

# Fundamentalism and Secularization: The Case of the Isle of Lewis<sup>1</sup>

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*Draft paper*

## Introduction

Are Christian revivals over in the UK ? If so, is Christian fundamentalism over ? As Callum Brown highlights, UK statistics of religious practice « very suddenly plunged » in the 1960s<sup>2</sup>. If we follow this respected British historian, today's British citizen may face « the death of Christian Britain ». This harsh secularization process might be compared to many other national contexts.... France, for example ! When Hippolyte Simon wrote *Towards Pagan France*<sup>3</sup>, no historian or sociologist disagreed with this idea: France may be strongly rooted in Christian history. But is no longer a Christian country. The rise of individual choice, consumerism, sexual freedom, fast urbanization and the impact of leisure society have led to the irresistible decline of strong religious beliefs.

In this *scenario*, fundamentalism, understood as a radical version of Protestantism, might be interpreted as a remain of the past. But is this true ? Isle of Lewis, in North-West Scotland, seems to be an ideal ground of observation to test this hypothesis. Described as " stronghold of Calvinism"<sup>4</sup>, this area has been closely observed in the course of the year 2004-2005. The collected material has been enriched by several sources taken from British newspapers published in the first decade of the XXIth Century.

In this very remote Gaelic island, religion seems to survive in its strong, orthodox and traditional forms, as we will see in the first part of this paper (I). However, Isle of Lewis is not as stable and traditional as it seems. Several indicators seem to demonstrate that the Hebrideans are not immune from secularization (II). But the isle if Lewis case study seems to illustrate the fact that fundamentalist religion is definitely not incompatible with a secularized society (III).

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<sup>2</sup> Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain. Understanding Secularization*, (London and New York, 2001) p.7.

<sup>3</sup> Hippolyte Simon, *Vers une France païenne* (Paris, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Colin and Mary Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven: The Revival on the Isle of Lewis, 1949-1952* (Fearn, 2004), p.24.

## **I. Isle of Lewis's religion described: a hotbed for fundamentalists?**

The idea that isle of Lewis remains one of the last hotbeds for Calvinistic Fundamentalists is widespread in contemporary Britain.

### **An isolated place**

This idea rests upon a geographic reality : Isle of Lewis remains a very isolated place, strongly exposed to the Atlantic winds, difficult to reach by the new waves of modernity. Lewis is the largest island of the Outer Hebrides or the Western Isles, a Scottish archipelago. From Ulapool, it takes 3 hours by ferry to reach it. Located in the north of Isle of Harris, Lewis totals 1,770 km<sup>2</sup>. Not enough to ask for independence, but far enough to develop a very strong local identity. Its capital, Stornorway, remains a very small town, actually the only one, assembling almost the half of the islanders<sup>5</sup>, who amount to less than 20.000 inhabitants<sup>6</sup>. If we include Harris, Uist and Barra, the population rises to around 26.000 inhabitants : the equivalent of a quite small city on mainland Scotland

Although undeniably British, Isle of Lewis retains a very distinctive local identity, both in language, habits, local economy, music and religion. Far more people have fled the cloudy island, especially during the XIXth Century and the first half of the XXth Century, than people who have joined Lewis<sup>7</sup>. Among them, Donald Trump's mother (from Tong, 4 miles away from Stornoway). When emigrants are far more than immigrants, local traditions remain very strong. Once part of a Norse kingdom until the treaty of Perth<sup>8</sup> (1266), this Gaelic speaking island displays the typical traits of insular identity, protected from uniformisation and standardisation because of its remoteness.

### **A very high level of religious practice**

All touristic guides warn visitors : isle of Lewis is rooted in a very lively Presbyterian tradition. Sabbath observance<sup>9</sup> is forgotten everywhere in Britain except in one place : isle of Lewis. Isle of Lewis is subdivided in four Presbyterian parishes :

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<sup>5</sup> There are around 8,000 inhabitants in Stornoway. But if we include the villages nearby, which have become quasi-suburbs of Stornoway, the global population of the town is nearer 12,000.

<sup>6</sup> In the 2001 Census, Lewis had a resident population of 18,489.

<sup>7</sup> This is particularly true after 1844, when Sir James Matheson bought the island. Brutal land reforms and famine forced many islanders off their lands, increasing the flood of Hebridean immigrants.

<sup>8</sup> Isle of Lewis was then ceded to the Kingdom of Scotland from the Kingdom of Norway.

<sup>9</sup> Which means : no work on Sunday, according to the Bible, 4th commandment, Book of *Exodus XX, 8-10*.

Barva, Lochs, Stornoway and Uig. All of them gather massive flocks of believers each Sunday. Lewis men and women got the reputation of being “instinctively and traditionally religious, with reverence for God, His Word and the ordinances of the church”, as Colin and Mary Peckham state in the first chapter of the book they wrote about the 1949-1952 Revival<sup>10</sup>.

