Crossley, James G. "45 Minutes from Doom! Tony Blair and the Radical Bible Rebranded." *Harnessing Chaos: The Bible in English Political Discourse Since 1968*. London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014. 210–241. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9780567659347.ch-008>>.

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Chapter 8

45 MINUTES FROM DOOM!

TONY BLAIR AND THE RADICAL BIBLE REBRANDED

1. Spiritual *and* Religious: The Political Theology of Tony Blair

By the turn of the millennium, the Thatcher revolution in political thinking was over, both in the sense that she was now a figure often deemed ‘toxic’ and that the general tenets of Thatcherism had simultaneously been accepted by the main political parties and culturally normalised. Indeed, Thatcher famously claimed that her greatest legacy was New Labour. By the time Tony Blair (b. 1953) came to power in 1997, issues surrounding Christianity and the Bible had changed.¹ Thatcher faced a Church of England prepared to confront her on issues of social justice, inner-city tensions, and welfare. After her third election victory in 1987, and the final stage of her embedding of Thatcherism, the Church shifted its attention more abstractly towards the worries about the perils of materialism. In the longer term, high-profile concerns with poverty would become more internationally focused (e.g. Make Poverty History, Jubilee 2000) and more consensual, with politicians walking side-by-side with anti-poverty campaigners, in addition to more specialised concerns for issues of human rights and ethics. While the relationship between Church and State became less antagonistic, the 1990s and the 2000s saw identity politics become more of a serious problem for the very authority of the Anglican Church, in particular the rise of those most polarising of debates: women priests (and later bishops) and homosexuality. Such issues were of increasing prominence, of course, because of the wider acceptance of more liberal attitudes towards homosexuality and gender equality. Questions about ‘Englishness’ in relation to race and immigration had also changed. Whereas questions of colour and race were pushed to the fore, not least by Enoch Powell, liberal multiculturalism had become much more firmly embedded in English politics by the time

1. For a more detailed summary of what follows see e.g. Filby, ‘God and Mrs Thatcher’, pp. 212-31. See also Steven, *Christianity and Party Politics*, pp. 105-20.

Blair took office. Of course, this still meant tolerance on the assumption that liberal capitalist democracy is the norm, and a stark reminder of this qualification came on September 11, 2001. And September 11 now brought 'religion' and Islam to the fore in the dominant discourses surrounding debates on immigration as well as international politics. The Cold War was certainly over; the War on Terror was about to begin.

A product of a private education, socialist-cum-Tory atheist father, Protestant mother of Irish descent, rock music, music management, and the legal profession, Blair grew up wearing his Christianity and politics lightly, at least in public. It was only from his time at St John's College, Oxford (1972–75), that Blair began to start thinking more seriously about politics (even Marxism) and religion ('I was brought up as one, but I was not in any real sense a practising Christian until I went to Oxford').² Confirmed as an Anglican at St John's, here he would articulate the importance of Christianity in terms of social relevance, social change, and social mobility, but stressing the relationship between the individual and the community as Thatcherism was in the ascendancy. There were a number of formative influences on Blair's political and social theology, typically coming from a centre-left form of Christian Socialism, and including Peter Thomson, John Burton (Labour Councillor and Blair's agent for 25 years), Cherie Booth whom he would of course marry, and the ideas of communitarian thinkers such as John Macmurray,³ though whether communitarian ideas were rigorously implemented or properly understood is moot.⁴ But it was Thomson who Blair would describe as probably the most influential person in his life.⁵ Thomson was a Christian

2. R. McCloughry, 'Practising for Power: Tony Blair', *Third Way* (September 14, 1993), <http://web.archive.org/web/20070927142102/http://www.thirdway.org.uk/past/showpage.asp?page=43>.

3. For summaries see e.g. J. Rentoul, *Tony Blair* (London: Warner, 1996), pp. 36–48, 72–75, 293–95; A. Seldon, *Blair: The Biography* (London: Free Press, 2004), pp. 32–46, 515–32; F. Beckett and D. Hencke, *The Blairs and their Court* (London: Aurum, 2004), pp. 28–44; P. Stephens, *Tony Blair: The Making of a World Leader* (London: Viking, 2004), pp. 15–36; J. Burton and E. McCabe, *We Don't Do God: Blair's Religious Belief and its Consequences* (London: Continuum, 2009), pp. ix–47.

4. S. Hale, *Blair's Community: Communitarian Thought and New Labour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006). Cf. Beckett and Hencke, *The Blairs*, pp. 27–31.

5. T. Blair, *A Journey* (London: Hutchinson, 2010), p. 78. Cf. Burton and McCabe, *We Don't Do God*, p. 8: 'Tony hadn't really thought deeply about religion and politics until he met Peter'. For further detail on the influence of Thomson on Blair see e.g. Rentoul, *Tony Blair*, pp. 36–45; Burton and McCabe, *We Don't Do God*, pp. ix–xi, 4–13, 58.

Socialist and Australian Anglican priest and was a mature student at St John's when Blair met him. He helped Blair articulate the fusion of what Blair would categorise as religion and politics in that 'religion' is deemed something which comes first and prioritises humankind and values while 'politics' prioritises the analysis of society and how it can be changed. Blair overlapped both categories but still stressed that for him and Thomson religion would always come first.⁶

Andrew Rawnsley claimed that 'No Prime Minister since William Gladstone read the Bible more regularly'.⁷ Even so, prior to becoming Labour leader in 1994, Blair was fairly quiet about his Christianity and love of the Bible, though under the influence of the then Labour leader John Smith he joined the Christian Socialist Movement in 1992.⁸ On becoming leader, Blair was still relatively quiet, particularly after the experience of the media jumping on his religious beliefs in reaction to an infamous interview with the *Sunday Telegraph* in 1996. Alastair Campbell claimed in his diaries:

I could see nothing but trouble in talking about it. British people are not like Americans, who seem to want their politicians banging the Bible all the time. They hated it, I was sure of that. The ones who didn't believe didn't want to hear it; and the ones who did felt the politicians who went on about it were doing it for the wrong reasons... I felt fully vindicated. As I said to TB... Never talk about God... GB [Gordon Brown] called and we agreed God was a disaster area.⁹

But intense media interest in Blair's Christianity would resurface again during the 'war on terror', particularly because of Blair's close association with the evangelical Christian, Republican, and American president, George W. Bush.

