

CHAPTER TWO

I Believe Because They Don't: Fundamentalist Christianity

In the Introduction, we had occasion briefly to mention what is now ordinarily called “evangelical” or “born-again” Christianity, and we noted that the term “fundamentalist” is no longer the term that most conservative Protestant Christians use to designate themselves. However, I will use the term “fundamentalist” in this chapter to denote a defensive form of Christian belief, of which contemporary evangelicalism or born-again Christianity is one example. The term is useful, because it suggests the adherence to what are deemed fundamentals of belief that are under siege within the larger culture. The siege mentality is crucial for what I am calling fundamentalism here: Christian fundamentalism – and it is Christian fundamentalism rather than fundamentalisms of other varieties that I shall explore – can be designated an oppositional spiritual stance, one that is defined by the commitment to protect certain beliefs, deemed essential to Christian faith, from forces in the larger culture that are perceived as undermining those beliefs.

In the third edition of his classic study of American evangelicalism, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, Randall Balmer effectively underlines the oppositional character of fundamentalist spirituality:

Ever since the 1925 Scopes Trial convinced fundamentalists that the broader American culture had turned hostile to their interests, fundamentalists have busied themselves devising various institutions to insulate themselves and their children from the depredations of the world. (In fact,

the terms *worldly* and *worldliness* are probably the closest most evangelicals come to epithets; these words are often spoken sneeringly, in a tone at the same time condescending and cautionary).¹

As a result of this oppositional stance, we encounter a “network of institutions – churches, denominations, Bible camps, colleges, seminaries, publishing houses, mission societies – that evangelicals built in earnest after 1925. The subculture made possible a wholesale retreat from the larger culture.”²

Our particular interest in fundamentalism as an oppositional spirituality has to do with its relation to pluralism and the phenomenon of the disconfirming Other. Now the opposition that Christian fundamentalism has most vigorously mounted since its early-twentieth-century inception has been against such modern phenomena as the dictates of evolutionary biology and historical criticism of the Bible. But its oppositional stance has also included other religions. Most often, the other religions at issue have not been Asian traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism (although its unrelenting foreign missionary activities are tantamount to opposition to these traditions) but, rather, the triumvirate of mainline or liberal Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and Judaism. Mainline Protestants are seen as having abandoned crucial tenets of the faith. Roman Catholics have often been regarded by Protestant fundamentalists as hardly Christian at all, but as devotees of the merely human institution that is the Roman Catholic Church, which has usurped the role properly belonging to Jesus Christ, a Christ known not through the pronouncements of the Church but only in the Bible. As for the Jews, nothing could be much clearer than the pronouncement of a recent President of the Southern Baptist Convention (the single largest Protestant body in the United States and one of decidedly fundamentalist pedigree) that “God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew.”³ Fundamentalist Christian organizations such as Jews for Jesus leave no doubt about the fact that, for fundamentalists, Judaism is deficient.

Nor should we overlook the fact that, even when we say that evolutionary biology and historical criticism of the Bible have been the leading incitements to fundamentalist defensiveness, we are still dealing with spiritual pluralism and its disconfirming Other: the larger American culture that has embraced science and historical criticism is not composed principally of atheists and avowed secularists, but, rather, of non-fundamentalist Christians and Jews who choose to integrate these modern ideas and methods into their own worldviews. Hence the aforementioned antipathy to liberal Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Jews.

When Andrew Greeley and Michael Hout lay out what they take to be the defining characteristics of “Conservative Christianity” in the United States, a concrete iteration of what I am calling Christian fundamentalism, they focus on three things: a literal reading of the Bible, an emphasis on the experience of being born-again, and a commitment to converting others to their version of faith in Jesus Christ.⁴ The first of these, namely, biblical literalism, is at the heart of what I am calling fundamentalism, for one of the fundamentals that is perceived as being under attack in the modern and contemporary worlds is precisely the idea that God dictated the Bible word-for-word to its writers and that he intended it to be read literally. At first blush, the attack upon biblical literalism appears to come from the two quarters indicated above: the historical-critical approach to studying the Bible and the dictates of natural science, evolutionary biology in particular. The historical-critical method is largely a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe. To turn that method upon the Bible is to read it, not as dictation from God, but as the product of human beings living in particular times and affected by particular concerns and circumstances. As a result, the Bible is understood as a document motivated by forces parallel to those that motivated many other literary works from various locales in the ancient world. Natural science is seen by fundamentalists as undermining the literal inerrancy of the Bible insofar as disciplines such as geology, biology, and physics appear to contradict biblical stories about the creation of the world and humanity as well as biblical accounts of miracles.

