right hand of the Father making intercession for His people. Christ is the Head of the Church and will come again to judge the world and complete the salvation of His people and the Kingdom of God.

3.   About the Task of the Christian School

We affirm that a Christian school is a school where Christ is confessed as the Lord of creation. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, its special task is to teach the children to understand the world from a Christ-centred perspective and to equip them for their calling in life in subjection to Jesus Christ as Lord.

We affirm that, in pursuit of their task, Christian schools only employ Christian teachers and Christian non-teaching staff who are able to subscribe to this Statement of Affirmation.

4.   About the Role of Government

We affirm that all citizens owe obedience to the legally instituted governments of our nation which derive their authority from God and are responsible to Him for promoting and maintaining public security, justice and welfare.

We affirm that the responsibility for the education and guidance of children lies in the first instance with their parents or legal guardians, and that governments are duty bound to provide, without distinction and on general terms of equality, both the legal right and the opportunity for parents and guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by public authorities, that provide for the education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.[244]

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[244] AACS. Annual Report, (2008)., p. 18.

> ## MISSION STATEMENT
> The AACS Mission is to assist Christian schools
> in Australia and advocate and protect
> their interests at the national level.

In pursuit of this Statement of Affirmation and Mission, the Association has as its main objectives to:

- provide a combined Christian schools voice on issues relevant to Christian education;

- enable combined representation at the national level on behalf of Christian schools;

- undertake co-operative activities that are in the overall interests of Christian schools;

- disseminate appropriate information; and

- undertake any other activities that are consistent with the purpose of the Association.

The following AACS services have resulted from the above objectives:

Government Liaison and Negotiation

AACS has direct liaison and consultations with the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training and the Shadow Minister. This provides for consultation and negotiation at the highest level. The AACS represents the Christian school sector on a number of committees convened by the Australian Government. AACS maintains close contact with the most senior officers in the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training.

Christian Schools Representation

At the request of Christian Schools Australia, Christian Parent Controlled Schools or Individual Member Schools, the Executive Officer takes representations on behalf of member schools to the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training or directly to the appropriate federal politicians.

AACS National Office

With an Executive Officer based in Canberra, the Association has a voice and presence in the National Capital. This facilitates access to senior officers in DEST, as well as federal politicians of all political parties and other national non-government school authorities/associations.

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[245] AACS. Annual Report, (2008)., p. 19.

Appendix 6: Justin's Research Results

(A)   The Reasons Parents Send Their Children to CPC Schools

Table 5:5 – The Reasons Parents Send Their Children to Christian Parent Controlled Schools – According to Students and Graduates			
My parents sent me to this school because:	**Constituent Group**	**Agree**	**Distribution of Responses**
the school seeks to put Jesus at the centre of everything	Graduates (n=70)	A = 89%	SA – 60% MA – 29% MD – 7% SD –4 %
	Senior Students (n=402)	A = 70%	SA – 31% MA – 39% MD – 17% SD – 13%
	Parents (n=82)	A = 87%	SA – 62% MA – 24% MD – 10% SD –4 %
there are Christian teachers	Graduates (n=70)	A = 85%	SA – 44% MA – 41% MD – 10% SD –4 %
	Senior Students (n=402)	A = 70%	SA – 14% MA – 56% MD – 19 % SD – 11%
	Parents (n=81)	A = 96%	SA – 63% MA – 33% MD – 3% SD – 1%
they believe that the Bible is of central importance to all things	Graduates (n=70)	A = 89%	SA – 57% MA –31% MD – 9% SD –3 %
	Senior Students (n=401)	A = 66%	SA – 23% MA – 43% MD – 20 % SD – 14%
	Parents (n=82)	A = 87%	SA – 70% MA – 17% MD – 10% SD –4 %
of dissatisfaction with local state schools	Graduates (n=69)	A = 43%	SA – 19% MA – 24% MD – 34% SD –22 %
	Senior Students (n=403)	A = 53%	SA – 25% MA – 28% MD – 28 % SD – 18%
	Parents (n=80)	A = 56%	SA – 28% MA – 29% MD – 26% SD –18 %
there is good discipline	Graduates (n=70)	A = 36%	SA – 7% MA – 29% MD – 49% SD –16 %
	Senior Students (n=401)	A = 40%	SA – 8% MA – 32% MD – 38 % SD – 22%
	Parents (n=82)	A = 90%	SA – 33% MA – 57% MD – 10% SD – 0%
so that I will have better employment opportunities	Graduates (n=70)	A = 23%	SA – 7% MA – 17% MD – 50% SD – 26%
	Senior Students (n=402)	A = 41%	SA – 11% MA – 30% MD – 35% SD – 24%
	Parents (n=82)	A = 56%	SA – 7% MA – 49% MD – 31% SD – 13%
A = Strongly Agree + Mostly Agree SA – Strongly Agree MA – Mostly Agree MD – Mostly Disagree SD – Strongly Disagree **n** = number of participants completing each survey item. Max. number of participants was 82, 405 and 70 respectively.			

