**"The Sacred Canopy and the End Times:**

**Fundamentalism's defenses at the Edge of Chaos"**

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As millions of viewers around the world watched the televised scenes of terror and mayhem in Mumbai which transpired November 26-30, 2008, we have yet to hear, as of this writing, a rational, cogent explanation of what the motivation could possibly be for a band of well-armed and well-trained young Muslim terrorists, in their early twenties, to simultaneously attack different targets in the financial and cultural capital of India. These targets comprised two prestigious international hotels, a popular café, a local hospital, a train station and a Jewish community center, sites for the random killing of innocent men, women and children, including but not restricted to Americans and Britons. The majority of the victims of this crime were Indian, and some were most likely Muslims too. Until we can assess and examine the socio-psychological infrastructure of these types of events in the world, the planet will continue to be an increasingly dangerous place for all of us, especially for, but not restricted to, those who live in the urban centers of the world.

However, the fact that the majority of terrorist attacks in the past fifty years have occurred at major urban centers, from the Olympics in Munich in 1972 to the twin towers of New York City in 2001, from the discotheques in Bali (2002) and Casablanca (2003), to the train station in Madrid (2004) and the bombings in London (2005) suggests that, at the very least, the venues of these attacks have psychological import, in addition to the potential for access to media distribution, for the violent groups and extremists engaged in such slaughter of innocent human life.

This paper aims to explore an assessment and examination of different expressions of fundamentalism, not just in its extreme, chronic and pathological forms, such as terrorist groups, but also those emerging systems which are guided by an exclusive value or belief system, which claim a monopoly on the truth or which experience a threat of annihilation. This exploration is offered in the hope that some sense can be made out of the fragmentation of the human species

which is increasingly divided along these lines, as well as the apparent senselessness of these tragic events that constantly deluge our communications infrastructure through television and the blogosphere. It will identify and outline some of the factors that may be at the heart of these cross currents, such as the increasing secularization of societies as a result of progress in modern science and technology, the inherent greed and need of a consumer driven and market driven society required to sustain economic viability (as in the recent global financial crisis), the cultural fallout and imperialism which can accompany globalization, the lack of good governance resulting in social and economic injustice, and an adherence to an end times eschatology.

1924 and 1925 were important years in the world because 1924 was when the Caliphate was abolished by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in Turkey and 1925 was the year when the Scopes Trial was held in Dayton, Tennessee. The abolition of the Caliphate was accepted by default as a result of the failure two years later of a world Islamic Conference in 1926 to come to any agreement about maintaining this last remaining vestige of an institution of religious authority which was once thought essential and imperative to the proper and correct guidance of the vast majority of the Muslim world. The Scopes Trial was the fight between the forces of Christian fundamentalism against the forces of secularism on the question of the teaching of Darwin's scientific theory of evolution in the American system of education. The dissolution of the Caliphate was the final extinction of the notion of a hitherto almost universally recognized system of religious authority in Sunni mainstream Islam since the late 7th Century. In the first instance, the dissolution of the Caliphate was made by decree in a newly created state longing to throw off the shackles of a religious hierarchy and its religious dogma that had held back the forces of progress leading to the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War One. 1924 was the year that the newly founded secular Muslim state claimed its authority over the education system of Turkey. In the second instance, the conflict between Creationism and the Theory of Evolution was fought out in an American court. 1925 was the year that it became legal to teach evolution in most parts of the American system of education. In both cases, in two very different epicenters of the world's two great religions, Christianity and Islam, the fault lines were being clearly drawn. Religious education and secular education had chosen to go separate ways because they were not able to walk together without stumbling over each other or in some cases invalidating each other. Two emerging systems appeared to be incompatible or unable to accommodate the other system.