As this might already imply, precisely what the 'socialism' was in Christian Socialism would change over time and the stress on individual responsibility and social mobility would bring his political Christianity and exegesis close to Margaret Thatcher's. Prior to becoming a Labour Party MP in 1983, Blair had certainly read Marxist literature and was

6. Blair, *Journey*, p. 78. A typical Blair soundbite is as follows: 'Blair said politicians should not ignore religion, calling for a "religion-friendly democracy and democracy-friendly religion"'. See 'Tony Blair, former Prime Minister, did order Number 10 staff to pray', *Huffington Post* (July 24, 2012), http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/07/24/tony-blair-former-prime-prayer_n_1699362.html.

7. A. Rawnsley, *The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), p. 447.

8. Rentoul, *Tony Blair*, pp. 47, 293.

9. A. Campbell, *The Blair Years* (London: Hutchinson, 2007), pp. 111-12.

interested in Marxism. But ultimately he would not become (or remain?) a Marxist in the sense that he perceived it to be a useful resource rather than an ideology requiring absolute fidelity. By the early 1980s Blair would be regarded as something of a 'soft' leftist of the Kinnock variety. Like other Labour MPs of his generation, he was influenced by the peace movement and was a supporter of CND. Yet his general drift to the right of the Labour Party was becoming gradually clear and he firmly opposed Benn's bid for the deputy leadership in 1981, though only supporting the candidate of the right, Dennis Healey, as an anti-Benn option.¹⁰ But, accompanying the electoral failures of the 1980s and 1992, Blair would look into ways of attracting the non-traditional Labour voter and move further to the right of the party, particularly on becoming leader after the death of John Smith in 1994. Along with Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson, Blair would develop a form of social democracy that would embrace Thatcherite economics, reject a number of iconic Labour policies from the 1980s such as unilateral disarmament, rethink the role of the welfare state, and, most noisily, drop Clause 4 (a commitment to common/public ownership or nationalisation) from the Labour Party constitution – all of which reflected the Giddens-inspired 'Third Way'. With the inclusion of the former journalist Alastair Campbell among the core group, an obsession with PR and controlling or limiting the influence of the media (seen to be a key factor in the loss of the 1992 election) became a marked feature of Blair's leadership. By the time of his landslide election victory in 1997 at the age of just 43 (then the youngest Prime Minister since 1812), Labour had become New Labour and, assisted by three electoral victories, Blair became increasingly prominent on the global stage, particularly in his enthusiasm for military interventions in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, and, of course, Iraq. And as we saw in the chapter on Thatcher, the ideological shift from the Evil Empire/Cold War to the Axis of Evil/War on Terror was smooth enough.

Nevertheless, Blair would still articulate himself in what he understood to be communitarian terms in his shift towards New Labour.¹¹ In a 1993 interview, when he was Shadow Home Secretary, Blair might allude to a critique of Thatcher's 'there's no such thing as society' and he may still be using the language of 'socialism' but it is reinterpreted in a way that was hardly alien to her way of thinking, particularly in the language of community support, morality, and individualism:

10. Rentoul, *Tony Blair*, pp. 73-77.

11. J. Kampfner, *Blair's Wars* (London: Free Press, 2004), pp. 73-75; Burton and McCabe, *We Don't Do God*, pp. 62-66, 77, 91, 133; Stephens, *Tony Blair*, pp. 19-20.

You are what you are in part because of others, and you cannot divorce the individual from the surrounding society. That idea is to me the distinguishing philosophical feature of the Christian religion. But the notion of the individual within a community is not a substitute for individual responsibility... Christianity is a very tough religion, and there are certain imperatives of individual conduct that it is very, very strong on. It is not a religion that makes easy excuses for people. My reinterpretation of the socialist message is that social responsibility is important to reinforce personal responsibility, not as a substitute for it.¹²

Indeed, even when explaining the 2008 financial crisis Gordon Brown could articulate the government's position with reference support from the Bible (and beyond) combining individualism, personal morality, entrepreneurialism, and the significance of capitalism, with virtually no reference to the public sector and state interventionism, and in a way not entirely alien to a Thatcher speech:

[Adam Smith] argued the flourishing of moral sentiments comes before and is the foundation of the wealth of nations. And when people ask, 'Can there be a shared global ethic that can lie behind global rules', I answer that through each of our heritages, traditions and faiths, there runs a single powerful moral sense demanding responsibility from all and fairness to all. Christians do not say that people should be reduced merely to what they can produce or what they can buy – that we should let the weak go under and only the strong survive. No: we say, 'Do to others what you would have them do unto you'.

...When Judaism says, 'Love your neighbour as yourself', when Muslims say, 'No one of you is a believer unless he desires for another what he desires for himself', when Buddhists say, 'Hurt not others in ways that you find yourself hurtful', when Sikhs say, 'Treat others as you would be treated yourself', and when Hindus say, 'The sum of duty is not do unto others what would cause pain if done to you', they each and all reflect a sense that we share the pain of others, we believe in something bigger than ourselves, that we cannot be truly content while others face despair, cannot be completely at ease while others live in fear, and cannot be satisfied while others are in sorrow. I believe that we all feel, regardless of the source of our philosophy, the same deep sense, a moral sense, that each of us is our brothers' and sisters' keeper.