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[246] Justins, 'Christian Parent Controlled Schools in Australia - a Study of the Relationship between Foundational Values and Prevailing Practices'.p. 190

(B)   The Bible as Guide

Survey Items	Group	Agree	Distribution of Responses
This school teaches students to understand the Bible	Parents (n=82)	A = 83%	SA=23% MA=60% MD=15% SD=2%
	Students (n=403)	A = 71%	SA=20% MA=51% MD=23% SD=6%
	Graduates (n=70)	A = 87%	SA=30% MA=57% MD=11% SD=1%
In my teaching, I have not really been adequately prepared to teach from a completely biblical perspective	Teachers (n=295)	A = 38%	SA=8% MA=31% MD=45% SD=17%
The Bible is often used in my class	Teachers (n=293)	A = 57%	SA=24% MA=33% MD=36% SD=7%
... The Bible is often used in my English class	Students (n=400)	A = 23%	SA=5% MA=18% MD=34% SD=44%
... The Bible was often used in my English class	Graduates (n=69)	A = 25%	SA=6% MA=19% MD=46% SD=29%
I (My parents) chose this school for my children (me) because the Bible is of central importance to all that happens	Parents (n=82)	A = 87%	SA=70% MA=17% MD=10% SD=4%
	Students (n=401)	A = 66%	SA=23% MA=43% MD=20% SD=14%
	Graduates (n=70)	A = 89%	SA=57% MA=31% MD=9% SD=3%
The Bible is essential for students to understand science	Parents (n=82)	A = 67%	SA=40% MA=27% MD=22% SD=11%
	Teachers (n=293)	A = 77%	SA=42% MA=35% MD=19% SD=5%
	Students (n=402)	A = 45%	SA=16% MA=29% MD=29% SD=26%
	Graduates (n=70)	A = 61%	SA=27% MA=34% MD=30% SD=9%
The Bible is essential for students to understand the world / human society	Parents (n=82)	A = 94%	SA=73% MA=21% MD=2% SD=4%
	Teachers (n=295)	A = 94%	SA=69% MA=25% MD=5% SD=1%
	Students (n=403)	A = 57%	SA=20% MA=37% MD=25% SD=18%
	Graduates (n=69)	A = 80%	SA=51% MA=29% MD=15% SD=6%

Table 5:11 - The Bible as Guide.

A = Strongly Agree + Mostly Agree   SA = Strongly Agree   MA = Mostly Agree MD = Mostly Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

n = Number of participants completing survey. Max. possible was 82 parents, 405 senior students, 70 graduates and 296 teachers.

Appendix 7: Convention on the Rights of the Child

U.N. General Assembly

Document A/RES/44/25 (12 December 1989) with Annex

Article 14

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living; the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

Appendix 8: TOLEDO Key Guiding Principles

Whenever teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools is provided in OSCE participating States, the following guiding principles should be considered:

1. Teaching about religions and beliefs must be provided in ways that are fair, accurate and based on sound scholarship. Students should learn about religions and beliefs in an environment respectful of human rights, fundamental freedoms and civic values.

2. Those who teach about religions and beliefs should have a commitment to religious freedom that contributes to a school environment and practices that foster protection of the rights of others in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding among members of the school community.

3. Teaching about religions and beliefs is a major responsibility of schools, but the manner in which this teaching takes place should not undermine or ignore the role of families and religious or belief organizations in transmitting values to successive generations.