The fault lines that were drawn then have not changed radically much in the intervening eighty years, despite all of the economic progress and expansion that has taken place globally,

even after the Cold War is in its very last throes. One would have thought that it would be possible to write that the Cold War is actually over but the forces on each side of that Bipolar world are still breathing their last gasps, as Russia begins to retract from a failure in Perestroika and Glasnost, perhaps in a return to a dogma of a political oligarchy of sorts, while the US is beginning to re-examine its vision of Pax Americana in the midst of its two-fanged wars on terror, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But how do we define the forces which are at play? What are these forces and why do they continue to collide both here and abroad? Is it merely a return to the Crusades of yore, with one or more religious group claiming territory and sacred space over the other? Or is this a collision only of religious fundamentalisms as emerging systems of epistemology, at the "edge of Chaos?" Helene Shulman, in her book "Living at the Edge of Chaos" examines the work of Stephen Wolfram and Chris Langston who in the mid- to late 1980s were looking at complex systems in mathematics and computer analysis. They coined the term "the edge of chaos" as the "place where complex adaptive systems (CAS) begin to evolve." (1997, p. 112).

The Fundamentalism Project, which was commissioned by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1987 and completed in 1994, produced a five volume study of religious fundamentalisms after ten conferences, the employment of two hundred international scholars and thousands of hours of field work. The conclusions of the fundamentalism project are discussed in a book co-authored by Scott Appleby, one of the directors of the Fundamentalism Project, entitled "Strong Religion – The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World" in which the phrase "sacred canopy" captures, profoundly, the nature of the boundary issues that are so integral to this topic:

"Despite the high visibility of fundamentalist movements in the world today, however, there is a general tendency to underplay religion as an autonomous force in politics, to oversimplify and minimize the complexity of "church-state" relations as they form and reform around the globe. The dominant explanatory view of religion is reductive, treating it as epiphenomenal to economic, political, or psychological realities. Since the Enlightenment the principle of separation of church and state has been an essential criterion of modernization and the measure of liberty. It leads scholars, journalists, and statesmen to assume that religion is an unequivocally private matter.

The boundary between the sacred and the secular varies from country to country, however. Millions of people structure their daily routines around the spiritual practices enjoined by a

religious tradition, and they often do so quite "publicly." Dress, eating habits, gender relations, negotiations of time, space and social calendar – all unfold beneath a sacred canopy." (2003, p. 4).

What is especially striking about the image of a sacred canopy is that it limits, from the secular perspective, the nature and quality of the human experience to a sacral plane thus disavowing other realities and epistemologies, whereas from the religious perspective, it focuses on the sacral plane as the only acceptable form of existence. This is especially true of the Islamic world, where Din and Dunya (Faith and World) are not split off from each other. For some, who practice Islam in Saudi Arabia, World is to be completely infused with Faith such that a typical work cycle must stop for noon time prayers and afternoon prayers, women are not permitted to drive and must always be accompanied by a male in public spaces; a women only hotel and a women only university have just opened. Adultery is condemned and the guilty are stoned to death. The only way for both men and women to escape such a sacred canopy is to travel abroad, although women must still be accompanied by a male relative on a flight out of the country. As Almond, Appleby and Sivan observe:

"Whereas secularists reject arguments and claims drawn from religious doctrines or sacred Scripture, the majority in many countries relies on such sources of authority in making political as well as personal decisions. Secularists may have internalized the privatization of belief, but religion continues to perform complex, multiple roles and functions in societies from the United States and Europe, across the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia to Indonesia." (2003, p. 4).

These forms and expressions of a sacred canopy, as imagined by the fundamentalist Saudis, as self-appointed gatekeepers to the Holy City of Mecca, are held up as a pure model of the ideal society for other Muslim nations to emulate. Any compromise is perceived as a weakness or a corruption in faith, or in some cases, viewed as nothing less than heresy. This is the epistemological nature of the conflict. And this epistemology gets exported and disseminated through thousands of places of worship all over the world, funded by the Saudis, financed by their oil wealth. This is the Saudi legacy to the Muslim world, and it is offered with the purest of intentions. Not only has it also resulted in the destruction of life and property in the twin towers of New York City, it has also unwittingly spawned a mass movement which has reified one interpretation of Islam as a strict set of doctrinal laws which serves as a backlash to the forces of secularization that were unleashed by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

However, as Youssef Choueiri, a Lebanese lecturer in Arabic and Islamic Studies at Exeter University notes in his analysis of Islamic Fundamentalism: "Although Ataturk succeeded in destroying the Caliphate, his Turkish experiment, being unashamedly secularist, failed to become a model for the rest of the region. Consequently, Christendom and world Zionism, having observed the meager results of their labour and determined to avoid repeating former mistakes, tried their hands at new political experiments, hoping to achieve the same end by different means." (1990, p. 108).

