

'Fundamentalism or religion based on *interpretation* of TEXTS has been and still is a major source of human suffering'

Greg Turek

Two incidents recently prompted me to put pen to paper. Firstly it was reported in the media that a Jehovah's Witness was suing a hospital for saving her life with a blood transfusion against her wishes. It seems that Jehovah's Witnesses base their beliefs with regard to blood transfusion on interpretation of Leviticus 17: 13,14 and Acts 15:29. When I looked up these sections of the bible, my interpretation was as follows. The Leviticus reference basically deals with not eating blood and the methods of preparing meat to remove the blood before eating it. Acts 15:29 contains the following, 'upon you these essentials. You are to abstain from meat that has been offered to idols, from blood, from anything that has been strangled and from fornication. If you keep from these things you will be doing right. Farewell.'

Surely the avoidance of blood refers to the eating of blood, not intra-venous transfusion to save life. As we shall see later, anyone can interpret a passage from the Bible or other text in an almost limitless number of ways resulting in an almost limitless number of arguments.

One of the foundations of ancient Jewish law was the sanctity of human life, and the general principle that the saving of human life took precedence over all religious laws and customs. This basic biblical principle seems to have been disregarded by Jehovah's Witnesses.

The second incident which I found disturbing involved a highly intelligent, highly educated young adult family friend becoming fanatically aligned to a Jewish fundamentalist sect. This involvement includes becoming strictly kosher (requiring her mother to virtually install a separate kitchen for her), ultra conservative dress and strictly observing all synagogue services and rituals.

What I found much more disturbing than the innocuous superficial rituals and trappings was the rigid tunnel vision and elitist mindset which seems to be a common factor in most fundamentalist adherents.

The world's great religions must be respected as sources of wisdom and the principles and foundations of human ascent. The founders of the great religions were generally prophets, avatars or messengers from the unconscious or deeper spiritual dimension. One could say they were relaying the word of the creator to steer humanity in a new direction, and generally this direction involved raising human awareness to a higher level.

For human evolution to move forward, surely open-mindedness, education and communication are essential. It would seem to me that the way people isolate themselves into rigid fundamentalist mind sets is regressive and against the ascent of humanity.

In order to more fully understand this previous statement the following explanation of a deeper level of reality

may be helpful.

The principles and foundations of the 'creative life force' can be clearly seen depicted in the tree of life of the Kabbalah, and in a very similar way as the subtle energy system of ancient Yogic tradition.

This tree of life is virtually a map of the evolutionary process with three vertical columns or channels (like a tree trunk) and seven major energy centres or chakras (like tree branches). The columns or channels basically represent past, future and present. The centres or chakras are like milestones and principles of the creation.

Viewed as a macrocosm, this tree of life is like a map of the physical creation. As a microcosm it is the blue print of life and exists as the underlying life force in all living things (and in all matter). For example in human beings, the subtle energy system provides life force to the physical body. Each major nerve plexus has a corresponding energy centre nourishing it. Disease can occur when these energy centres are damaged.

The chakras are aligned upwards along the spine, they contain qualities covering all functions and aspects of existence, increasing in evolutionary sophistication from the first and lowest placed in the sternum to the highest at the fontanelle region of the head.

The following is a very simple outline of the chakra system.

The first chakra at the base of the spine represents the qualities of innocence and wisdom and provides life force to organs of reproduction and excretion. This chakra as an evolutionary milestone represents the earliest life forms, single celled amoeba which basically only needed to metabolise, excrete and reproduce.

The second chakra has the quality of creativity and energises organs related to the aortic plexus, and represents the evolutionary stage when there was a veritable explosion of multi cellular life forms.

The third chakra has qualities of satisfaction, contentment, nurture and mastery. It energises organs related to the solar plexus. The corresponding evolutionary milestone could be seen as relating to nourishment (agriculture), shelter (development of tools and manipulation of matter) and collective survival, as well as guiding principles and foundations of human civilisation as established by prophets and avatars of major religions.

The fourth chakra has qualities of security and protection, and energises organs relating to the cardiac plexus (heart, lungs etc). The corresponding evolutionary milestone relates to the principles of motherhood, fatherhood and law and order.

The fifth chakra has qualities relating to communication and relationships, and energises organs connected with the cervical plexus. The corresponding evolutionary milestone could be seen as the organisation of humanity into cultures and nations.

The sixth chakra (or 'third eye'), has qualities of forgiveness and tolerance and energises thought processes including functions of ego and superego. All of our ideas, concepts, beliefs and perceptions are governed by this chakra. Our ego is a fabrication of what we believe about ourselves and is usually subject to varying degrees of delusion. This is where we formulate our belief systems and our separateness from others (individuality). This separateness has been an essential stage of the human evolutionary process as this is where we exercise our free will and develop concepts (including abstract) through our mental projections. This quality separates us from animals.

The seventh chakra has qualities of integration and oneness with the universal consciousness. When this chakra quality is opened in an individual, a state of enlightenment begins to develop. In other words one is connected to the primordial being. One goes beyond belief systems and the convoluted world of concepts. The absolute or truth can be experienced without thought. This is the true Yoga or union.

We are living at a time when the seventh chakra quality can be opened and experienced. We are at the early stages of the awakening of this evolutionary milestone. Fundamentalist belief systems are related to the sixth

chakra and will only be outgrown when a sufficient number of individuals (critical mass) open up the qualities of their seventh chakra and transcend the delusion and distortions of the mind. Of course this does not mean that we must become mindless automatons. We use our mind for the purpose it was intended as a superb information processor and means of exploring the world around us. The mind should lead us on a journey out of ignorance and superstition, and through its openness and curiosity it can lead us upwards. It can give us an understanding of why we are on this journey, thus forming a foundation for the next evolutionary step.

It is only through the honest and freely desired seeking of truth that individuals will reach this enlightened state, and thus move away from the deluded and distorted world of religious fundamentalism. The result will eventually be the unity of all humankind.

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