4. Efforts should be made to establish advisory bodies at different levels that take an inclusive approach to involving different stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of curriculum and in the training of teachers.

5. Where a compulsory programme involving teaching about religions and beliefs is not sufficiently objective, efforts should be made to revise it to make it more balanced and impartial, but where this is not possible, or cannot be accomplished immediately, recognizing opt-out rights may be a satisfactory solution for parents and pupils, provided that the opt-out arrangements are structured in a sensitive and non-discriminatory way.

6. Those who teach about religions and beliefs should be adequately educated to do so. Such teachers need to have the knowledge, attitude and skills to teach about religions and beliefs in a fair and balanced way. Teachers need not only subject-matter competence but pedagogical skills so that they can interact with students and help students interact with each other in sensitive and respectful ways.

7. Preparation of curricula, textbooks and educational materials for teaching about religions and beliefs should take into account religious and non-religious views in a way that is inclusive, fair, and respectful. Care should be taken to avoid inaccurate or prejudicial material, particularly when this reinforces negative stereotypes.

8. Curricula should be developed in accordance with recognized professional standards in order to ensure a balanced approach to study about religions and beliefs. Development and implementation of curricula should also include open and fair procedures that give all interested parties appropriate opportunities to offer comments and advice.

9. Quality curricula in the area of teaching about religions and beliefs can only contribute effectively to the educational aims of the Toledo Guiding Principles if teachers are professionally trained to use the curricula and receive ongoing training to further develop their knowledge and competences regarding this subject matter. Any basic teacher preparation should be framed and developed according to democratic and human rights principles and include insight into cultural and religious diversity in society.

10. Curricula focusing on teaching about religions and beliefs should give attention to key historical and contemporary developments pertaining to religion and belief, and reflect global and local issues. They should be sensitive to different local manifestations of religious and secular plurality found in schools and the communities they serve. Such sensitivities will help address the concerns of students, parents and other stakeholders in education.

[247]

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[247] ODIHR. op. cit.

Appendix 9: My 'Thunderbolt' Moment

This brief account of my personal case is provided to make known the perspective from which this paper was written, to demonstrate how some of the concepts discussed in this discourse apply in practice, and to help correct the misconception that a rejection of fundamentalism is a rejection of God.

The mind-explosion I have experienced is hard to describe. It was not until I began the academic research for this paper that I realised my Christian beliefs and those of my friends and family were classified as "fundamentalist." I had still thought these beliefs were that of the average Christian, and that my school, being a "non-denominational" school, must have been one of the more open and accepting schools. I was very surprised as my investigations revealed that my school was part of a recent "new independent Christian school movement" that arrived with the Dutch in the 1950s, particularly given that my mother was one of those immigrants. I was even more surprised to learn that our fundamental beliefs were part of a movement that began in the 20th century, and of the change in definition of faith. As I learned I shared my discoveries with my family and friends, which has challenged them to question too. Looking back I can see myself experiencing each of Fowler's Stages of Faith, up to Stage 5 anyway!

As I mentioned in the introduction, for the first 20 years of my life I was a passionate evangelical Christian. I was born into a Christian family (who are wonderful and I love very much) with Christian parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. I was christened at birth, and I "asked God into my heart" every time the Sunday school teacher said aloud "the prayer" at the Sydney Anglican Sunday school of my childhood. At 4 years old I began my schooling at Covenant Christian School (CCS), a new independent Christian school mentioned in chapter 6, where I spent the next 13 years of my life. During my childhood I experienced the *Intuitive-Projective* stage of faith, with the lasting fear of hell's eternal damnation a feeling that, although I do not believe hell is a real place, is still a fear deeply buried in my subconscious. It pops up on occasion when some Christians I am close to worry that I could end up in hell's fires if I do not "return to my faith in Jesus". During my years at CCS I moved on to a *Mythic-Literal* faith, my entire concept of Christianity based on a one-dimensional interpretation of the

Bible and the fundamentalist narrative that my teachers, my parents and my church shared.