...Winstanley called it 'the light in man'. Call it duty or simply call it conscience, it means we cannot and will not pass by on the other side when people are suffering and when we have it within our power to be both responsible and to support fairness, and endeavour to help.

So, I believe that we have a responsibility to ensure that both markets and governments serve the public interest, to recognise that the poor are

12. McCloughry, 'Practising for Power'.

our shared responsibility, and that wealth carries unique responsibilities too... Now that people can communicate so easily and instantaneously across borders, cultures and faiths, I believe we can be confident that, across the world, we are discovering that there is a shared moral sense.¹³

Likewise, Blair may have rhetorically distanced himself from the hyper-individualist interpretation of Thatcherism and high levels of unemployment associated with it, but, as we will see below, Brown's words could equally have come from Blair.¹⁴

The concern for personal responsibility, the individual, and the community was developed further in Blair's ideas of societal and liberal tolerance. Given that Blair is a longstanding social liberal – at least in his parliamentary behaviour, as evidenced by voting patterns and matters of conscience (e.g. pro-choice on abortion, supported stem-cell research, promoted the 'morning after' pill, introduced legislation for civil partnerships)¹⁵ – it is no surprise that this ecumenicalism was developed more broadly in terms of interreligious harmony and dialogue, nor that it played a role in his handling of Northern Ireland. After his interviews with Blair, Andrew Rawnsley recalled that Blair would often talk about the 'latest inter-faith book that he had read on holiday or was keeping by his bedside' and that Blair believed that Christians, Jews, and Muslims 'were all essentially children of the same God'.¹⁶ But it was the interest

13. G. Brown, 'Speech and Q&A at St Paul's Cathedral: Transcript of speeches by the Prime Minister and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd at St Paul's Cathedral' (March 31, 2009), <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2009/03/pms-speech-at-st-pauls-cathedral-18858>.

14. Blair's anti-Thatcher (/Major) Christian rhetoric is found in e.g. T. Blair, 'Preface', in Bryant (ed.), *Reclaiming the Ground*, pp. 9-12 (10): 'Central to Christianity is the belief in equality... It is shameful that millions of our fellow citizens are out of work, that many young of our people are left without hope and opportunity... [I]t is about the union between individual and community.' See also Seldon, *Blair*, p. 519.

15. Burton and McCabe, *We Don't Do God*, pp. 67-68, 180-82; Stephen, *Tony Blair*, pp. 27-28.

16. Rawnsley, *End of the Party*, p. 448, cf. p. 410. See also p. 173 where it is reported that Blair said the Jewish God and the Christian God is 'the same God'. There are a number of similar anecdotes reported. For example: '...he would always ask what was the best way to do things, not because of his Christian beliefs but because of a strict set of values that apply to all religions, Muslims and Jews, as well as Christians' (Burton and McCabe, *We Don't Do God*, p. 9); 'He told one friend on holiday: "The main religions are all about the same thing"' (Kampfner, *Blair's Wars*, p. 74); "'Jews, Muslims and Christians...all children of Abraham.'" Barry

in Islam in particular that was to be intensified after September 11, and with the following ‘war on terror’, when he became increasingly (and, for some of his supporters and some of his enemies, uncomfortably) associated with Bush and the kind of American evangelical Christianity Bush continues to represent in the popular imagination. As we will see, this provoked further, more globally framed thinking about ecumenicalism, involving global interaction among religions, the ways in which religions relate to liberal democracy, and the significance of all this for the exegesis of both the Bible and the Qur’an.

Indeed, Blair has embraced traditions beyond the ‘Abrahamic faiths’, including those which might be regarded as ‘spiritual’ and which are popularly perceived, or even caricatured, as the kinds of beliefs associated with a certain strand of affluent liberal ‘New Age’ thought.¹⁷ This has typically been portrayed in the press through the relentless focus on Cherie Blair and her spiritual companion, Carole Caplin. However, there were telling sans Caplin moments. For instance, the *Times* reported that in August 2001, the Blairs stayed at the plush Maroma Hotel, near Cancún, where Tony and Cherie took part in a Mayan ‘rebirthing ritual’ which, according to the brochure, ‘is equally beneficial for the mind and spirit... [P]articipants are invited to meditate, feel at one with Mother Earth and experience inner feelings and visions.’ Sporting only bathing costumes, the couple approached the Temazcal pyramid containing the steam bath (and also representing ‘the womb’), bowed, and prayed to the four winds. Once inside, it was reported, the herb-infused steam generated a ‘cleansing sweat’ in order to balance ‘energy flow’. As Mayan songs were chanted, the Blairs had to imagine animals in the steam and explanations of their visions were given. Then their hopes and fears were confronted in order to facilitate the rebirth. The pain of (re-) birth was symbolically enacted by screaming out loud. They were given melon and papaya to eat and told to rub the remains, along with mud from the Mayan jungle, on one another’s bodies. They also spoke their wishes. Tony Blair’s wish was for world peace.¹⁸

Cox, a close friend, says the theme has long been part of his private conversation: “He will say to you that if you look beyond the rituals, almost all religions share the same fundamental values” (Stephens, *Tony Blair*, pp. 25-26).

17. Cf. Beckett and Hencke, *The Blairs*, pp. 278-79, 337. It is tempting to contrast Thatcher on theosophy: ‘Theosophy was a mixture of mysticism, Christianity and “the wisdom of the East”, sense and nonsense’ (Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, p. 7).