Visiting isle of Lewis in the early XXI<sup>st</sup> Century gives still impressive visions of churches filled with attenders, young and old, singing Psalms by heart and listening with passion to long sermons. Even if church attendance is now lower than what it was one generation ago, it is still much stronger than everywhere else in contemporary UK. Around 40% of the total population of Lewis still goes to church every Sunday according to Peter Brierley Census<sup>11</sup>, and the main Christian library in Stornoway is alive and well: its many Christian books, most of them with a distinct Evangelical or even Fundamentalist flavour<sup>12</sup>, still find their customers. At the beginning of the XXI<sup>th</sup> Century, Isle of Lewis does not only claim a very high level of religious practice. It also claims a very high level of religious fervour. Hebrideans are very generous in their church givings. 2003 tables reveal that Free Church of Scotland parishes in the Western isles were twice as generous as Glasgow and Argyll, and three times more generous than Edinburgh and Perth<sup>13</sup>. The Outer Hebridees appear today as the most Christian part of the UK, where people still leave houses unlocked. « Today, the Long Island is, to many, Britain's 'last stronghold of the pure Gospel' », recalls John Macleod<sup>14</sup>.

### **A settled reputation of religious fundamentalism, rooted in history**

This religious fervour is often linked with a reputation : isle of Lewis, as a hotbed for Christian fundamentalists. But what do we mean by “fundamentalism” ? Fundamentalism is often taken today as a synonym of radical religion. However, it does have a more distinct definition: fundamentalists emerged in the Protestant world at the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> Century, as a reaction to Liberal theology. This orthodox or neo-orthodox movement took its name because of the *Fundamentals*, a series of twelve theological volumes published in the United States from 1910 to 1915. The 90 essays edited in these booklets by A.C. Dixon and Reuben Archer Torrey reaffirmed what was meant as orthodox Christian beliefs as the virgin birth of Jesus-Christ, the atonement, the bodily resurrection of Jesus and the second coming of the Lord Jesus. They also emphasised the idea that sees the Bible (both Old Testament and New

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<sup>10</sup> C. and M. Peckham, (Fearn, 2004), p.18.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Brierley (ed.), *Scottish Church Census 2002*. Cf. Peter Brierley, *Turning the Tide, The Challenge Ahead*, (ed. Christian Research, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Several books from Young Earth Creationists for example.

<sup>13</sup> *2003 Congregational Remittances* (amounts received by the General Treasurer of the Free Church of Scotland), published in *The Monthly Record, The magazine of the Free Church of Scotland*, september 2003, p.23.

<sup>14</sup> John Macleod, *Banner in the west: a spiritual history of Lewis and Harris* (Birlinn, 2008).

Testament) as infallible and historically accurate. Fundamentalism became soon the radical wing of Evangelicalism, with an emphasis on separation, premillennialism<sup>15</sup> and confrontation with worldliness.

In that sense, it would be wrong to describe most of Lewis religion as fundamentalist. Premillennialism and separation, which have become a trademark of Protestant fundamentalism, cannot be considered as the most important beliefs on the island. Traditional Presbyterian beliefs, rooted in John Calvin's theology, are the main religious cement, translated in an increasingly Evangelical spirituality based upon conversion and holiness<sup>16</sup>. The Free Church of Scotland is the predominant church on the isle. The Church of Scotland and the Free Presbyterian Church are the other main churches. All of them claim to hold traditional Calvinist creeds. They would certainly not define themselves as fundamentalists, but Christian first (in the Evangelical definition) and Presbyterian second.

However, being Presbyterian and fundamentalist is not incompatible, as the history of Fundamentalism abundantly recalls. Although it would be wrong to castigate Lewis Christians as Fundamentalists, a distinct Fundamentalist flavour is definitely perceivable on the island, and some ministers do not hesitate to describe themselves as "Fundamentalists". Christian liberalism does not have a good press, and the idea that the Bible is the true Word of God is widely share. Traditional forms of Christian social control, completely out of date in other parts of the UK, are still practiced in the name of the Bible<sup>17</sup>.

Although the principle of separation is not exactly understood as typical US fundamentalists understand it today, contemporary history of Protestantism in Lewis illustrates abundantly a local taste for separation. In the course of the Disruption debate which led to the creation of the Free Church of Scotland in 1843, most of the islanders chose the Free Church of Scotland, separated from the Kirk. Many other separations followed. When the first Free Church of Scotland and the Kirk finally reunited in 1900, most of Lewis disagreed. Remaining separate was better than compromise, which could be a typical Fundamentalist stand. Last but not least, Lewis ministers are often in the forefront of today's culture wars between Christian worldviews and secular ones. Isle of Lewis believers are not afraid to stand as counter-cultural Christians, counter-cultural fighters, embracing therefore one of the typical features of Fundamentalist Christians. The most visible example of this cultural stand

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<sup>15</sup> Premillennialism is the belief that Jesus-Christ will literally and physically be back on the earth for his millennial reign, at his Second coming. This doctrine, cherished by Fundamentalists, is called premillennialism because it holds that Christ's return to earth will occur prior to the inauguration of the millennium. Premillennialism is distinct from postmillennialism or amillennialism, eschatological options which view the millennial rule as occurring either before the Second coming, or as being figurative and non-temporal.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989).