During my first two years at university I moved onto the *Synthetic-Conventional* stage. I lived what I thought was a typical Christian life: daily "private-times" where I would read a chapter of a Christian book and pray. I would go to a "Bible study" group on Wednesday nights, church "youth group" at a Baptist church on Friday nights. I taught Sunday school on Sunday mornings, and attended the evening service on Sunday nights. By my own choice I was baptised and "confirmed" at 19 years old. I had completely dedicated my life to God and believed it was through Jesus I could have this relationship. I openly shared my faith with new friends, who were always a little shocked when I told them about my commitment. I had a coherent orientation in my outlook to life and I felt secure in my Christian identity. I was not afraid of stating what I believed. In my mind life seemed clear although, as Fowler points out, at this stage I had not yet stepped outside the paradigm to reflect on it and I was unaware that I even had it. Although I had not stepped outside the Christian paradigm, I was always interested in learning about other people's beliefs: if someone was not a Christian I wanted to know why. Yet I struggled to get any answers from my new non-Christian friends at university. They just "didn't believe Christianity was the truth" but they had no real reason for this choice. They did not want to think about it. The church's explanation that these "non-believers" wanted to live by their own rules rather than God's rules (in other words they reject God because they want to have sex, drink alcohol and not go to church) seemed to make sense in my fundamentalist mind. But what I couldn't understand was how people could care so much about such fickle desires and ruling their own lives for the short 80 years or so we have on earth. This did not compare to the ever-lasting life Christianity had on offer from my point of view.

The transition point for me was like Fowler suggests, caused by 'a serious clash or contradiction between valued authority sources'. It came in the form of a boyfriend's father, who had been brought up Catholic and had spent much time in his youth researching the facts and the frauds of religion. It was at this time, at the age of 20, that I first learned about the Crusades and the Inquisition, about Pagan nature of Easter and Christmas, and I realised for the first time that the whole world does not base concept of time on Jesus' birth (BC/AD), but that other civilisations have their own measurements

of history. This 'thunderbolt moment' transitioned me into an *Individuative-Reflective* stage of faith. Following an emotional battle, with everything I based my life seemingly falling apart, I abandoned religion and escaped from the narrow-minded world that surrounded me in Sydney. I travelled and lived overseas for three years, exposing myself to the world-views people in Thailand, Japan and all over Europe.

Although I had rejected Christianity, I had not rejected "God". Prayer was deeply embedded in my mental processes and whether it was my own deluded mind or was truly a connection with 'God,' I could see my prayers being answered, and I felt the comfort and security of a fatherly omni-present force protecting me and guiding me in my daily life. For the first time in my life I began to claim my own identity, with my own boundaries and connections with the divine. On return to Sydney I was once again surrounded by fundamentalism and now feeling at an emotional-distance from it, I decided to do some research for myself. My 92 year old Opa had a fall, I moved in as his carer and was rewarded with the most valuable thing in the world: time. I taught myself the things I had missed out on in my education: the theory of evolution, and a big perspective of the history of humanity in comparison to the history of the universe. I tried to comprehend how humans had evolved so rapidly in such a short space of time. I was slowly becoming more and more reflective, increasing my capacity for critical reflection and dealing with the images still with me from my fundamentalist past. At first I was studying by reading library books, watching documentaries and overloading my Internet browser with hundreds of links. I discovered a new love of learning and soon arrived back at university, but unlike my first degree (in Business), this time I was studying Arts. I wanted to know about the world, about history, about philosophy, psychology, politics and other religions. I chose to study in the interdisciplinary field of Peace and Conflict Studies, which allowed me to pursue such knowledge and piece together the missing pieces of the puzzle in my mind. The very nature of Peace and Conflict Studies, initiated a further transition, now into a *Conjunctive* faith. Simultaneous to learning about philosophies of peace, and the relationship between religion and war, I was continuing to research and document the history and theology of Christianity. My purpose in this search was driven by a desire to share my knowledge and the freedom of thought, with my younger sisters and cousins, who had also attended CCS and I saw as earlier versions of myself still stuck at stage 2 and stage 3. They had not been exposed to the wider perspectives I had been exposed to through my ex-

boyfriend, my travels and my research. Through my inner voice God was leading me to do this research, and faithfully I followed.