18. T. Baldwin, ‘Cherie stops Blair being stick in mud’, *Times* (December 15, 2001). The Downing Street response strongly suggests that this story was at least roughly accurate: ‘I’ve no idea whether all this is true. The Prime Minister, as you

In 2007, shortly after stepping down as Prime Minister, Blair converted to Catholicism. This had been long expected, not least because Cherie Blair and their children are baptised Catholics and Blair had been attending Catholic Mass.¹⁹ What is notable is that during his political career Blair did not accept the official Catholic line on a number of key issues such as contraception, homosexuality, and abortion, and he did not follow Pope John Paul II's opposition to the Iraq War.²⁰ As we will see, political, social, or cultural liberalism – in many ways a logical outworking of his take on communitarian thinking – as well as the guiding centrality of parliamentary democracy, continues to be a significant feature of Blair's belief and exegesis. Nor did Blair drop his ecumenicalism when he converted. On the contrary, ecumenical and communitarian concerns got more global still when, in 2008, he founded the Tony Blair Faith Foundation. At the launch in the Time Warner Centre, New York, Blair claimed that one of the goals of the Foundation was to counter extremism 'in all six leading religions'.²¹ However, it also has goals framed in more positive terms, claiming to promote 'understanding and respect between the world's major religions' which is deemed 'central to a policy to secure sustained peace'. Despite globalisation and an 'increasingly interconnected world', 'faith has remained at the core of life for billions' and 'underpins systems of thought and behaviour... [uniting] people around a common cause'.²²

Blair also wanted to continue his influence at the level of policy making and so the Foundation also includes the Faith and Globalization Initiative which brings together a 'network of leading research universities analysing the interaction of faith and globalisation' and 'presenting the findings to public policy makers and the wider world'.²³ The Faith and Globalization Initiative received a considerable level of academic

know, is in Belgium for the European summit. However, what I can tell you is that, like any other couple on holiday abroad, they enjoyed doing what the Romans do.' According to the *Times*, 'those close to him' suggested that he 'probably went along with it to please Cherie'. Blair's symbolic rebirth was deemed too ecumenical for some Christians who were not happy at this perceived idolatry. See e.g. L. Gunter, 'Tony Blair and wife perform chant ritual to lizards/pyramid in Mexico', *Edmonton Journal* (December 2001–January 2002).

19. See further Seldon, *Blair*, pp. 516, 521–23.

20. Rawnsley, *End of the Party*, p. 449.

21. 'Blair launches faith foundation', *BBC News* (May 30, 2008), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7427809.stm. The big six are Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism.

22. <http://www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/page/about-us>.

23. <http://www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/>. See also <http://www.fgi-tbfff.org/>.

support. In addition to the Foundation having a significant presence at the annual American Academy of Religion meeting, the Faith and Globalization Initiative was initially taken up by Yale University, Durham University, and the National University of Singapore,²⁴ and now counts among its global 'Lead Universities' and 'Associate Universities' the University of Winchester, St Mary's University College, McGill University, Tecnológico de Monterrey, University of Western Australia, Peking University, University of Prishtina, Banaras Hindu University, Pwani University College, and Wheaton College.²⁵ The Yale collaboration involved the Divinity School and School of Management, with Blair appointed a Howland Distinguished Fellow. The Faith and Globalization seminar was 'organized by Yale's Divinity School, led by Dean Harold Attridge' and Blair would even co-teach with Miroslav Volf.²⁶

In his memoirs, Blair discusses the role of the Foundation in further detail and, concerning the future of global harmony in particular, in highly optimistic language. In this context he gives a number of general statements about the global importance of religious tolerance. In order to create peaceful coexistence in a context of globalisation, he argues, practitioners of different 'faiths' must learn from and respect one another. For Blair, the Foundation was designed to do just this and the focus is on youth and the future. So, for instance, new technology can bring together children of different faiths (including of Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh faiths) from twelve different countries.²⁷ Blair does not believe that young people are merely self-absorbed and gadget-obsessed. On the contrary, he sees the young people working for him in Africa and the legions of volunteers in his Foundation as 'dynamic', dedicated, and with an unprejudiced religious commitment. Blair claims that even young Israelis and Palestinians can come together as they strive for 'fulfilment' and opportunities to better themselves and their situation. This, for Blair, illustrates that while there may be acts of hate, there are always these benign sentiments, and actions of such faith-driven people can bring change for the better.²⁸

24. 'Tony Blair launches Faith and Globalisation programme at Durham University' (July 10, 2009), <http://www.dur.ac.uk/news/newsitem/?itemno=8243>.

25. <http://www.fgi-tbff.org/>.

26. 'Yale and Tony Blair Launch Faith and Globalization Initiative' (September 18, 2008), <http://news.yale.edu/2008/09/18/yale-and-tony-blair-launch-faith-and-globalization-initiative>. See further <http://faithandglobalization.yale.edu/>.