<sup>17</sup> For example : Church discipline towards attenders engaging in sexual promiscuity.

is the shops closed on Sunday : islanders are widely known in all touristic guides for being Sabbath keepers.

No surprise then if it is on isle of Lewis that historians locate the last big British Christian revival. This revival occurred mainly from 1949 to 1952. It was not the first one on this island, and it may not be the last one. Since the 1820s, several revivals have contributed to Lewis reputation of piety and religious fervour<sup>18</sup>. In the early XIXth Century, Lewis still appeared as a difficult place for Christians. From his own religious perspective, here is how Rev. M. Macaulay describes the situation before the first Uig revival :

“Until the Edinburgh Gaelic School Society began its work in Lewis, the densest intellectual and spiritual darkness held universal sway in the island, and Uig was by no means better than the other districts in this respect. Although the ground-work had begun with these teachers in instructing the people to read the Bible in their own tongue, we hear of no apparent effect before 1820, after which we notice some movement among the dry bones through the preaching and evangelical zeal of Finlay Munro and John MacLeod, Galson »<sup>19</sup>.

Through Finely Munro and MacLeod, Lewis religion turned out to become distinctively Evangelical in the sense given by David Bebbington, with an emphasis on Biblicism, crucicentrism, conversion and activism. Several revivals followed the Uig awakening. The last one, which occurred after World War II, is the most famous. It has been described and studied by Colin and Mary Peckham (2004). Their research is based upon testimonies, conversion accounts, and the diaries of of Duncan Campbell. Reverend Duncan Campbell, the man who initiated this revival, was not from Lewis. He came from the mainland of Scotland. He intended to stay in Lewis for only ten days, and then take a rest from his mission work. However, despite his tiredness, he sensed a feeling of spiritual expectation amongst the people who had invited him to Barvas (North of Isle of Lewis), and after the preaching service on the second evening he was there, the congregation joined in a fervent prayer, asking for forgiveness, Mercy and revival. This was the start of a three-year revival. After its start in Barvas, this revival spread to Tarbert, Leurpost, Arnol, Stornoway... The revival was felt throughout the whole of Lewis, to such as extent that Duncan Campbell later described it as "a community saturated with God".

Duncan was not only an able preacher. He was also able to speak Gaelic, which was a tremendous help, as most Hebridean people still spoke this language. This is one of the reasons why Campbell's evangelistic outreach bore so many fruits : he

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<sup>18</sup> See Colin and Mary Peckham, (2004), chapter 3, "Revivals in Lewis", p.27-36.

<sup>19</sup> Murdo Macaulay, *Aspects of the religious history of Lewis up to the Disruption of 1843* (Stornoway, 1885), p.169-170.

was able to preach the Bible and to preach conversion to islanders in their mother tongue, giving him an easy acceptance to the people.

As a former principal of the Faith Mission Bible College, Colin Peckham highlights typical aspects of an Evangelical revival, with a strong emphasis on the transforming might of the Trinitarian God, the role of the Bible and the Holy Spirit, and the centrality of conversion to Jesus-Christ, saviour of sinners through his redemptive work. His own wife was converted during this Lewis revival, which led to growing religious attendances and a renewed Christian fervour rooted in the Bible. As an example, Duncan Campbell reported in the *Keswick Week* (1952) that eighty-three hymns were written in the revival, and despite the fact that the message in the revival was one of severity, they were all on the love of God<sup>20</sup>. Sixty years after the start of this last strong Revival, what remains today of this “community saturated with God” described once by Duncan?

## **II. No future for fundamentalism ? A trend toward secularization**

Contemporary Isle of Lewis is still hard to reach, especially when winds blow during the three hours needed to reach it by ferry... But Lewis is less and less isolated, more and more visited, and therefore, more and more culturally diverse. Isle of Lewis is now part of this Global Village described by specialists of globalization. A global village saturated by the ideals of consumer society, far from the puritan ascetism described by Max Weber<sup>21</sup>. In this context, the future of radical religion does not seem very bright.

### **An increasingly connected island**

Lewis has long been a local economy, suffering from underdevelopment and emigration<sup>22</sup>. Crofting, fishing and weaving were the main activities, while shops were usually very small and all-purpose. This has changed : Isle of Lewis economy is today more and more open to global trends. Typical British supermarkets are now available around Stornoway, while many national chains and a few international franchises have settled downtown. Isle of Lewis has even been recently designated as a very favourable place for start-ups, attracting several young entrepreneurs<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Duncan Campbell, quoted in C. and M. Peckham (2004), p.109.

<sup>21</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905).