Meanwhile, a year later in Dayton, Tennessee, the Bible's creation story was being fiercely debated between the ACLU on behalf of the scientific community and the Christian fundamentalist movement in the Bible belt. Historian Edward Larson, in his book "Summer for the Gods" identifies the Scopes Trail as having far reaching consequences – as in the proverbial butterfly effect of Chaos Theory. Referencing Adventists Science educator, George McCready Price, who had consulted with William Jennings Bryan, Larson notes:

"By the 1940s, however, Price even surpassed secular commentators in describing the trial as a crushing defeat for fundamentalism, "which may be regarded as a turning point in the intellectual and religious history of mankind." He blamed the entire disaster on "poor Bryan, with his day-age theory of Genesis." Later fundamentalist proponents of a more recent creation agreed. Price's successor at the helm of the "scientific" creationist movement, Henry M. Morris, commented, "Probably the most serious mistake made by Bryan on the stand was to insist repeatedly that he had implicit confidence in the infallibility of Scripture, but then to hedge on the geological question, relying on the day/age theory." Of course, Bryan simply testified to what he and many prominent fundamentalists of his day believed. Nevertheless, late- twentieth-century fundamentalist leader Jerry Falwell maintained that Bryan "lost the respect of Fundamentalists when he subscribed to the idea of periods of time for creation rather than twenty-four hour days." (1997, p. 237).

This battle is still being fought today between the Christian fundamentalist proponents of Intelligent Design and the scientific community over the exclusive scientific claims of veracity of the generally accepted theory of evolution. A follow up to the Scopes Trial evolved exactly 80 years later in 2005 in a six week court trial in Dover, rural Pennsylvania. According to the Associated Press report of December 20, 2005:

"HARRISBURG, Pa. - In one of the biggest courtroom clashes between faith and evolution since the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial, a federal judge barred a Pennsylvania public school

district Tuesday from teaching "intelligent design" in biology class, saying the concept is creationism in disguise.

U.S. District Judge John E. Jones delivered a stinging attack on the Dover Area School Board, saying its first-in-the-nation decision in October 2004 to insert intelligent design into the science curriculum violates the constitutional separation of church and state.

The ruling was a major setback to the intelligent design movement, which is also waging battles in Georgia and Kansas. Intelligent design holds that living organisms are so complex that they must have been created by some kind of higher force."

The question about evolution even surfaced this recent election cycle in the primaries leading up to the nominations by each party for a Presidential candidate for the United States of America, when candidates were asked to take a position or explain their stand on the theory of evolution. The lack of conversation on the topic, even at that level, spoke volumes about the under-currents of American life and the cultural issues that still simmer in the American psyche. And yet, the theory of evolution seemed to have intellectual implications for how a Presidential candidate would address the cultural issues of stem cell research, abortions and the concomitant decisions that impact Roe v. Wade by future Supreme Court nominations, as well as gay marriage. Both Presidential candidates were interviewed by Rick Warren, a celebrated Christian pastor and author of "A Purpose Driven-Life", almost as if there was a need for a vetting of their Christian credentials by the popular religious electorate, perhaps seeking its own Christian form of the Caliphate to replace the anointed out-going US president who introduced prayer at Cabinet level meetings.

The meta-text of these inquiries into the eligibility of a leader of the most religious nation in the world is to establish not only a template for just and good governance at home but also for the projection of American ideals by the leader of the free world onto the global system, because the emerging system which is having the most impact on the planet is the process of globalization. Will the leader of the free world carry the mantle of the Christian faith or will he or she represent the forces of secular modernism, as is the case in the European Union and China?