I particularly focussed my search on the evidence that supports the two fundamental exegeses: the divinity of Jesus and the holy inerrant Word of God. I considered the "Jesus: liar, lunatic or lord" argument, which presents three mutually exclusive options for who Jesus was, and concludes that unless you are going to call Jesus a liar or a lunatic, then you had better call him Lord.[248] I discovered there were many alternative scenarios which this argument leaves out. I considered the possibility that Jesus was a great teacher whose story, following his death, grew more dramatic as it was transmitted over time. This proposition seemed a whole lot more likely to me than a physical ascension into the heavens above. Where would he go? Heaven, if it is anywhere, is not above us among the stars and other planets! I may have believed this idea had I still thought the earth was flat, however things have changed since the time of Jesus. Discovering that the supernatural elements such as the virgin birth and resurrection were also elements of pagan religions, gives credence to the alternative view that Jesus was a great teacher but not divine. It seemed that these elements of pagan myth were added to the story to fit in the context of Roman pagan religion. The fact that Christmas and Easter were pagan traditions adopted by Christianity,[249] made it seem highly likely that the stories of Jesus are contextually shaped.[250]

Similarly, the Bible is justified as the inerrant "Word of God" simply because the church makes this claim. The church gives no consideration to the inadequacy of such an internal circular logic, or to the fact that the verses used support this claim were written *before* the the books of the Canon had been selected.[251] Similarly no mention is that Paul and other New Testament authors did not even infer that their writings were being

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[248] The 'Trilemma' argument first put forth by C.S.Lewis, but as restated for Christian youth by Josh McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter* (New York: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977, 2004).

[249] Christmas was on the winter equinox (25th December in those days) – was a celebration of the birth of the sun-god. Easter was on the spring equinox – for thousands of years had been a celebration of the death and resurrection of Ishtar, the goddess of new-life.

[250] See Spong, *A New Christianity for a New World*. On page titled: *Jesus*.

[251] For example, 2 Timothy 3:16, *"All Scripture is God-breathed"*. See the opening of each Bible book.

divinely inspired.[252] I looked for errors in the Bible, and I found they were numerous. From inevitable translation errors that come from the fact that Ancient Hebrew did not contain punctuation[253] to discrepancies over event details,[254] all of which were soon "harmonized" away in my discussions with Christians; either with far-fetched explanations, or with the backup harmonization "you just have to have faith".[255] In my Christian education the willingness of the early Christians to die for their beliefs was glorified, and yet there was no mention of the Inquisitional killing of anyone who would *not* believe.[256] The Christian narrative was taught just as Spong states, as if it 'dropped out of heaven in a fully developed form'.[257] There was no mention of the controversial theological debates that moulded it along the way. The research for this paper was the crux of my journey, and it is my hope that along with providing insights for academic readers, that it may provide some points for self-reflection for fundamentalists and that it

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[252] For example, Luke makes it particular clear he is attempting to put together a cohesive historical account of what people are talking about; he is clearly not claiming to be writing words inspired by God. See: Luke 1:1-4.

[253] Gerald L. Schroeder, *The Hidden Face of God : How Science Reveals the Ultimate Truth* (New York ; London: Free Press, 2001).

[254] For example, the conflicting genealogies of Matthew and Luke identify different fathers for Joseph's father (Jesus' grandfather).

Another example, is that each of the gospels state that Mary Magdalene visited Jesus tomb with a different person (Mathew states she was with one other woman while Mark states she was with two, Luke states three, and John states she went alone).

[255] For example the Joseph's father might be harmonized by stating that 'Joseph's father might have changed his name sometime during his life from Jacob to Heli'.

Similarly the discrepancy between the women at the tomb can be harmonized by stating that 'Mary Magdalene could have made one trip to the tomb alone. She could have followed this up with repetitive returns to the city and trips with various combinations of other women' – this is 'a very improbable story, but one that allows the Bible to be free of error.'

See: B. A. Robinson, 'Harmonizing Apparent Conflicts & Errors in the Bible'. (Ontario: Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, April 2009). <www.religioustolerance.org/ine_none4.htm>.

[256] Popular readings among fundamentalist youth include: Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *Don't Check Your Brains at the Door* (New York: Word Publishing, 1992). and Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1988). These books provide one-sided arguments that were very convincing to me while my mind was looking inside the Christian paradigm. Once I learned how to critically analyse and was able to think through these arguments for myself, I realised just how biased the facts presented are, and how mislead the format of the argument is.