<sup>22</sup> P.G. Merwett, "Economic brokerage and peripheral underdevelopment in the Isle of Lewis", *Sociological Review*, n°31, 1983, p.427-452.

<sup>23</sup> "With the highest rate of new businesses starting-up last year than any other place in Scotland, the Western Isles is bucking the trend in other rural areas. Island banks opened 21% more accounts for new businesses in

On a cultural level, all inhabitants use to watch television, like all British citizen. This has religious consequences. Among others, sociologist Grace Davie, along with historian David Bebbington<sup>24</sup>, has highlighted the impact of television on British religious decline. "No longer perceived as a duty, religious activity has become, for an increasing proportion of the population, a leisure pursuit ; one, moreover, which competes for the public's attention alongside all sorts of other pastimes, including the ever more pervasive and ever more technologically advanced small screen"<sup>25</sup>. According to Davie, « the evidence is overwhelming. In 1950, television hardly existed ; only 2 per cent of households owned one and on Sundays there were but three programmes to distract such pioneers from other pursuits. In 1993, 79 per cent of the population indicated that they watched television on Sundays »<sup>26</sup>. It is no mystery then if British Evangelical's influence declined since the 1960s, along with Church of England's influence. This decline can be linked to the growing pressure of a secularized leisure society. If television had such an impact on the mainland, one can guess that its impact was even bigger on a remote island like Lewis, in which TV programs opened windows on realities to which many locals had no previous access.

Last but not least, the huge impact of the Digital revolution, starting in the early 1990s, has immensely contributed to the opening up of Lewis. Today's Isle of Lewis is a very well connected place<sup>27</sup>, leading John Macleod to describe a "*Bebo* generation"<sup>28</sup>. Social networking site *Bebo.com* and other members of its generation such as *Flickr.com* and *YouTube.com* are extremely popular. Jim Scheinman, vice-president of sales and marketing at *Bebo.com*, described in 2006 the phenomenal growth behind the site. "We focused on the core markets of the English-speaking world. In the markets we target — 13 year olds up to 33 year olds — we are growing at a rate of anything between 10% and 30% per week. Since we started up 11 months ago we have generated 24 million registered users and 3 billion monthly page views. In the schools we are active in, 80% of students come back every week. We've designed this product to be part of their daily life."<sup>29</sup> This is globally true for the whole British market, but even more accurate in Lewis, where almost everybody enjoys

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contrast to the rest of the country". Karin Slater, "Bucking the Trend to Success", *The Hebridean*, Friday April 8, 2005, p.8.

<sup>24</sup> See David Bebbington, 'Evangelism and Spirituality in Twentieth-Century Protestant Nonconformity', in Alan P. F. Sell and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century* (Studies in Christian History and Thought, Carlisle, 2003), p.184-215.

<sup>25</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without belonging* (London, 1994), p.194.

<sup>26</sup> G.Davie (1994), p. 203.

<sup>27</sup> The *Virtual Hebrides* Website, particularly effective from 1993 to 2000, is a good example of the large impact of the Digital revolution on the Island. Operated from Stornoway, this influential website was founded by photographer and film maker Sam Maynard. At one point in 1995, this website claimed to be the world's largest rural website as measured by visitors to its pages. See <http://www.virtualhebrides.com/>

<sup>28</sup> J. Macleod (Birlinn, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> John Kennedy, « Cracking the Bebo génération », 01.06.2006, published online in : <http://www.siliconrepublic.com/news/>.

today Internet and its social networks. Contrarily to China or Iran where these networks are closely watched and sometimes censored, no political or religious authority has enforced any censorship.

### **A slow decline of religious practice**

Exposing people to other cultural, religious, moral choices in a free society has consequences. As long as there was no real option : no dancing, no cinema, no shops open on Sunday, no screen and no digital connection, islander had only a few options for their spare time. Going fishing and hunting, or going to church. The cultural opening up of Isle of Lewis to a contemporary leisure society led to a slow decline of religious practice. Levels of attendance are still much higher than in the rest of the UK<sup>30</sup>, but the old Christian order is slowly fading : a few pubs have appeared on the island, and since 2002, Sunday flights land not far from Stornoway. To religious conservatives, it is as if the Devil had extended its dominion on the isle. Here is how Matthew Engel, a week-end columnist for the *Financial Times*, described the trend in 2008 :

« Some pubs are now open. There are Sunday flights. And Engebrets, a garage-cum-store on the edge of Stornoway, has broken the taboo, and does a storming trade. The sabbatarians may not actually advocate a return to the old days when the playground swings were chained up, nor to the (perhaps apocryphal) practice of locking the cockerel away from his hens for the duration. But they feel each of the newish breaches as stabs to the heart and harbingers of the end.

“I do regret them because it takes away from the special day,” says Morag Munro, a member of the Western Isles Council. “It means people having to work who can’t be at home with their families. You must remember that life on a croft here was very difficult. People worked very hard all week. Sunday was the day when everybody rested, and they needed that rest,” she explains.