Professor of the history of religion at Duke University, Dr. Bruce Lawrence examines this question in his book "Defenders of God – The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age" by twinning the forces of fundamentalism to its opposition to modernism:

"Modernity has to be reduced to be comprehended. It is the cipher symbolizing the technological surplus of our era. As such, it is the key category to consider when interpreting fundamentalism. It becomes and remains the enveloping context. Without modernity there are no fundamentalists, just as there are no modernists. The identity of fundamentalism, both as a psychological mindset and a historical movement, is shaped by the modern world. Fundamentalists seem bifurcated between their cause and their outcome; they are at once the consequence of modernity and the antithesis of modernism.

Either way, one cannot speak of premodern fundamentalists. In the premodern era there were not the material conditions that made the coherence and communication of fundamentalist ideology possible. The premodern era also lacked the exponents of that form of radical individualism now known as modernism. To speak about fundamentalism and to trace the lineage of any cadre of fundamentalists one must begin with the specific points of connectedness to, and interaction with, the processes that heralded the global material transformation of our world that we call modernization, the result of which was modernity. It follows that the moment when fundamentalists first appear differs within each religious tradition. It is earlier for *haredi* and quasi-Hasidic Jews, later for Protestant Christians, still later for Sunni and Shi'i Muslims, but in each instance the time line for discovering, describing, assessing, and perhaps explaining fundamentalists depends on modernity. The context frames the text; fundamentalists are products of modernity.

Because modernity is global, so is fundamentalism. Fundamentalists are not the privileged offspring of one modernizing religious tradition. The name in English is linked to turn-of-the-century Protestant Christianity, yet fundamentalism, like other reactions to modernity, has been at once cross-creedal and multicultural. Fundamentalism is as intrinsic and inevitable to Israeli *haredim* and Sunni or Shi'i Muslims as it is to American Protestants." (1989, pp. 2-3).

Does Lawrence's explanation of the tension between modernism and fundamentalism get us any closer, however, to any understanding of what the basis is for fundamentalist opposition? Does it help to identify the quality of the tension? Is it the fear of novelty and the unknown? Is it the fear and distress of uncertainty? Or is it the fear of annihilation by powerful forces which threaten to swallow up one's identification with a religious life or a community of like-minded believers?

Dr. Amyn Sajoo, editor of a newly published anthology on "Muslim Modernities – Expressions of the Civil Imagination" identifies the five major themes of modernity as 1) rationalism, 2) secularism, 3) individualism and human rights, 4) democratic governance and 5)

globalism. His claim is that this creates a plurality which has the potential for being overwhelming in its complexity. Although Sajoo is not explicit in his language, it is clear that reactionary elements within certain societies, which experience a sense of domination by these extraneous forces, identify them as a form of cultural imperialism, which often follows too closely on the heels of a colonial, post-colonial or neo-colonial history:

> "The narratives and impulses in these themes play a foundational role in any discussion of modernity and its cognates, such as modernisation. Clearly the scientific, industrial and political revolutions that were the crucibles in which these themes emerged were Western, which is not to say that they lacked crucial non-Western influences, most particularly from China, India and the Muslim world. From the physical and natural sciences to architecture, art, commerce and social thought, Western accomplishment is inextricably linked to these Others, unpalatable though this may be to the 'clash of civilisations' warriors. Still the revolutions that impelled (and were set off by) economic, techno-scientific and civic modernity occurred in the West. At the same time, modernity has come to be distinguished by its plurality, that is, the multiple sites where it is produced, the diversity of those who produce it and the variant processes that are involved, all contest the idea of a unitary modern. The globalism that pervades modernity is by its very nature multifarious in form and substance; local responses to global forces only add to that plurality. The implications of this challenge to a hegemonial modernity have been significant." (2008, pp. 8-9).

What is most threatening for so many religious groups both in the United States and elsewhere is that the project of modernity brings with it a fragmentation of authority. As Depth psychotherapists, we can empathize with and imagine the angst of the silent questions and doubts about how these complex forces can be embraced, or whether they even should be embraced, by a world view, which has flourished and thrived, based on absolute certainties about the Creation story, Adam and Eve, the age of the planet, sacred tablets with life serving commandments, the sovereign stewardship of the human species over all of Creation, and for some, the approaching end times, of which these very pluralities are often considered as the first signs. The understandably sane response by the fundamentalists is to call for firm boundaries in the face of the onslaught of Chaos and its ensuing complexity in the form of new epistemologies and thought, which come from the Other(s), threatening to undermine the prevailing and existing order. The sane response is to circle the wagons around the known world and focus energies on the known word of Scripture or tradition, which has proved enduring and reliable in the past. To accept a new creation myth could engender complexity and endanger the foundation of a faith.

