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## “A Retreat Into Militant Orthodoxy?”

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*The Guardian* [London] is one of the most liberal of Britain’s major daily newspapers, and it is often one of the most interesting. On Good Friday, the paper unleashed an attack upon orthodox believers that breaks new ground in secular intolerance disguised as tolerance.

In its editorial, “Fight the Good Fight,” the paper’s editors call for a fight against “militant orthodoxy.” From their article:

*The surviving faithful, particularly the newly converted who were attracted in the first place by the security offered by faith, feel undermined by the disregard of what to them is most important, and not just at Easter. For some Christians, the response is a retreat to a militant orthodoxy. They are not alone. Most world religions now support a radical or fundamentalist wing that reflects not a pre-determined instinct for intolerance so much as a fearful reaction to the 21st century, to cultural globalisation and commercial imperialism backed by military strength. To tolerate the intolerant, to accommodate the unbending, is the greatest challenge facing the defenders of a secular society, one that rejects a role for religion in the state.*

Note the propaganda technique of using the word “intolerance” without context. Intolerant of what? Intolerant in what manner? The editors provide no specifics. Then, they ground a concern for theological orthodoxy in psychology — a fearful reaction to “cultural globalisation” and the like. Does this look like a typical evangelical congregation? And what of concern for orthodoxy before there was the phenomenon of “cultural globalisation?”

The paper then points to Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber as an example of “extreme” Christian fundamentalism. This is ludicrous, of course. Where did Mr. McVeigh identify with anything even close to orthodox Christianity in any form? These editors are drawing at straws, and they know it.

Their real agenda becomes clear in this section of their article:

*The defenders of the secular state, believers and non-believers, can only hope to disarm it by finding a language that allows for doubt without compromising its own familiar principles - its faith in a rationally ordered society, a respect for science, for evidence-based knowledge, for non-religious education, and tolerance of religion supported by laws protecting individual rights. Within this general context, there are specific battles to fight, for example against the teaching of creationism, the extension (and the maintenance) of faith schools and the defence of free speech. There is a powerful case to be made for the disestablishment of the Church of England, if only as a demonstration of the equality of respect owed to all faiths. After all, a secular society is not one with no religion, but one where all are free, a market place where each can compete for support.*

*Religious liberals support the values of the modern secular state. They oppose racism and homophobia, they advocate the separation of church and state, they promote tolerance. This is why the current tension in the Anglican church should matter to everyone. If Rowan Williams were to decide that the Anglican Communion could only be saved by a lurch to conservatism, liberal secularism would be one of the losers. It may be that only 2 million regularly go to church, but three-quarters of Britons still regard themselves as Christian. The fight for women bishops and gay clergy is part of the wider fight for equality and tolerance throughout society. Religious liberals and defenders of the secular are fighting on the same side. In these pages yesterday, the vicar of Putney, Giles Fraser, called for liberals to rediscover their fight. So*

*too must the defenders of secularism.*

Their real agenda is the total secularization of the society. They want a society in which, to use their own words, there is no “role for religion.” They fear that the Church of England (which they want disestablished) might “lurch” toward conservatism. If so, they can only be correct that “liberal secularism would be one of the losers.”

Of course, read the other way, this would mean that the liberal secularists are hoping for a bit of assistance from the Church of England in promoting their agenda of a totally secular Britain.

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