27. Blair, *Journey*, p. 690.

28. Blair, *Journey*, p. 691.

If we translate this into the categories used in this book, we might reasonably expect that this sort of thinking would reflect overlapping aspects of the Liberal Bible and the Radical Bible (and who would disagree with global peace and harmony?). But there are parts of Blairite and New Labour thought that are not-so-compatible with the Radical Bible (and radicalism more generally) of the Labour tradition.²⁹ The ‘war on terror’ isolated a lot of (often grudging) supporters on the Left (and elsewhere), though we will return to Blair’s attempt to incorporate and transform traditions from the Radical Bible in the aftermath of September 11. But there were other means which would make it difficult for Blair and New Labour to be associated with the class-confrontational aspects of the Radical Bible and easy to become associated with a popular understanding of Thatcherism: certain individuals did not hide (some of) their close associations with wealthy capitalists. Perhaps it was Peter Mandelson, one of Blair’s closest confidants, who best epitomised New Labour’s love of capitalism. He has (legitimately) been described as someone who ‘swanked around the salons of the wealthy, the powerful and the right-wing’,³⁰ and he notoriously claimed in 1998 that New Labour was ‘intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich’ before quickly adding, ‘as long as they pay their taxes’.³¹ But, especially since he stepped down as Prime Minister, the British media regularly makes guesses about Blair’s not insignificant personal wealth (with estimates even reaching £60,000,000), and column inches are taken up by discussion of his numerous properties, private jet travel, public speaking fees, business interests, and fraternising with the rich and famous. And this upward mobility has even been performed in biblical terms, albeit probably too publicly for Blair’s liking. In 2011, after a summer dominated by the phone hacking scandal, it was discovered that Blair is godfather to Rupert Murdoch’s daughter, Grace, and that he was present at her Christening on the banks of the River Jordan where all the participants – including celebrities such as Nicole Kidman, Hugh Jackman, and Queen Rania of Jordan – were garbed in gleaming white cotton. There was no indication that Blair was present when the story and photographs were

29. Cf. Stephens, *Tony Blair*, p. 16: ‘Gladstone, too, had kept a Bible by his bedside... Blair preferred to place himself in the company of these Liberals rather than in the pantheon of previous Labour leaders.’

30. A. Rawnsley, *Servants of the People: The Inside Story of New Labour* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 214.

31. J. Rentoul, ‘Intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich’, *Independent Blog* (February 14, 2013), <http://blogs.independent.co.uk/2013/02/14/intensely-relaxed-about-people-getting-filthy-rich/>.

presented in the magazine *Hello!* (April 2010); it was only in a later interview that Murdoch's then wife, Wendi Deng, stated that Blair was one of Murdoch's closest friends.³² After years of associating with the rich and famous, the shift away from Old Labour was now symbolically complete; Blair may or may not see himself as a prophet but surely he now walks among the kings.

2. 'This Money and Bloodshed'

Blair has written and spoken a lot about tolerance, interfaith harmony, and world peace but, as we all know, religions have not always got along and, if we were to consistently foreground religious identity, we could even follow those who argue that the Christian Blair remains a high-profile advocate of the invasions of largely Islamic Afghanistan and Iraq. Blair has long been aware of such inter-faith difficulties as the flip side of religious compassion, and to tackle the historic problem of religions not always peacefully coexisting is, of course, part of Blair's vision. But there is a steelier edge to the hope for the future and it is revealed almost in passing in the discussion of religion in his memoirs. In a typically vague manner, Blair describes how new technologies may join up different faiths but, through their youthfulness, children can learn about different faiths and cultures based on 'truth' rather than 'deeply misguided preconceptions'.³³ This assumption of 'truth' and the possibility of 'deeply misguided perceptions' reveals the essentialist notion of True Religion and False Religion that runs throughout Blair's thinking, particularly on Islam, and it is a notable feature of the rhetoric of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation.³⁴ Yet it was, of course, the 'war on terror', including the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, which framed Blair's thinking on Islam, both in his own words and in popular imagination and memory. Only the most naïve would assume that Blair's vision of interfaith harmony does not come at a cost, as Blair himself was only too aware when trying to rethink his justification of the Iraq war. 'This

32. 'Tony Blair "godfather to Rupert Murdoch's daughter"', *BBC News* (September 5, 2011), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-14785501>; D. Sabbagh, 'How Tony Blair was taken into the Murdoch family fold', *Guardian* (September 5, 2011); D. Dumas, "'I had never been in a supermarket before I came to America": Wendi Murdoch on her childhood, her daughters and being best friends with Nicole Kidman', *Daily Mail* (September 10, 2011).

33. Blair, *Journey*, p. 690.

34. E.g. on the opening of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation in 2008, Blair noted 'extremism associated with the perversion of the proper faith of Islam'. See 'Blair launches faith foundation'.

money and bloodshed', he argued, was predominately expended because of the consequences of extremism which did not reflect the will of Iraqis.³⁵

This is why it is important to approach the liberalism and tolerance of Blairite theology with a hermeneutic of suspicion. And we should not forget that we are dealing with the leader of a party famed for its obsession with controlling – or at least limiting – the influence of the mass media. There are a range of ideological trends relating to geopolitical factors partly responsible for the more essentialist binaries of Blair's understanding of True Religion/Islam and False Religion/Islam. By and large, these were probably articulated unintentionally by Blair but they are deeply embedded ideological trends underpinning liberal interventionism which also form the continuity with Thatcher's Cold War thinking on related matters of ideological- and civilisation-difference (see Chapter 4) which Blair developed. There are, for instance, historic links between nationalism, interventionism, cultural superiority, and differentiation which contribute to the perpetuation of markets and underpin the 'war on terror'.³⁶ There are also the ideas crystallised by Samuel Huntington in his influential thesis of a 'Clash of Civilisations', which in turn owes a debt to Bernard Lewis' essay, 'The Roots of Muslim Rage'.³⁷ While assessing a range of competing global 'civilisations' (Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and possibly African), Huntington argued that with the fall of the Soviet Union, 'Islam' and the 'Arab world' have become a threat to 'the West'. According to Huntington, Western ideas such as individualism, liberalism, human rights, equality, liberty, democracy, free markets, and so on are not found in other civilisations and Islam has taken on the oppositional role, not least, as he infamously claimed, because it has 'bloody borders'. While there are seemingly endless portrayals of a stark

35. Blair, *Journey*, p. 479.

36. See e.g. N. Chomsky, *Pirates and Emperors, Old and New: International Terrorism in the Real World* (London: Pluto, 2002); A. Callinicos, *The New Mandarins of American Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003); D. Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); D. Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); R. Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (London: Fourth Estate, 2005); G. Achcar, *The Clash of Barbarisms: September 11 and the New World Disorder* (2nd edn; London: Saqi, 2006); Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*.