If Adam and Eve were not real characters in the prevailing myth of the Abrahamic religions, what else can constitute reality about human origins and how can we adjust to a less certain, ambiguous reality articulated in scientific metaphors like the Big Bang? If Jesus did not resurrect into the Heavens, beyond our limited perspective and understanding of the sacred canopy, where could He have gone or what meaning does his resurrection have? If the Caliphate can be abolished by one human being, then how do we read the Sacred Qur'an which speaks repeatedly of such an entity? Then what power does God really have over his own Creation? Are our prayers heard and do prayers really heal the sick? These are the unconscious cries of fundamentalists of all stripes who cannot tolerate complexity and uncertainty. Their conviction is built on Faith, and if they lose Faith, all is lost. The only sane response for a fundamentalist is to grasp on to the certainty of an absolutist vision for life, the world and the hereafter. We might think of their psychology as a cognitive behavioral approach to the questions of existence.

Firm boundaries create Order and structure, keeping Chaos, complexity and anarchy at bay. A strict moral code is requisite to maintaining firm boundaries. Any compromise is a sign of a weakness in faith. Guilt, fear and shame become the forces of control. If we separate the genders so that things do not run amok, then stricter control can be achieved. These are the kinds of forces that the Taliban unleashed on themselves and the general populace in Afghanistan. The pathological consequences of such a system are dire, but an uneducated population is not fertile soil for the forces of democracy and egalitarian structures, because control requires power and domination. And it was this tyrannical system that the allied military posse in search of Osama Bin Laden, the master-mind of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, had to crush in order to reduce the risk that the cancer of extremism would not overtake the entire the region.

This effort could well have succeeded if the forces of extremism in the form of neo-conservatism in the USA had not persuaded the American Caliph, or as some have called it, the Imperial Presidency, to wage war, simultaneously, against an equally deadly tyrannical power in Iraq, where the forces of a totalitarian, this time secular, enterprise had taken control of a natural resource, the second largest oil fields in the world, vital to an increasingly globalizing world economy. Only, in this case, those who would destroy the system had no understanding or appreciation for the complexity of the religious sectarian system that would emerge, in its own evolutionary time, to replace the former dictatorial system. No one at the center of American power had considered the persecutions that would occur against Sunni Muslims and Christians alike, once the majority Shia had finally gained access to the reins of power. The neo-conservative architects-in-chief had persuaded the American Caliph, who was himself itching for war, that the military campaign would be quick and easy, and reconstruction would be financed

by Iraqi oil revenues. The rationale for war was fictionalized, and later blamed on bad intelligence despite the fact that Scott Ritter, an expert on Weapons of Mass Destruction, had stated categorically in print and on cable media, on numerous occasions, that there were no WMD in Iraq. He had done his job well as a weapons inspector and knew the facts on the ground. Rationalism was thrown to the wind by the leaders of the free world. The American Caliph's obvious faux pas in initially using crusader language for the war was heard loud and clear by the enemy, and friends of the enemy, as a war against Islam. The Crusade had been joined. The allied forces of neo-conservative extremism were killing the subjugated Iraqi forces of a tyrannical regime, with the unintended consequences of hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths, as initially two emerging systems collided, only to have the global jihadist movement join the field: three complex adaptive systems erupted at "the edge of chaos." The terrorists had arrived on the scene, because terrorism thrives on Chaos. Complexity is the new world order which the neo-conservatives had, in their naiveté, failed to consider in their calculations. It is no longer accurate to state that every action has a single reaction, because complexity results in multiple reactions, both conscious and unconscious, which become localized and globalized in response to a single incident.

