

## Staying Armed Against the Accusers of Fundamentalism

I recently read a letter to the editors of the Minn. Trib. that prompted this response. The letter was typical of many usually posted in the Trib,'s op ed pages, where the liberal far left seems to delight in heaping ridicule on anyone they don't approve of. I purchase the Trib. often for a couple of reasons: first they have excellent columnists covering both outdoor and indoor sports, and I like their Variety section covering the fine arts.

But I also buy that paper to monitor the political conversation coming out of the *op ed* column, coming often from retired academics with too much free time. And frankly, many of those letters give academia and liberalism a bad name. (See Isaiah ch. 32 kjv)

The letter sparking this response condemns all fundamentalists, stating that any who practice it could become as murderous as Isis, Hezbollah or Hamas. So with one sweep of that mindless broad brush, the writer condemns not only the Islamic crazies, but all fundamentalists: Christians, Hebrews, Hindus and even Buddhist of being as dangerous as those now at large killing unbelievers in the name of Allah. I wish I'd saved that letter because it typifies one of the most wide spread of all the logical fallacies, the "each-to-all" fallacy. The whole list is discussed in chapter 10 of Sheridan Baker's "Practical Stylist." Ex: "I got mugged by a Gypsie; all Gypsies are muggers."

A brilliant apology for fundamentalism appears in the Sept. Issue of *The Levitt Letter*, in which Kristen Hart cites Zola Levitt's brilliant 2005 defense of fundamentalism. (See page 10: *A Dirty Word*)

First he discusses Judaism: "Fundamentalist Jews are often lumped in with Muslims as being dangerous. They are the ones who wear peculiar costumes,

attend lengthy prayer services and attend all Jewish festivals.. They dress and behave that way to set themselves apart from oncoming reform branches of Judaism. “To my knowledge, they have never killed anyone,” writes Zola.

He then treats of the Christians: “Fundamentalist Christians are also lumped into this strange new media religion of fundamentalism. They are simply Bible readers who intend to carry out the tenants of the Bible and live lives exemplified by the Apostles and by the Messiah himself.

They would not hurt a fly, and are pledged to love all other people including Jews and Muslims. They are accused of being some sinister religious right in America, or having some sinister plot behind the scenes to take over the world. (They actually will in the kingdom to come, but that will be the work of the King). They are more interested in the next life than in this one, and in the next world than in this one. And that is what scripture teaches.”

Zola adds that they are potentially powerful if they unite together and “they certainly helped elect the president.” Because, at a point when they see the world turning to evil, they rightly object. They have greater numbers than are usually estimated. Even among liberal denominations I discover fundamentalist Bible literalists often in my travels. “And so in the end, the word *fundamentalism* is a very unclear distinction to make between the various religious faiths. One might just say that those who cover their heads and those who pray all day are dangerous, and that of course would be ridiculous. There is no reason at all for fundamentalism in itself to continue to be a dirty word.”

This letter of Zola’s was written 18 years ago, says Kirsten Hart, and it demonstrates that when an argument is well made, it will outlast many specious claims to brilliance. It also shows what a loss the world suffered when Zola Levitt

passed on into Paradise. By the way the president unified Christians helped to elect was George Bush.

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