But the sense of siege that fuels biblical literalism is tied to an additional phenomenon.

Though it is not as salient as historical criticism and natural science, we should not overlook the role of the pluralistic challenge in generating a tenacious, defensive biblical literalism among fundamentalists, for extra-Christian pluralism – the fact that there are many different religions – confronts the Christian with alternative scriptures, each claiming the sort of authority that Christians have usually supposed belongs to their Bible alone. Non-fundamentalist Christians might respond by embracing an interpretive freedom as the proper approach to the Bible (seeing much of it as metaphorical or symbolic, for example), which would theoretically allow them to avoid the conclusion that other scriptures contradict, and perhaps actually disconfirm, the Bible. In sharp contrast, the fundamentalist takes the oppositional tack of saying that the Bible must be taken wholly literally and thus should be regarded as falsifying any texts that contradict it.

Greeley and Hout's second defining characteristic, namely, the emphasis upon the experience of being born again, connects with our discussion in the Introduction of the importance in American spirituality generally of an experience of direct connection with the divine. The phrase "born again" itself comes from the third chapter of the Gospel of John in the Christian New Testament, where Jesus explains that, in order to enter the Kingdom of God, one must be born anew (John 3:3-8). That is, one must radically reorient one's priorities, away from selfish concerns and toward God and his Kingdom. There is a parallel message in another statement attributed to Jesus, namely, that one must lose the old self in order to find the new, regenerate self (Matthew 10:39). Christians of nearly all stripes would probably agree with this sentiment if taken broadly – indeed even spiritual traditions outside Christianity speak of the need for a radical reorientation of one's life, as in the Buddha's teaching about extinguishing the illusion of selfhood – but American Christian fundamentalists have given the expression "born again" a specific meaning. For the fundamentalist believer, to be born again is to have a powerful experience of the dissolution of

one's old way of being and of having one's life reordered by being directly connected, via the act of faith, to Jesus Christ. The experience is sufficiently dramatic that fundamentalists often suppose that one should be able to name the precise date upon which the experience of Christian rebirth occurred.

The third factor that Greeley and Hout associate with what they call Conservative Christianity is particularly germane to our topic of pluralism: it is a hallmark of American Christian fundamentalism that its practitioners expend extraordinary effort to convert others to their viewpoint, to bring others to the born-again experience. The very phenomenon of proselytizing or evangelization is, of course, a function of pluralism. If one lived in a wholly homogeneous religious or spiritual environment, then there would be no need to convert others to one's own perspective, for there would be no other perspectives. But fundamentalists not only live among a host of other perspectives, they are characterized by a zeal for converting those who believe differently.

We shall return to this zeal to convert others as a response to spiritual pluralism. But first we must examine an even more basic move on the part of fundamentalism, one directed to all of the threats that fundamentalists perceive as arrayed before them, including pluralism and its threat of the disconfirming Other. As we have seen, fundamentalism is a spiritual worldview defined by a sense of siege. How might this siege mentality not only suggest the need for a defensive posture on the part of the fundamentalist *but simultaneously actually provide such a defense against the disconfirming potential of those who believe differently?*

We are, by now, familiar with the structure of pluralistic disconfirmation. I hold certain spiritual beliefs, and my grounds for those beliefs are claims of divine revelation or something akin to revelation. But I encounter persons with spiritual beliefs that contradict my own. By itself, this does not disconfirm my own convictions. The problem arises from the fact that those other persons make the same sorts of claims to revelation as grounding for their beliefs as the claims that I make. And this means that my belief system is, in effect, neutralized. We are faced with a host of

conflicting claims and no reliable means for adjudicating among them and demonstrating that some of the claims are legitimate while their competitors are not. The contradictory spiritual beliefs cancel one another out.