“People walked to church, walked back home, had their dinner – the best of the week – read or did whatever quiet activity they wanted, and went to church at night. Communities walked together so it was a very sociable day. For me, it wasn’t sombre or dull. It was special.” The problem is that Mrs Munro’s idea of fun is not universally shared on Lewis. »<sup>31</sup>

Less and less universally, one might say !

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Brierley, *Scottish Church Census* (<http://www.christian-research.org.uk/scc4.htm>)

<sup>31</sup> Matthew Engel, “Dispatch from the Isle of Lewis, *Financial Times*, July 5, 2008.



## Choice undermining faith ?

In the course of the XXth Century, Presbyterianism lost its hegemony on the people of Lewis. In spite of the strong revival which occurred in the early Fifties, the traditional Calvinistic and Evangelical mindset is slowly eroding. With new Chinese, Thai and Indian restaurants, the culinary diet diversifies, and it is the same with the cultural and religious diet. Non Presbyterian protestants are on the rise (Salvation Army, new Charismatics<sup>32</sup>), along with Catholics<sup>33</sup>, Jehovah witnesses and even Islam ! In early 2005, there were at least eight Muslim families in Stornoway, along with a single one on Harris<sup>34</sup>.

As people have more choices, strong religion declines because absolutes are undermined by diversity of options. On a more global scale, Scottish sociologist Steve Bruce has devoted considerable energy and talent explaining that although Evangelical religion seems more resilient than established Church of England, it is nonetheless on a declining path<sup>35</sup>. The main reason for this decline is probably found in the fact that secularized societies like Britain offer too many choices to the children of Evangelical believers. Choice undermines faith. Therefore, internal transmission does not work as it did 100 years ago. Hard census data seems to confirm his analysis<sup>36</sup>. In Lewis as in Great Britain, most Evangelicals were born into Evangelical families. Although Evangelicals continue to describe their experiences in the Pauline language of dramatic conversion, Steve Bruce argues that they could more accurately be described as the product of socialization. In flow tables that link the religion of survey respondents to that of their parents and divide them into Catholic, Mainstream Protestant, Conservative Protestant and 'Not Religious', there is no movement from Catholic, Mainstream Protestant and Not Religious to Conservative Protestant. The main flow is from Catholic and Mainstream Protestant (about 50% of each) to Not Religious.

Conservative Protestantism survives because it retains half its children, has larger than average families sizes, has benefited disproportionately from increases in life expectancy, and has higher than average levels of commitment. But since this transmission is less and less effective as secular society offers more and more choices to Evangelical children, the future of Evangelical and Fundamentalist churches in

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<sup>32</sup> A New Wine Church is located downtown Stornoway. One of its trademark is: "The church should never be static but should always be on the move". Cf. <http://www.newwinechurch.com/>

<sup>33</sup> After the passing of Pope John-Paul II, a very positive article was published in *The Hebrideans*. Michelle Robson, "Remembering the pope", *The Hebrideans*, Friday, April 8, 2005, p.16. "The death of the Pope was remembered in churches across the region on Sunday and a special mass was held in Stornoway on Tuesday night conducted by the new parish priest Fr Tom Kearns".

<sup>34</sup> Aisha, "We are the only muslims where we live", BBC website, January 26, 2005 : <http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/>

<sup>35</sup> Steve Bruce, *God is dead. Secularization in the West* (Oxford, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> According the *Census 2001*, the most common answer given by the Scottish under 35 when asked about their religion is « none » (Peter Brierley, *Scottish Church Census*).

Britain appears to be all but bright. The particular case of Isle of Lewis fits this pattern : the only distinction might be the isolation of Lewis, but as this isolation is eroding, the death of Christian Lewis is only a question of time : it might take 50 or 100 years more, but the process is the same. Secularized church buildings which become houses or businesses have already appeared on Lewis : they are no more specific to mainland Scotland: in 2005, there was already at least one Lewis church which had been converted to a secular business<sup>37</sup> ... Fundamentalists from Lewis might soon become as a rarity as panda bears.

### **III. Death and resurrection of Fundamentalism on Isle of Lewis**

Although strong, the theoretical framework developed by Steve Bruce may not be as convincing as it seems. One cannot help but see that religious conservatives still remain the dominant player on the isle.

#### **A fierce and selective religious battle against secularization**

If secularization forces are vigorous, religious conservatives, more or less influenced by Fundamentalism, are far from inactive ! Their churches still attract people on the basis of a ministry "centred on the Bible" and focused on "the clear explanation of the good news that Jesus came into the world to redeem people from sin"<sup>38</sup>. One must say that Lewis churches, although conservative, do not fight democratic values. They do not fight individual choice. They do not fight religious freedom, and freedom of conscience. They do not ask Muslim families to leave the island, or Catholics to stop idolatry<sup>39</sup>. What they fight is a worldview in which God is not the first provider of meaning. They fight a worldview exclusively centred on Man. They fight for a world in which religion remains the centre of ordinary life.