For a liberal Christian opinion see: John Shelby Spong, *The Sins of Scripture : Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Reveal the God of Love* (Pymble, N.S.W.: HarperCollins, 2005).

[257] Spong, *A New Christianity for a New World*. On page titled: *Jesus*. op. cit.

may help assist them on the emotionally challenging process of questioning one's faith and beliefs.

Transitioning from a *Literal* faith to a *Conjunctive* faith is not an easy process. Taking responsibility for one's own faith, and ensuring it is a faith that you have chosen for yourself rather than a consequence of your upbringing, is a worthwhile pursuit. It gives generous rewards both during the process and at the end when you feel your relationship with God deepen in understanding and integrity. Breaking from institutionalised intermediaries, you move from a world that appears black and white to unveil an exciting reality of a God and Universe of many colours and many forms with whom you may live your life in accordance with "His" will, which in a strange way is entirely connected to your own will. It is my understanding that God is not a separate super-human consciousness, sitting up in the clouds with a magic wand. Instead "He" is an all-encompassing presence that we humans personify in order to comprehend and communicate with. However "He" is not a he, "He" is the powerful presence behind life, encompassing the tiniest quantum molecule inside a single grain of sand, and extending out to the most faraway planets in galaxies trillions of light years away. "He" is in the air, in the water, in our food, and in our mind. An omni-presence that allows "Him" to know everything, to know how many hairs are on our heads, and to know each and every one of our thoughts. I believe it is through this knowing of our thoughts, that prayers are answered. Our thoughts are transmitted and in themselves have consequences. "Ask and you will receive, knock and the door will open." I have realised you can talk to God in your mind, and listen to "Him" through the many ways "He" communicates, not only through historical Holy Books, but through nature, through other humans, through your deepest intuitions, through art, books, music – through everything.

I have noticed in my life that by asking God and listening to "Him", your past, present and future self combine in a way that allows your will to align with God's will. It seems that the most unlikely desires, if they will lead to a positive result in the long run for the collective conscious of life, may be fulfilled if only you ask. I think that the most satisfying thing you can do in your life is find your purpose and live it out. *Ask how you can provide the most benefit for the most people*. Listen to your intuition as this is God communicating with you. Understand your place in the universe and your unique role in

fulfilling God's purpose: to create. God created us and is continuing to create. We are still evolving and this process will never stop. Why does God do this? So that He can know Himself. We have God inside us and we are made *in* His image. We are God's expression of himself. As we express ourselves, we express God. How do we love God? By loving all people. Loving our planet. Being grateful for all we have. By having faith, listening to the God's communication, following His signs and our deepest intuitions, and thereby living out our individual and collective roles in the universe. Fulfilling our potential.

When Jesus said 'I've not come to call the righteous but to call sinners to repent,' He was calling for an improvement of behaviour. By following His example we will see a change in the hearts and minds of people, that will lead to a state of peace within individual conscious and collective conscious. Jesus was a teacher, a healer and eventually executed for his ideas and for the radical stands he stood against the religious leaders and status quo, against the structural violence of his world 2000-years ago, the cultural-societal prescribed path that he faced, and leading a revolution of heart and mind. It is now in the 21st century, that it is our turn to follow Jesus, and do the same.

But how do we do this? Our identity is caught up in our religion. We don't know who we are without it. How would we define ourselves? How would we decipher what is right from what is wrong without the Bible as our guidebook? We share with our friends and family a wonderful blanket of security. We are warm, comfortable, and happy to think that our place in the afterlife is assured. Questioning this brings a fear of the future, and the uncertainty it holds. We feel we have no time to research these matters for ourselves, and we do not feel the need. We are satisfied with the simple explanation our church provides us of good versus evil, it makes sense and the outside world seems so confusing. Most of all we confront our fear of punishment, punishment for questioning, eternal punishment in hell's fires should the fundamentalism be right, and the new path we choose for ourselves be wrong. What will happen to me after I die? These fears will soon be met with God's love and assurance once again.