Spiritual and religious beliefs – and here we are concerned with beliefs, as opposed to the many other phenomena associated with spirituality, such as engagement in ritual and the practice of prayer – are, of course, of a particular type. Unlike existentially neutral beliefs, such as my belief that Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth rather than the seventeenth President of the United States, there is often a great deal riding on spiritual beliefs: both my sense of the meaning of life and my assumptions about the significance of death may well be a function of my spiritual beliefs. But there is another category of belief, one whose existential weight can be equal to that of spiritual beliefs, that is nonetheless distinct from them, namely, our moral convictions. One way to distinguish between the two is to note that, however important a spiritual belief is to me – for example, the belief that God exists – a spiritual belief is a conviction that something is the case. A moral belief, by contrast, is a conviction, not that something is the case, but that something ought to be the case: I ought, for instance, to love my neighbor as I love myself.

It turns out that the siege mentality in Christian fundamentalism introduces the special category of moral conviction into the mix in its confrontation with the disconfirming Other. This is of the utmost significance, because it suggests that, while I might find myself at an impasse if I had only my spiritual beliefs (and the grounding that goes with them) to put up against the disconfirming Other, the impasse can be broken if I have another sort of belief in addition to those spiritual beliefs, namely a moral belief. The fundamentalist concludes – and this is often one reason why he or she becomes a fundamentalist – that particular spiritual truths of the greatest importance are under attack and that it is therefore his or her *moral duty* to defend those truths. While the Other's spiritual beliefs might appear simply to cancel out my beliefs if my spiritual beliefs are taken just on their own, they do not in fact stand on their

own. They are augmented by a distinct, additional category of belief, belief about my moral duties. Spiritual beliefs point to moral duties here because the perceived assault upon beliefs of ultimate importance makes it incumbent upon me to do all that I can to protect those ultimate convictions. And it is of the very nature of moral convictions that they are supposed to trump all else, to guide all aspects of our behavior, including our cognitive behavior. To take a non-spiritual example, my moral conviction that all people should be treated as equals will lead me to look askance at any cognitive claim that one racial group is mentally inferior to others, even if someone presents me with evidence for that cognitive claim that possesses initial plausibility. To the extent that the Christian fundamentalist experiences the disconfirming challenge of other belief traditions as an assault that he or she has the moral duty to repulse, the fundamentalist has potentially broken the impasse that results when one has only propositional beliefs (beliefs about what is the case) to put up against the propositional beliefs of others.

In order fully to understand the dynamic at work here, it is essential that we distinguish between a logical-argumentative analysis of this defensive move on the part of the fundamentalist and what we might call a phenomenological analysis. From a logical-argumentative perspective, the scenario that we have just sketched, in which the believer wards off the disconfirming assault of the Other via a sense of moral duty, is fallacious. One has a moral duty to defend certain spiritual propositions if and only if those propositions are true. But the very problem at hand is that the disconfirming Other puts me in a position where I cannot know that the spiritual propositions that I have been embracing up to this point are true. Indeed, if I consider the many different competing religious visions that exist in our pluralistic society, then the mathematical odds are against the spiritual propositions that I have hitherto embraced being true. From a logical point of view, then, the moral duty to defend the propositions, the card that supposedly trumps the cognitive challenge of the disconfirming Other, never actually arrives in my hand: if spiritual pluralism suggests that the

propositions are most likely false, then the moral duty to defend them cannot arise in the first place. To put the matter in a slightly different way, the sense of moral duty arises too late.

Human nature being what it is, however, an analysis of the logic at issue will not necessarily suffice as an explanation of what actually happens when I confront the disconfirming Other. The designation of our species as *homo sapiens* is woefully incomplete if it is taken to mean that we will always follow the most logical course. In order to capture what, I wish to argue, frequently occurs in the fundamentalist's real-life response to the disconfirming Other, we must take what might be deemed a phenomenological approach. That is, we must ask, not what the rules of logical argumentation dictate, but what the fundamentalist believer experiences upon encountering the potentially disconfirming Other, what is actually given to his or her consciousness. This kind of phenomenological inquiry suggests, first of all, that the sense of moral duty will indeed appear as a "given," a dictum that confronts the believer as a powerful responsibility imposed on him or her from without and that, as such, has no chance of being interpreted as something that he or she is illicitly throwing into the gap. The analysis reveals, secondly, that the moral duty will by no means be experienced as something that comes too late, after the encounter with the disconfirming Other has destroyed the believer's truth claims and hence any moral duty to defend them. Rather, the believer will *experience* the moral duty to defend his or her convictions about ultimate truth as given *simultaneously* with the recognition that those convictions are under siege.⁵