Many social issues, several local debates are regularly marked by religious stands against the alleged excesses of secularization. Lewis pastors are not shy people... They plead vocally for Christian values in the public place, in and out of isle of Lewis. The *Stornoway Gazette* is full of public stands taken by pastors on issues

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<sup>37</sup> Located in Stornoway, this former church building has been reframed into: "N.D. Macleod Ltd, The Powerhouse for Everything Electrical" (it is not a Charismatic church but a business).

<sup>38</sup> Iver Martin (Minister of Stornoway Free Church), "Welcome to our website!", <http://stornowayfreechurch.org>, home page (2009).

<sup>39</sup> Although anticatholic flavours are still there on XXith Century Lewis. After the death of Pope John-Paul II, Lindsay Maccallum wrote to the *Stornoway Gazette* in order to give "a different perspective", highlighting "the role of the Roman Catholic Church in the Holocaust", and concluding : "It is significant that it took Pope John Paul II fourteen years to recognise the state of Israel". Lindsay Maccallum, in "Letters to the Editor", *Stornoway Gazette*, Thursday, April 14, 2005, p.6.

like Education, Creation, Sexual purity, pastoral care, families, keeping the Sabbath, fighting atheism, etc<sup>40</sup>. In doing so, they do not always put on silk gloves : commenting on the war on terror, a minister and regular contributor from Back Free Church reminds his readers in an article published in July 2007 : “remember that the real war on terror is what God himself engaged in when he sent his innocent Son to die for a fallen world »... In the same article, he claims unashamedly : "I am a Christian radical fundamentalist. I believe the text of the Bible is without error in the original autographs, wholly given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. My whole life and ministry are centred around the true claims of the Person and Work of Jesus of Nazareth. And I am called to proclaim and preach that message into a confused world."<sup>41</sup>

While David Bebbington rightly emphasizes that "Evangelicals, including conservatives, have generally repudiated the term (fundamentalist) in Britain"<sup>42</sup>, it seems obvious here that Lewis is an exception to the rule, at least with this pastor, who claims to be a "radical fundamentalist". This kind of rhetoric is not confined to the Isle of Lewis, as several former Lewis ministers operate in the UK. Just after the December 2004 Tsunami, one of them<sup>43</sup> became famous by declaring that this natural disaster was to be interpreted as God's punishment for seekers of pleasure. Most UK national medias echoed Reverend John Macleod's stand, connecting it to his Lewis background<sup>44</sup>.

The religious fight is not only channelled through sermons, articles and interviews<sup>45</sup>. It is also shaped by Christian social alternatives. Several travel options have been made available for religious tourists from Lewis, including Israel tours<sup>46</sup>. Several churches and ministers are also involved in active social work, like Rev Kenneth M. Ferguson, minister of Cross Free Church (Ness, Isle of Lewis) while being also -for several years- Chairman of the Management Committee of the Bethesda Nursing Home and Hospice (Stornoway)<sup>47</sup>. But one of the most striking examples of this strategy of building Christian alternatives is the creation, in 1999, of an independent Christian school in Stornoway<sup>48</sup>. A close look to its website indicates clearly the purpose of this new Christian school, still active 10 years after its creation.

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<sup>40</sup> Donnie McInnes, “Wake up, or the ‘Lewis Sabbath’ will be lost, says FP Church”, *Stornoway Gazette*, 29th of May, 2008, David Robertson, “Challenging Dawkins”, *Stornoway Gazette*, 10th of May, 2007....

<sup>41</sup> Cf. “Fighting the War on Terror”, *Stornoway Gazette*, 11 of July, 2007, iaind@backfreechurch.co.uk (minister from Back Free Church).

<sup>42</sup> David W. Bebbington (London, 1989), p.275.

<sup>43</sup> Rev. John Macleod, minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in London, after having served in Stornoway for 35 years.

<sup>44</sup> Peter MacAulay, “Minister claims tsunami was God's punishment for seekers of pleasure”, *The Press and Journal, the Voice of the North*, Wednesday, feb 9, 2005, p.1.

<sup>45</sup> Sermons are widely published in the local press (full text or summaries), along with all kinds of "Pastoral reflections".

<sup>46</sup> Glyn Morgan, “Celebrating 50 Israel tours”, *Alive News*, n°21, winter 2004-05, p.1.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Kenneth M. Ferguson's Biographical sketch, <http://www.crosschurch.freeuk.com/> (2009).

<sup>48</sup> Lewis Independent Christian School (LICS), created in Stornoway (Isle of Lewis) in 1999. Website: <http://www.lics.org.uk/>

« The school is founded on the principle that Christianity and Biblical truth must find a place across the whole curriculum and not just be confined to the act of worship and Religious and Moral Education.