Two such reactions were: 1) the Islamophobia which had taken root in the USA at the highest levels of the rightwing of the Republican party and its supportive propaganda ally – the cable news network, Fox News and 2) the Cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed which were published in a Danish newspaper, to cast aspersions on the violent nature of the founder of the faith of Islam. This theme of globalism or globalization cannot be underestimated in regards to the tension between fundamentalism and modernity because both systems are inter-connected in the very web of Life. We can no longer imagine just the effect of one sole Brazilian butterfly on the climate in North America, without noting that any change in the climate can affect the entire ecological system, the world economy and millions, if not billions of lives. Shulman sees this as an inherent weakness of the human information processing system:

> "All paradigms, however, are myopic. They are based on near-sightedness to a greater or lesser degree, because we can only work with the limited portion of the world that can come into our perception and the limited portion of the world that is recognized by our culture of birth. When we as human correct for our perceptual myopia with tools or scientific instruments, we construct our theories within the same cultural limitations, introducing another level of myopia. We can never get rid of the problem of myopia, because it is built into the human perceptual and cognitive apparatus. But we can know it is there and allow it to revitalize our certainties. Then we have to become aware that our schemata are context-

dependent and that science, religion, culture, and even our personalities are cobbled together out of context-dependent building blocks." (1997, p. 99)

The wider acceptance of a secular life, often perceived as an assault on the religious right in the USA, pushes the fundamentalists further into a corner. Sam Harris, author of the controversial, "The End of Faith," writes in a "Letter to the Christian Nation" about the ineffectiveness of the Christian stand on abstinence instead of contraception as a way of reducing the incidents of public health enemy Number One, sexually transmitted diseases. These include the epidemic of human papillomavirus (HPV), which causes nearly five thousand deaths a year from cervical cancer, increasing rates of gonorrhea among American teens, which is seventy times higher than among peer populations in the Netherlands and France, as well as the HIV/Aids pandemic which is sweeping the African Continent:

"The problem is that Christians like yourself are not principally concerned about teen pregnancy and the spread of disease. That is, you are not worried about the *suffering* caused by sex; you are worried about sex. As if this fact needed further corroboration, Reginald Finger, an Evangelical member of the CDC 's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, recently announced that he would consider opposing an HIV vaccine – thereby condemning millions of men and women to die unnecessarily from AIDS each year – because such a vaccine would encourage premarital sex by making it less risky. This is one of the many points on which your religious beliefs become genuinely lethal." (2006, p. 28).

The fragmentation of authority in fundamentalist systems, mentioned earlier, also gives rise to individualism and, in some groups, a call for human rights. Recently, Muslim women in the United States challenged the notion that only a male Muslim could lead the prayer in congregation. The challenge was not simply a written opposition to patriarchal domination of the American Muslim community, but an event at which a woman led the prayer for other women as a 'fait accompli' in a public setting. This was possible in the United States because a woman has equal rights under the law. Similarly, the American polity is grappling with the legality of gay marriage, because clearly to deny a gay couple the right to marry is a denial of a human right protected by secular laws. Both systems are engaged in another round of debates based on the merits of a constitutional law, as opposed to religious laws.

Ironically, in Egypt, a fatwa – a religious decree – was issued by the Muslim clerics at Al-Azhar University, which is accepted by many Muslims world-wide as a source of legitimate religious authority, requiring all women who have been raped to obtain a legal abortion because of the higher incidents of inter-gender contact in an increasingly secular society. This has

resulted in a higher rate of reported rape and incest. Since dating is not the norm in Egypt and most other Muslim countries, sexuality, theoretically, has to be delayed because of stringent economic constraints and very high levels of unemployment. A child, born out of wedlock, is not an accepted practice in these countries. Hence, unmarried pregnant women would also be classified as 'raped.' It is not yet clear if the fatwa requires the woman to identify her rapist. In any event, clearly the traditional system is breaking down and a new one is emerging, in which a woman will continue to have her rights protected. The issue of individualism and human rights leads to questions about democratic governance. In the case of Egypt, a religious edict was required because Egypt is, and has been, a failing democracy, governed by an authoritarian dictatorial system. These are the kinds of systems that the extreme fundamentalists, identified as radical Islamists by the Western press, are challenging, even though, with the exception of Iran, they have not yet successfully gained power. Algeria came close to bringing in an Islamic form of democratic governance but the threat of a fundamentalist system was not palatable to the military, which is most often a force for secularism in most Muslims lands. The same is true, historically of Pakistan. Clearly, modernity is a harbinger for democratic governance, and as new forms of democracy emerge in socio-economically unviable state and national systems, more chaos will ensue.