37. S.P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs* 72 (1993), pp. 22-49; S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); cf. B. Lewis, 'The Roots of Muslim Rage', *The Atlantic* (September 1990), pp. 47-60.

'Islam versus the West' in politics, intellectual thought, and the media,³⁸ Blair (and Bush) attempted to nuance this and downplay the grand differences in civilisation ('a clash not so much between civilisations but rather one about the force and consequence of globalisation'),³⁹ trying to make arguments about interventionism more along the lines of a liberal imperialism with a soft Orientalist twist.⁴⁰ In the immediate aftermath of September 11, Blair, echoing Thatcher, believed that the problem was particularly manifested in the form of 'extremism', rather than Islam as a whole, though he would modify this further on reflection. Indeed, Blair developed his thinking extensively on this issue, just as Thatcher did, with reference to the Bible and religion, on the Cold War.

After September 11, Blair argued that the 'war on terror' would indeed be a war but that it was 'in a profound sense' an ideological battle: 'the mores and modus vivendi of religious fanaticism versus those of an enlightened, secular system of government that in the West, at least, incorporated belief in liberty, equality and democracy'.⁴¹ Blair may have come to believe that the two sides are more complicated than a simple binary might suggest but a strict binary still guides his thinking throughout, even when the language of a 'spectrum' of beliefs in Islam is introduced. At one end are 'the extremists who advocate terrorism to further the goal of the Islamic state' who may be 'few in number' but 'their sympathisers reach far further along the spectrum than we think'. At this point, Blair seemed to have one eye also on the (typically) liberal-left opposition in the UK (at least as understood by certain liberal interventionists) because among these 'sympathisers' are 'many [who] do not agree with the terrorism' but who nevertheless (and note the scare quotes) 'understand' why it is happening. Likewise, and a little further along the spectrum, 'are those who condemn the terrorists, but in a curious and dangerous way buy into bits of their world view'. These people 'agree with the extremists' that America is 'anti-Islam', they see the invasion of Afghanistan or Iraq 'as invasions of Muslim nations', and they view Israel 'as the symbol of Western anti-Islamic prejudice'. These people stretch 'uncomfortably far into the middle of the spectrum'. On the other side, however, are 'a large number, probably the majority' who 'condemn terrorists and their world view'. This group 'find the terrorism

38. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror*, pp. 25-52, 58-142.

39. Blair, *Journey*, p. 346.

40. On the general history of which see e.g.; R. Seymour, *The Liberal Defence of Murder* (London: Verso, 2008); M. Dillon and J. Reid, *The Liberal Way of War: Killing to Make Life Live* (New York: Routledge, 2009). See also, of course, E.W. Said, *Orientalism* (3rd edn; London: Penguin Books, 2003).

41. Blair, *Journey*, p. 346.

repugnant' and 'they wish to be in alliance with the Western nations against it'. However, for Blair, this group have yet to articulate confidently 'a thoroughly reformed and modernising view of Islam'. They are stuck, he suggests, because common in 'the Arab and Muslim world' is a problematic choice on the one hand between a potentially well-meaning ruling elite (but which the people are concerned about promoting), and on the other, a popular movement with the wrong intentions (but which the people are too keen to promote).⁴²

Blair's view of Islam and extremist Islam is, therefore, and by his own admission, thoroughly mixed in with his political ideas, democracy, and the modern nation-state which has further echoes of Thatcher's Cold War thinking. The Blairite view would have it that True Religion (and Politics) must be in line with an enlightened, secular system of government' and a 'belief in liberty, equality and democracy', whereas False Religion (and Politics) must not. More precisely still, True Religion (and Politics) would see nations such as America, Britain, and Israel as forces of good, whereas False Religion (and Politics) would not. This is a universalist vision of liberal democracy to which the world, presumably, must ultimately conform.⁴³ This is why Scripture and reading Scripture for instruction is important for Blair because his logic suggests that we must trace religion back to its true, essential origins in order to get behind the later 'corruptions'. Once we do this, we find that True Religion is not only based on scriptures but also tolerant and necessarily compatible with the secularised nation state and the correct foreign policy. This was a view implicit in Thatcher's handling of Islam and religion; we will see it developed much further still by Blair.

This is also a view implied in Obama's liberalising exegesis of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim sacred texts in his famous speech delivered in Cairo in 2009, which we might label Liberal Holy Scriptures rather than Liberal Bible,⁴⁴ a kind of foreign policy equivalent of Gordon Brown's handling of the 2008 financial crisis with reference to what 'Judaism...Muslims...Buddhists...Sikhs...Hindus say'. 'Scriptural' language (from 'Holy Koran', 'Holy Bible', the Talmud) was brought to the fore by Obama, bringing together Christianity, Islam, and Judaism under the umbrella of peace and the general term 'God':

42. Blair, *Journey*, p. 348.

43. H. O'Shaughnessy, 'Tony Blair's Faith Foundation inspires ridicule', *Guardian* (May 13, 2009).

44. B. Obama, 'Remarks by the President on a New Beginning', *The White House: Office of the Press Secretary* (2009), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>.

We have the power to make the world we seek, but only if we have the courage to make a new beginning, keeping in mind what has been written.