The challenge of the spiritual Other, simply by threatening to undo one's own beliefs, rather than by advancing to the point of actually undoing them, already brings the moral duty to defend those beliefs to the forefront of consciousness. This phenomenological fact becomes evident not only in the zeal with which fundamentalists defend their beliefs but also the energy that they put into attempting to convert others. They go to the effort, in many cases, to walk from house to house and knock on doors, seeking to convince others to embrace their convictions,

and many are willing to travel to far-away places to engage in this behavior.

Thus it is that the fundamentalist is defiantly averring, “I believe because they do not” and doing so in a twofold sense. First of all, what the fundamentalist picks out as the most fundamental of his or her beliefs – Jesus’ virgin birth and the literal inerrancy of the Bible, for example – are a function of what is under attack by others. Secondly, his or her ability to hold onto the overall spiritual worldview that these fundamentals polemically symbolize is provided, in part, by the overwhelming sense of moral responsibility that arises precisely because of this attack.

Of course, the evangelical Christian form of fundamentalism, as is the case with other spiritual fundamentalisms, does not have to rely simply upon the believer’s own resources to oppose the threat of the unbelieving Other. Many fundamentalist Christians passionately aver that God himself will go so far as to spirit the believer away from the potentially debilitating influence of that other. A sizable portion of contemporary Christian fundamentalists, true to the convictions of their forebears throughout Christian history, believe that Christ will shortly return to earth. Apocalyptic expectations, which include the expectation of the return of Christ, were apparently part of earliest Christianity, as is apparent from the Gospel of Mark, the first of the canonical Gospels to be written. While early Christian apocalypticism, which rises to a fever pitch in the book of Revelation in the New Testament, did not pay a great deal of attention to what contemporary fundamentalists call the “rapture,” it is at the heart of much fundamentalist Christian piety today. Based on a short passage in Paul’s First Thessalonians (4:17), the doctrine of the rapture, as it is most frequently articulated in the present day and age, holds that one of the first miraculous accompaniments of Christ’s world-ending return will be the “rapturing” of true believers into heaven. That is, in one extraordinary moment, God will literally whisk the born-again away to heaven, leaving the unsaved on their own here below. If a true believer happens to be driving a car or piloting an airplane when the rapture occurs, woe be unto those left behind, who may find the

now-unguided vehicle careening out of control and into their path. Hence the familiar automobile bumper sticker displayed by some fundamentalist Christians: "Warning: In Case of Rapture This Car Will Be Unmanned."

The implications of this rapture theology are genuinely striking. First of all, as already indicated, the clear implication is that the threat of the unbelieving Other will be supernaturally removed: born-again Christians will be taken up to the ultimate safe haven, and the potentially disconfirming Others will be left behind on earth. In fact, *Left Behind* is one title in the extraordinarily popular series of Christian apocalyptic fiction authored by Tim F. LeHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, of which there is even a Hollywood film version.⁶

Second, not only will God take care of spiriting the believer away from the potentially corrupting influence of the unbelieving Other, but the theology of the rapture encourages the fundamentalist Christian to engage in undisguised *Schadenfreude* about the fate of that other. As their obvious delight in the image of out-of-control cars and airplanes wreaking havoc among the unsaved makes clear, devotees of rapture theology take solace in the notion that those whose beliefs contradict their own will be subject to a world of suffering precisely as a function of their holding the wrong beliefs. And the ante will be upped when the merely this-worldly suffering of the left behind is followed by eternal suffering in Hell when they die. As is the case with most apocalyptic thinking, going back to its origins in Judaism in the second century B.C.E. when Palestine was under the rule of Antiochus IV (the tyrant of Hanukkah fame), the threat to the faith is perceived as so great that it is necessary for God to step in and violently overthrow the present order. That so many Christian fundamentalists hold to apocalyptic theology as basic to their belief system – the imminent return of Christ is one of the beliefs listed in the all-important *The Fundamentals* mentioned in the Introduction as a founding document of Christian fundamentalism⁷ – only serves to underline the oppositional structure of fundamentalism.