Our curriculum aims to ensure that the Lordship of God is recognised in history, languages, mathematics, geography, arts, music, science and physical education as well as in religion. Consequently, while the curriculum is designed to be comprehensive, the children are taught to think critically and to develop a Christian world-view. They are taught to view the world as created by God and are encouraged to discover, use and develop their God given gifts, in arts or science, for a life of service to God and thereby the world. »<sup>49</sup>

Here is an unashamedly Bible-centred education which can legitimately be characterised by a Fundamentalist tone. When State schools appear to reject the Christian world-view, Christian conservatives do not only complain : they act and create their own social structures, including educative ones.

### **A political victory for Sabbath keepers ?**

This active involvement in the social life has been particularly highlighted through the lenses of the Sabbath. Sabbath observance has been, and remains today a very sensitive issue. There is even a society, the Lord's Day Observance Society, to fight for it. Although not only based in Lewis<sup>50</sup>, this society finds on this particular island its most enthusiastic supporters.

While a few believe the Sabbath to be simply a lack of amenities and facilities for locals and tourists, most others believe it to be a vital aspect of island life, a link to religious tradition and an alternative to the consumer society prevalent on the mainland. In Stornoway, a vast majority of the island's services, shops and businesses still close on Sunday as it was the case in whole Scotland until the 1970s<sup>51</sup>. However, in recent years an increasing number of transport services have begun operating on a Sunday. The first Sunday air service began in October 2002. But it was met by loud protests from churches under the banner of the Lord's Day Observance Society. However, the Sunday air services have expanded and there are now two return flights to Inverness and one to Glasgow as well as becoming generally more accepted. Ferry travel on Sundays from Lewis and Harris is also possible since 2005 after Caledonian

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<sup>49</sup> Curriculum of the Lewis Independent Christian School (<http://www.lics.org.uk/curriculum.htm>)

<sup>50</sup> The Lord's Day Observance Society (LDOS) is the leading pressure group against secular activities on Sundays in the UK. It was founded in 1831 by Anglican clergy and laymen.

<sup>51</sup> Comparing Scotland and England, David W. Bebbington notices that "in general sabbatarianism was stronger north of the border (Bebbington, 1989), p.210.

MacBrayne introduced such a service to the timetable of the Sound of Harris ferry<sup>52</sup>. The introduction of this service was also met with protests, but Caledonian MacBrayne maintained its position.

One could think that these religious opposition failed. After all, a poll conducted in 2000 showed that around 60% of islanders were in favour of having ferry and air travel available on Sundays. However, it is not that simple. First of all, the same 2000 poll showed a strong majority against the opening of shops on Sunday. Second, religious opposition prevented the Calmac Ferry company to open sailings to Isle of Lewis, in spite of many attempts<sup>53</sup>. Visiting Lewis in 2006, *Sunday Times'* journalist Kenny Farquharson discovers a Sabbath culture "that is standing firm"<sup>54</sup>.... even if the Ferry company finally won the battle, starting its first scheduled service from 19 July 2009<sup>55</sup>. Third, the political implications of the Sunday air travels have been surprisingly high, to the point that these Sunday trips may have cost seats to the Labour Party. Why ?

Campaigning for the 2005 General election, Jack McConnell, former Scottish Prime Minister landed at Stornoway airport on the 10th of April, 2005.... Which happened to be a Sunday ! This Sunday visit ignited a huge protest from local churches. Reverend David Murray of the Free Church Continuing, Sandwick, stated : « It is deeply offensive to God and to most islanders that Jack McConnell should choose to arrive on Lewis via a Sabbath flight. Either, he is completely out of touch with the sensitivities of islanders, or he has chosen to make deliberate statement of hostility to God's Word and the island's Christian heritage. I suspect the latter, as he and most of his MSP colleagues continue to advance the anti-Christian, secular and humanistic agenda that has characterised the Scottish Parliament since its inception. I Wonder if our local Labour MP and MSP have the backbone to protest against their leader's deliberate disobedience of God's law » This text was published on the FrontPage of *The Hebrideans*, a paper widely spread on Isle of Lewis<sup>56</sup>.

At the two following elections, the Labour party was ousted. For the UK Parliament, Angus MacNeil (SNP), a native from Lewis, succeeded to Calum MacDonald (Labour Party) in 2005. For the Scottish Parliament, Alasdair Allan, from the Scottish National party (SNP) succeeded to Alasdair Morrison (Labour Party) in 2007. One cannot say that the 2005 Sabbath Scandal explained everything... But it surely played a part.

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<sup>52</sup> See Kenny Farquharson, "Sea Change", *The Sunday Times*, July 30, 2006, p.16.

<sup>53</sup> The most recent one : "Calmac to introduce Sunday sailings to Isle of Lewis. The ferry company fear they are in breach of law if they don't offer a seven day service. » 15 May 2009 (<http://news.stv.tv/scotland/north/>)

<sup>54</sup> Kenny Farquharson, "Sea Change", *op. cit.*

<sup>55</sup> "Green Light for Sunday Sailing", *BBC News*, 14 July 2009 ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/scotland/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/))

<sup>56</sup> Eilidh Whiteford, "First Minister lands into Sabbath blast", *The Hebrideans*, vol 2, n°55, Friday, April 15, 2005.