The emergence of globalism and globalization as another face of modernity ensures a vibrant opposition and rejection of alien artifacts that serve to undermine existing rigid structures. The fact that in Iran, many women now cover their coiffures and haute couture underneath their burqas is symbolic of how old and new systems can converge, even informally at first, as other aspects of modernity become more acceptable. Iranian young adults now text-message each other, communicating romantic interest or a safe venue for a rendezvous, as men in cars drive by women in cars, on Saturday nights in a wealthy suburb of Tehran. This is clearly being influenced by the culture that young immigrant Iranian-Americans have been exposed to in California who in turn connect with their peers in Iran through Facebook. It may be only a matter of time before the reactionary hard-line clerics react again and move against this strange attractor, which according to Chaos Theory, is informally described as strange if it has a non-integer dimension, or if the dynamics on it are chaotic. The term was coined to describe the attractor that resulted from a series of bifurcations of a system describing fluid flow. In this case, the traditional gender relations of an entire society are being challenged by the new globalized technology and generally higher levels of education of Iranian young adults. Once this dynamic is set in motion, can it ever be halted, or do the dynamics continue to play out until one system over-rides another? Time will tell, and at the current pace of an accelerated dynamic, something has got to give before the Taliban reconstitutes itself in neighboring Afghanistan in reaction to

gender liberalization in Iran for fear that it will spread to Afghan youth who already have access to cell phones. These are the inherent risks of change in a modernizing world.

With these imminent risks of change, it is interesting that both in the USA and in Iran, there is much talk of the End Times. The Christian evangelical movement has thrown in their moral and financial support to the state of Israel, because they are expecting the return of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem. It is conceivable that a majority of the right wing Christian electorate supported the war in Iraq because it posed the greatest threat in the region to Israel. That threat has been effectively neutralized to the advantage of Iraq's neighbor, Iran. Not one single commentator on cable news or talk radio in the United States has pointed out the natural alliance that exists between two Shia states which are surrounded by Sunni regimes and kingdoms. It is as if the common epistemology these two countries share is considered less powerful than the imaginary borders that were drawn up by the British after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The Iranian president, Ahmadinejad, himself has invoked the imminent return of the Mahdi (the hidden Imam, a redeemer figure in Shia Islam) which this denomination of Islam is convinced will usher in a new age, in the same breath as he makes blatantly aggressive threats to annihilate the state of Israel.

"Ahmadinejad," reports Robin Wright, author of "Dreams and Shadows," which provides a detailed overview of current developments in the Middle East, "had a deep devotion to the Shiite messiah. "Our revolution's main mission is to pave the way for the reappearance of the twelfth imam, the Mahdi," he told a meeting of clerics four months after taking office. "Today," he said, "we should define our economic, cultural, and political policies on the policy of Imam Mahdi's return."" (2008, p. 330)

Jesus Christ will also return, according to mainstream Muslim dogma at the end of time. This is another common mythos which seems to compel millions of Christians and Muslims to want to create the conditions for the return of the Savior and the Redeemer. In the case of Shia Muslims in Iran and in Iraq, both figures, the Mahdi and Christ, are imagined to return together. Is it not astounding that these strongly held beliefs are ignored in the calculus of tensions between the world of Shia Islam and Christianity? Will it take a wider secularization of these worlds, as has happened successfully in Europe, to reduce tensions based on the religious mythology and eschatology of these two Abrahamic faiths?  As Harris, the self-confessed infidel, aptly points out: "Our competing religious certainties are impeding the emergence of a viable, global civilization. Religious faith – faith that there is a God who cares what name He is called, faith that Jesus is coming back to Earth, faith that Muslim martyrs go straight to Paradise – is on the wrong side of an escalating war of ideas." (2006, p.80).