Having attempted to lay bare the basic oppositional structure of fundamentalist belief and one of the defensive moves that comes

with it, it is now important for us to reiterate an important fact. While much of the sense of siege underlying fundamentalist Christian belief and the oppositional structure of that belief may have their roots in the historical-critical approach to the Bible and the dictates of the natural sciences (which is already an indirect encounter with pluralism, in that science and historical critique are embraced by other Christians and many Jews), a direct encounter with spiritual pluralism is also an important factor. I have already alluded to the incessant proselytizing activities of fundamentalist Christian groups, which includes both the attempt to convert various sorts of Jews and Christians to the fundamentalist fold and the desire to convert devotees of other world religions. We are all familiar with the overseas missionary work that fundamentalist Christians undertake in an effort to upend the spiritual convictions that animate non-Christian religions. But we do not have to consider simply what Christian missionaries are up to in places such as Africa and Asia to see the fundamentalist antipathy to non-Christian religions. At a rally for candidate John McCain during the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, the former pastor of the Grace Evangelical Free Church in Davenport, Iowa, Arnold Conrad, offered up the following prayer:

There are millions of people around this world praying to their god – whether it's Hindu, Buddha [*sic*], Allah – that his [Senator McCain's] opponent [Senator Barack Obama] wins, for a variety of reasons. And Lord, I pray that you will guard your own reputation, because they're going to think that their God is bigger than you, if that happens."⁸

To this list of opponents, we can add New Age piety, most forms of which are often seen by fundamentalists as anti-Christian paganism. As already indicated above with the example of the door-knocking for which fundamentalists are renowned – with Jehovah's Witnesses providing the clearest example – fundamentalist evangelization efforts occur here in the United States as well as abroad.

While the fundamentalist oppositional tactic explored above, which centers on the sense of moral responsibility to

defend one's beliefs, can be applied equally well to the threat posed by spiritual pluralism in its most direct form, to the threat from historical criticism of the Bible, and to challenges from natural science, there is another fundamentalist strategy that appears tailor-made to address the threat represented by pluralism in particular: one can attempt to create one's own social plausibility structure.

Our beliefs will be the more firmly held the more inter-subjective validity they possess. In a society in which everyone believes that there is a God in heaven who rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked, the reality of that God can virtually be taken for granted. By contrast, if there are many persons in my midst who reject belief in such a God, the belief will seem to me, at the very least, open to question (the "fragilization" of which Charles Taylor speaks). In short, if my social group is characterized by unanimity in holding a particular conviction, it provides a potent structure for reinforcing the plausibility of that conviction.

The whole phenomenon of the disconfirming Other can be expressed in terms of the dissolution of any such strong social plausibility structure. Fundamentalist Christians, with their aforementioned predilection for constant proselytizing and for withdrawing into a self-generated subculture, are, in effect, creating a workable social plausibility structure: by converting others to their own religious worldview, they buttress their plausibility structure by increasing the number of persons who share their convictions; by retreating into a subculture, they maintain the integrity of a particular plausibility structure that might otherwise be undone by the presence of disconfirming Others.

While the zeal to convert others to their own belief system continues unabated within fundamentalist Christianity, the retreat into an independent subculture described in the quotations from Balmer above – the subtitle of Balmer's book is *A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America* – is not as thoroughly characteristic of Christian fundamentalism as it once was. Balmer himself is fully aware of a transition in this regard that actually began as early as the 1970s:

. . . especially since the mid-1970s, as evangelicals began to emerge, albeit tentatively, from their self-imposed exile, . . . suspicion of “the world” has dissipated considerably. The antipathy toward the broader culture so characteristic of evangelicals in the twenties and thirties has gradually given way to ambivalence. Even as many evangelicals retain the old rhetoric of opposition to the world, they are eager to appropriate many of that world’s standards of success. This explains, for instance, the proliferation of prosperity theology in evangelical circles.⁹

A particularly potent example of this so-called “prosperity theology,” which trumpets the notion that true believers, far from needing to live abstemiously, should expect to receive economic blessings from God, is provided by the extraordinary popularity of preacher Joel Osteen. Today’s fundamentalist Christians, including those who tune into Osteen’s television program and devour his books – whether they identify themselves as born-again, as evangelicals, or as fundamentalists – are perfectly comfortable driving a new Mercedes and parking it in the three-car garage attached to their mini-mansion in an upscale suburb.