## **Traditionalism in danger, but Fundamentalism alive and well**

In the end, the last 25 years illustrate the fact that Christianity on Isle of Lewis, even in its most zealous forms, is far from crumbling. Religion is changing, it is not disappearing. Some forms decline, some remain quite strong, some even grow. The traditional religious attender fits quite well in the first category. Traditionalism is clearly in danger. Understood as a desire to keep away from modernity, from consumer society and individualism, traditionalism is slowly vanishing. The Calvinistic Arcadia when 100% of a single community gathered at Church every Sunday is probably over, and for long. If we understand Fundamentalism with this kind of traditionalist and conservative religion which rejects the premises of modernity, then the prospect of Fundamentalism on isle of Lewis is decline and death. But this analysis would be based upon a mistake.

Many journalists and observers wrongly assume that Fundamentalism will vanish as well, because Fundamentalism is nothing more than a Protestant traditionalism. It is all the contrary ! Protestant Fundamentalism is not a synonym of traditionalism. Unlike traditionalism, Fundamentalism, as French sociologist Jean-Paul Willaime, for example, has demonstrated<sup>57</sup>, does not reject modernity, at least if we understand modernity as an emphasis on individual choice, freedom of conscience and democratic values. While Catholic traditionalists often indulge in a kind of “Ancien Régime” dream, Protestant fundamentalists prefer current republican or democratic regimes, and individual choice does not sound to them as a bad word. They are at ease with modern technology, open well connected to the wider world<sup>58</sup>, and the vitality of religious websites from Isle of Lewis today gives an ample illustration. These websites are technically modern and up-to-date<sup>59</sup>, they rely on the individual choices of digital pilgrims, while maintaining orthodox creeds and strong beliefs many fundamentalists hold dearly. Therefore, modernity has opposite effects towards traditional religion and fundamentalist religion. The first one erodes, the second one gets stronger. As Nancy Ammerman states, Fundamentalism exists where there are changes. When there are no changes, there is tradition, not Fundamentalism<sup>60</sup>. Traditional European Christianity needed a sacred canopy<sup>61</sup>. Fundamentalists do not need such a canopy.

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<sup>57</sup> Jean-Paul Willaime, *La précarité protestante* (Geneva, 1992).

<sup>58</sup> For example, see Donnie Macinnes, "Islander is shocked at plight at Cambodia's suffering children", *Stornoway Gazette*, April 14, 2005, p.12. This article is based upon an account from Anne, a Lewis woman, who visited poor Cambodian villages as a representative of *Tearfund* in the APC Church in Stornoway.

<sup>59</sup> See for example Back Free Church's website, which provides studies, photo galleries, audio and podcasts : <http://www.backfreechurch.co.uk/> (2009)

<sup>60</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1990), p.155.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Peter Berger's most classic book: *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York, 1967).

Far from being expelled by a secularized and fast-changing world, Christians close to the “fundamentalist type” have adapted to it, in order to secure strong subcultures and separatist churches in which the alternative reality of Evangelical Christianity as they understand it remains on display to XXIth UK citizens.

## Conclusion

The Isle of Lewis case study reminds us of an important feature of contemporary religion : secularization does not undermine Fundamentalism. What secularization undermines is traditional religion, based upon heritage age-old practices, family reproduction and a kind of rejection of modernity. Whatever close it might be in its doctrinal expressions, Fundamentalism is not traditionalism. Understood as a counter-cultural stand mixing strong orthodox claims (Bible as the true Word Of God) with an emphasis on individual choice and the use of modern technologies, Fundamentalism is alive and well in Lewis today.

When speaking about the *Bible Belt* in the US before World War II, Henry Louis Mencken<sup>62</sup> (1880-1956) thought that fundamentalists would disappear with Economic development and the spread of modern life in the South. French political scientist André Siegfried, who travelled South in the same period, thought the same<sup>63</sup>. Traditional religion indeed declined, but not fundamentalism *per se*, and the same might be true today with Isle of Lewis, as well as with other parts of Britain or Europe. Therefore, this should encourage further studies in order to get a better understanding of our contemporary religious landscape. Far from being remains of the past, curiosities confined to remote places, Protestant fundamentalists have adapted to modernity. They strive, fight and even grow in secular contexts, whether they are located in Stornoway, downtown London or even France<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> See H.L. Mencken, S.T. Joshi, *H.L. Mencken on religion* (Prometheus Books, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> André Siegfried, *Les Etats-Unis d'aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1927).

<sup>64</sup> See Sebastien Fath, "Evangelical Protestantism in France : an example of Denominational Recomposition?", *Sociology of Religion* , 2005, vol.66/4, p.399-418.