But it would appear that there are really two End Times in the Christian view. The literal one, based on interpretations of John's revelation in the Bible, which is ushered in with the rapture as a specific global human event, and there is also the spiritual one leading to an Eternal Life, exclusively reserved for those who accept Jesus as their personal Savior. Both are motivators for right wing Christian fundamentalists to radically transform their lives through a "born again" experience and supposedly shun a materialist, secular life which has profound implications for educational systems as well as American foreign policy. Precisely how this is possible for televangelists and Fox News who both thrive on systems that were sourced in the secular world of science and technology is unclear but what is certain, for this group, is that only true bible believing Christians will earn Eternal Life and be raised up in the rapture. Jesus will then make his presence known in Jerusalem, if, from the secular perspective, it has not been wiped out by Palestinians and Iranian militants or terrorists with Iranian nuclear capabilities. This sense of certainty is well captured in a five year field study published in 1994 on the psychology of fundamentalism in America by Dr. Charles Strozier, a practicing psychoanalyst and senior faculty member of the Training and Research Institute in Self Psychology. In his book "Apocalypse," Strozier provides case studies of individuals he interviewed in New York City who espoused convictions in the notion of the Apocalypse. Sam, who found his calling as an evangelist shortly after his depressed wife committed suicide, speaks to this sense of certainty, which he found lacking as an Episcopalian:

> "To be born again, however, and get locked into the absolute security of biblical literalism, was more attractive. "I feel that the major question in my life which is what happens in the end, has been answered for me," he said. And the answer came not through being good but just by believing. That was God's great gift to him. With the knowledge of eternal life, Sam could then live his life in a "triumphant way." He was secure on many levels. His daily life and work gained meaning. He became well known for his intelligent, witty, and compassionate lectures on the New Testament." (1995, pp. 48-49).

Along with the certainty of eternal life, the personal relationship with the Lord which every card carrying evangelical Christian claims as their special gift is still only reserved for a limited number of believers. This sense of the elect brings with it a particular kind of psychology, notes Strozier:

> "But shame and guilt, then become an integral part of the apocalyptic. A striking aspect of the fundamentalist system is that just as individual guilt and shame diminish, collective evil increases. The badness, one might say, shifts its venue. Fundamentalists believe that the number of true Christians will decrease as we approach the end of time, for evil will increase everywhere else. The world implodes on itself from the weight of all its evil. End time

violence is the indirect expression of all that accumulated sin, and it helps maintain individual purity as it unloads destruction. Such is the effect in fundamentalist theology of transforming guilt. The purer Christians are, the more sinful nonbelievers become." (1994, p. 107).

It is little wonder then that Billy Graham's son, Franklin, would call Islam an evil and a wicked religion. Muslims, for him, can only represent the antithesis of a pure Christian life and they must be converted to the true faith. As Franklin Graham prepared his team of evangelists from the Samaritan Purse to strike Agape in the hearts of Iraqis, following the US invasion, he could not have imagined the complexity of turning Iraqi Muslims into born again Christians. Many Iraqis were already very secular. Those who were religious were equally convicted in their faith, as Shia Muslims, that the Mahdi will return some day, but with Jesus in tow. Nor could he have imagined that Christians would no longer have the protection of a secular state, resulting in persecution and flight for hundreds of thousands of Christians from Iraq. Franklin Graham's crusade retreated in the face of the complexity of the new Iraqi state, where Chaos continues to rein and Muslim conservatives are recruiting adherents into their own brand of religious fundamentalism.

What is clearly implied in the End Times schematic is that the end of life, as we know it, is imminent and any accommodation of new and emerging epistemologies by the elect makes no sense, since only the certainty of religious truth is relevant to salvation. When all the systems, the fundamentalisms of each of the Abrahamic traditions, collide with the ever expanding secular and global complex adaptive systems, the edge of Chaos reins and the thirst for certainty is re-ignited, whether it is found in a fragile democratic state built on the principles of secular pluralism, or in the sermons of Christian clergy, Muslim clerics or Jewish settlers in Palestinian lands, all of whom walk with a similar sense of certainty. Chaos breeds chaos and even more complexity, each emergent form or system crashing and colliding in a dynamic inter-play of its own. Then fundamentalism retreats in a natural defense from innovation or evolution, and thrives anew in fear of the secular, the global and the apocalyptic.

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