But to say that fundamentalist Christians have emerged from their previous cultural isolation insofar as they have embraced contemporary American notions of success and wealth is not to suggest that fundamentalism is no longer defined by an oppositional mentality. On the contrary, precisely as a function of their moving into the larger culture, fundamentalist Christianity has spawned what commentators on American society have dubbed the “religious right.” That is, while they are now more than happy to insinuate themselves into the larger social and political processes (recall Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority and Pat Robertson’s presidential campaigns) that characterize American life, fundamentalists energetically oppose much of what they see as the norm in those processes. They vociferously oppose the Supreme Court’s *Roe vs. Wade* abortion decision, they agitate to bring prayer into public school classrooms and the Ten Commandments into

courtrooms across the country, and they get out the vote to oppose legislation allowing gays to marry. Hence, the very notion of the “religious right” is defined by a sense of opposition on the part of its adherents toward what they take to be America’s deficient mores.

Just as fundamentalists’ emergence from an isolated subculture does not necessarily undercut the oppositional character of the fundamentalist mindset, so too it does not undo their attempt to create and reinforce a plausibility structure for their beliefs, thereby fighting back against the disconfirming power represented by pluralism. For one thing, the political activism that is part and parcel of the “religious right” phenomenon is, like the zealous efforts to convert members of other religions to fundamentalist Christian belief, an attempt to make the larger American society fall into step with the fundamentalist worldview, thereby creating a more effective social plausibility structure.

Given the continuing importance of shoring up the fundamentalist plausibility structure in the face of the disconfirming Other, especially as fundamentalists move out of their erstwhile cultural isolation, it should not be surprising that what is often dubbed the “mega-church” has appeared on the scene in contemporary American fundamentalism. For the mega-church allows fundamentalists to embrace important aspects of the larger culture while still wrapping themselves in a supportive plausibility structure. In essence, the mega-church sees to it that the church itself provides a broad array of services and activities that the believer has come to expect through his or her participation in the larger culture. It thereby allows one to buy into important currents of mainstream culture, but sees to it that those currents are monitored by a fundamentalist community. The mega-church is frequently a non-denominational, evangelical organization founded and led by a high-profile, communication-savvy preacher, a congregation with over a thousand members. But, once again, the mega-church is notable not simply for the number of its members, but also for the number of services and activities that it provides for them.

The stereotypical mega-church is built around a huge sanctuary boasting the latest in high-tech audio-visual equipment. That

equipment will be augmented by a professional choir and band. One who attends such a church expects that the message proclaimed by its preachers, whose images will be projected on a huge viewing screen, will be reinforced by a spectacle as entertaining as anything that Hollywood has to offer. And what happens on Sunday morning is only a small portion of the story. The church may also have a bowling alley and a basketball court, along with organized leagues to exploit them, for church members to enjoy throughout the week. A church member who has a problem with substance abuse will not need to seek help outside the mega-church, since it will provide its own internal, Christ-centered support groups. Similarly, in a culture in which it is taken for granted that the problems that we confront are not a function simply of external challenges but are often problems best addressed through psychological therapy, the mega-church will have on its staff minister-therapists to offer its members the psychological support services that they require. In short, the member of a fundamentalist mega-church can have the best of both worlds: the believer can take advantage of many of the benefits that the larger, non-fundamentalist culture has to offer, but can enjoy those benefits within the safety of the church and its fundamentalist worldview. The plausibility structure for fundamentalist belief is thus kept intact even as American fundamentalism emerges from its erstwhile cultural ghetto. The disconfirming power of the Other is held at bay despite the fundamentalist's decision to buy into some of the perquisites of American culture at large.

Perhaps the best way to classify fundamentalism, then, when we consider its response to American spiritual pluralism, is as a halfway house between avoidance tactics and strategic modifications of belief. On the one hand, it is not a mere evasion of the pluralistic challenge.¹⁰ Fundamentalism is a self-conscious and vigorous response to that challenge. But, on the other hand, its response is decidedly defensive in tone and attempts to hold onto certain "fundamentals" rather than to meet the pluralist challenge by strategically modifying belief in the fashion that we shall explore in the chapters that follow.¹¹