For the last 6000-years, humankind has become more conscious of our consciousness, ever since we, in mythological terms, "ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge." As a side effect we have seen ourselves become more separate from other life forms and from

God. However, this does not need to be the case. Our expanded consciousness is an amazing gift that allows us to express God in new ways. However we can expand our consciousness, express ourselves as creative individuals, and remain aware of the underlying connectedness of all life. When we disconnect from God, either through disfigurations of religion or by abandoning religion altogether, our separateness makes us feel alone and afraid, of what will happen to our consciousness when our human bodies die. But we are not separate from our environment or from each other. Our existence is interconnected. We cannot survive without our air, food, water and relationships. Plants transform our carbon to oxygen and provide us our food. God can be seen in every process, every cell, every animal, and inside us. Our existence is not comprised of the separateness we feel in our human defined identities, the separate consciousness of 'me,' but our existence is interdependent on everything. We are together, there is no 'me' there is only 'us'.

The separate conscious we experience is a *temporary illusion*, allowing God to express his creativity and experience different realities. One day we will return to God, we will no longer separate, no longer experiencing the highs and lows – we will return to blissful peace of oneness. This is a place that we can meditate into, experiencing a temporary reuniting with God. This is what Buddhists find as they are enlightened. Even atheists must imagine the feeling of death, when our separate consciousness ceases to be conscious. We are returning to the state we were in before we were conscious – a return to nothing *and* a return to everything. Realise your connectedness, realise that you are not separate from God now nor will you ever be – then you can never feel alone. If you can see yourself in all things, you understand that death is not death, for you can never die. Even when our planet dies, we will continue to exist, beginning the wonderful evolutionary creative process once again in some alternate universe in some alternate time.

There is much to explore and learn and it is overwhelming at first. But we soon realise that we are all in this together, manifesting our individual and collective purposes in life and so the questioning and evaluation process becomes easy. Family and friends will see the joys of experiencing the deeper levels of reality you are experiencing. There is no need to fear anything – instead focus your mind and emotions on love. On loving God

and loving others, for in the synchronicity of life, God, other humans and the Universe, are all *you*.

My faith today is stronger than ever. 'How?' asks my Dad, 'Based upon what?' My faith and understanding of God is not based on an authoritatively prescribed absolute, so there is no stock-standard simplistic answer as my Dad is able to place on the "historical evidence" as presented in the Christian Bible. My faith is based on deductions drawn from my own analytical evaluation of all the knowledge I have been exposed to and all the experiences I have had. As I am exposed to new knowledge and more experiences, the basis for my faith grows stronger and closer to the Truth, which I believe is a universal objective, even if humans will never fully discover it. This includes deductions drawn from what I see, hear, smell, taste, touch and feel; from my current understanding of language, history, science, religion, spirituality; and from the growing personal experiences I have with the unknown force driving the unfolding creation and evolution of our universe. I don't claim that all these philosophies I describe are the one and only truth! They are simply the evolving results of my journey of faith.

I have gone from the very narrow perspective of my fundamentalist upbringing, blocking out much of the world in fear of loosing my assured place in heaven to a perspective that sees the unknown and embraces it, that rejoices over the uncertainty of life, and enjoys the ongoing process which learning allows for developing a deeper understanding of the purpose of my life in His continuous process of creation. I now have a closer relationship and much deeper understanding of God than could ever have been possible in the fundamentalist paradigm of my past. To take responsibility for your own mind and soul is scary at first, but then it is liberating. Your mind and soul are free to *think* for yourself.

While we can never know what new discoveries lay just outside our present knowledge, we can appreciate what we do know and enjoy the process of seeking to know more. When you have a question I recommend that you research it and draw your own conclusions, so that you are actively pursuing a deeper understanding of Truth, a deeper understanding of the Universe that God has created and which you and "He" are still continuing to create. Whether or not we ever achieve our goal of understanding the Truth is not important. When we realise that all people in all cultures and in all religions,

are connected, and that we all seek this same common goal, we realise that joining together we can create a most wonderful synergy: sharing knowledge, sharing experiences, and sharing our understanding of the divine powers at play. Then we can, together, work for the common good of every form of life in our Universe. Continuing as part of God's creative process, expressing "Him" in new ways, maximising our individual and collective creative potentials, advancing the collective conscious of the Universe to higher levels of understanding and spirituality. We are all a wondrous part of this exciting process and incredibly, if we set our sights on Shalom, the Kingdom of God, Peace on Earth, it will come. All we have to do is ask.