The Holy Koran tells us, 'O mankind! We have created you male and a female; and we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another.'

The Talmud tells us: 'The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace'.

The Holy Bible tells us, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God'. [Matt. 5.9]

The people of the world can live together in peace. We know that is God's vision. Now, that must be our work here on Earth. Thank you. And may God's peace be upon you.

Just prior to this Obama spoke of 'one rule that lies at the heart of every religion', that 'we do unto others as we would have them do unto us' (cf. Matt. 7.12; Luke 6.31). 'This truth', he adds, 'transcends nations and peoples – a belief that isn't new; that isn't black or white or brown; that isn't Christian, or Muslim or Jew'. When Obama referred to 'do unto others as we would have them do unto us', he vaguely interpreted the admittedly already vague saying and sentiment as 'a faith in other people', adding it was 'what brought me here today'. Faith in people to do precisely what was not fully expanded but in the same context Obama mentioned that 'we should choose the right path, not just the easy path', the former presumably being the path Obama's administration choose.

We should not forget the importance of the geopolitical and religious contexts that are of obvious importance when giving a major speech in Cairo shortly after the end of the Bush administration. This early post-Bush speech was light on detail about foreign policy but it maintained a standard American line on the Middle East, albeit in general terms. 'America', Obama claimed, 'respects the right of all peaceful and law-abiding voices to be heard around the world, even if we disagree with them. And we will welcome all elected, peaceful governments – provided they govern with respect for all their people.' While Obama was careful to distance himself from Bush in this speech, there was little difference in general aims. After all, who decides what are 'peaceful governments', governing 'with respect'? At this point it is worth reminding ourselves that Obama was the guest of Mubarak, who would – eventually – not be deemed a friend but at this time was running a police state.⁴⁵ While Obama might have been reaching out to Muslims in the Middle East, he made the same move as Blair, namely, to reach out to

45. *Amnesty International Report 2009: Egypt*, <http://thereport.amnesty.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/egypt>; R. Fisk, 'Police state is the wrong venue for Obama's speech', *Independent* (June 3, 2009).

those who would agree with (Anglo-)American foreign policy in the Middle East. While there may have been a rhetorically anti-Bush move, we are not really too far from ‘you’re either with us or against us’. Moreover, the Obama speech defended the actions in Afghanistan and praised the international support for the pursuit of violent extremists which is not far from the ‘coalition of the willing’. In this context Obama implied another aspect of this coalition when he mentioned ‘the enduring faith of over a billion people is so much bigger than the narrow hatred of a few. Islam is not part of the problem in combating violent extremism – it is an important part of promoting peace’.

Blair heaped praised on Obama’s Cairo speech, seeing it as an exceptional case for peace and coexistence and effectively combining soft and hard power.⁴⁶ What we will now see is that these sorts of sentiments were effectively worked out in Blair’s own version of the Liberal Bible but a Liberal Bible – or indeed Obama-style Liberal Holy Scriptures – which had to deal with the influence of the Radical Bible in the Labour tradition.

3. Doing God? The Iraq War and the Apocalyptic Bible

But did Campbell – Blair’s Director of Communications and Strategy – not famously claim ‘we don’t do God’ when Blair was asked a question about religion by *Vanity Fair* journalist, David Margolick? Campbell’s response has typically been taken to refer to New Labour’s queasiness on issues relating to religion and public presentation of policy, or even that the New Labour government were not prepared to entertain religious questions at all. However, Alastair Campbell has claimed that this ‘was not a major strategic statement’ but rather an attempt to end the interview when Margolick kept asking a ‘final question’ and the last example happened to be about his faith. Even so, he still argues that ‘we don’t do God’ was ‘simply part of a view that in UK politics, it is always quite dangerous to mix religion and politics, not least because the electorate are not keen on it, and the media and politicians tend to misrepresent it whenever it happens’.⁴⁷ However, it is certainly clear that God – and the

46. Blair, *Journey*, p. 673.

47. A. Campbell, ‘Baroness Warsi misses point of “we don’t do God”’, writes a pro faith atheist’, *Alastair’s Blog* (September 16, 2010), <http://www.alastaircampbell.org/blog/2010/09/16/baroness-warsi-misses-point-of-we-dont-do-god-writes-a-pro-faith-atheist/>. Recall, of course, Campbell’s reaction to Blair giving the controversial 1996 *Sunday Telegraph* interview on God and the Bible. See Campbell, *The Blair Years*, pp. 111-12. See also the comments in Steven, *Christianity and Party Politics*, p. 105.

Bible – did play a role in Blair’s thinking, even if they were not always out in the open.⁴⁸ After all, it was God, claimed Blair on *Parkinson*, who would ultimately judge him over Iraq,⁴⁹ while Campbell recalled that Blair ‘often’ read the Bible ‘when the really big decisions were on’.⁵⁰ It was not without reason that Private Eye could parody Blair as the trendy Vicar of St Albion.

While Blair might have wanted to foreground his Christianity more in his political career, what we instead saw was a more carefully managed downplaying of such beliefs with the intention of not scaring off parts of the electorate (he famously feared people would assume him a ‘nutter’ for talking about religious convictions).⁵¹ Indeed, it seems that the biblical references Blair wanted in his speeches were given the red pen treatment by Campbell (or at least those that Campbell spotted).⁵² However, biblical phrases, allusions, and quasi-biblical language still remained present in his writings and speeches. But they are even more than the vague, faintly Judaeo-Christianised, biblical citation found among successful American politicians such as Clinton, Bush and Obama and designed (ideally) to speak to believers without (ideally) alienating non-Christians and non-believers.⁵³ Frank Field’s reported claims about Blair’s understanding of Anglicanism and politics might apply equally to Blair’s use of the Bible: ‘the Church of England survived because it realises how much religion the English will take, which is not very much’.⁵⁴ Blair was, and remains, vague in using precise biblical allusions publicly and even now, free from electoral politics, he is still not likely to provide notification that a biblical allusion or quotation is imminent or has just passed.⁵⁵

48. Rawnsley, *End of the Party*, pp. 446-49; Burton and McCabe, *We Don’t Do God*, p. xv.

49. The remarks to Michael Parkinson were made on the March 4, 2006, edition of ITV’s *Parkinson*. The footage is available at ‘PM attacked on Iraq “God” remarks’, *BBC News* (March 4, 2006), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/4773124.stm>.

50. A. Campbell, *Power and the People 1997–1999: The Alastair Campbell Diaries*, vol. 2 (London: Arrow, 2011), p. 596.

51. ‘Blair feared faith “nutter” label’, *BBC News* (November 25, 2007), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7111620.stm>.

52. Burton and McCabe, *We Don’t Do God*, pp. 61-62.

53. On which see Berlinerblau, *Thumpin’ It*.

54. Rawnsley, *End of the Party*, p. 448.

55. This might further explain the relative degree of Bible-blindness (though certainly not to the extent of some of the people covered in this book) and lack of appreciation of thoroughgoing ‘religious’ issues in Blair’s rhetoric and thinking by his biographers. See E.L. Graham, ‘Doing God? Public Theology under Blair’, in

The following are famous enough biblical examples of the language of 'light' from the Sermon on the Mount and Johannine literature:

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matt. 5.14-16)

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. (John 1.9)

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life'. (John 8.12)

Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. (1 John 2.8)

When this language turns up in his memoirs, Blair does not mention chapter and verse, or even the Bible, and certainly not Christ, but the allusions to such thinking are clear enough, even if woven in a relatively loose manner in support of the ideals of the American nation and as a justification for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. While George Bush's Manichean view of the world may appear simplistic, Blair claims, it was a blunt analysis which could not really be disputed because certain nations continued to be run by corruption and oppression and lacked a bright future:

There is no house on the hill which makes the present struggle worthwhile; just a horizon full of deeper despair as far as the eye can see. For those people in that bleak wilderness, America does stand out; it does shine; it may not be a house in their land they can aspire to, but it is a house they can see in the distance, and in seeing, know that how they do live, is not how they must live. So when I look back and I reread all the documents and the memories flood back to me...I know that there was never any way Britain was not going to be with the US at that moment...⁵⁶

The convenient vagueness of the language of light is sufficiently widespread as an assumption of Good that it could, in theory, be embraced by all, or at least those who want to be on the side of Good, whether

P.M. Scott, E.L. Graham, and C.R. Baker (eds.), *Remoralizing Britain? Political, Ethical and Theological Perspectives on New Labour* (London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 1-18.

56. Blair, *Journey*, p. 434.

Christian or not. Future hope marks Blair's use of such biblical or quasi-biblical language, which is perhaps not a surprise when the implied language of binaries is invoked; indeed, and again like Thatcher's Cold War thinking, Blair had seen Christianity in strict terms of 'right and wrong, good and bad' long before the 'war on terror'.⁵⁷ Blair's future hopes are also marked by a use of language we might generally describe as 'apocalyptic', if by contemporary implications of that slippery term we mean dramatic global changes in the not-too-distant future, the inevitability of war, and the ultimate overcoming of suffering, injustice, hunger, and oppression. While Blair attributed the Manichean outlook to Bush, this would also be a fair way of categorising Blair's outlook too (as he came close to implying in his assessment of Bush),⁵⁸ and certainly when he uses vague biblical, quasi-biblical, and theological language. But this outlook cannot be understood apart from its contemporary political ramifications, in particular the Blair doctrine of liberal interventionism and, especially, the post-September 11 'war on terror'. As his agent and close friend John Burton claimed, Blair 'believed strongly, although he couldn't say it at the time, that intervention in Kosovo, Sierra Leone – Iraq too – was all part of the Christian battle; good should triumph over evil'.⁵⁹ That said, Blair was explicit on September 11, 2001: 'This is not a battle between the United States of America and terrorism, but between the free and democratic world and terrorism... [W]e, like them, will not rest until this evil is driven from our world.'⁶⁰

But in whatever form Blair constructed a threat associated with Islam – whether a question of extremists or the deep roots of an extremist worldview – it is still one that is constructed in opposition to, and in distinction from, liberal democracy. With Saddam Hussein on the horizon, Blair combined this concern with 'rogue states' who, Blair would argue, might provide more firepower for those extremists. And so the Manichean outlook was more precisely contextualised in terms of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in the build-up to the Iraq war. The following is Blair's preface to the 2002 government document on Iraq's alleged WMDs:

57. In his preface to the 1993 book on Christian Socialism Blair wrote: 'Christianity is a very tough religion... It is judgemental. There is right and wrong. There is good and bad... when we look at our world today and how much needs to be done, we should not hesitate to make such judgements' (Blair, 'Preface', p. 12).

58. See e.g. Rawnsley, *End of the Party*, p. 42.

59. Burton and McCabe, *We Don't Do God*, p. xv.

60. T. Blair, 'Blair's statement in full', *BBC News* (September 11, 2001), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/1538551.stm.

...in light of the debate about Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), I wanted to share with the British public the reasons why I believe this issue to be a current and serious threat to the UK national interest.

In recent months, I have been increasingly alarmed by the evidence from inside Iraq that...Saddam Hussein is continuing to develop WMD, and with them the ability to inflict real damage upon the region, and the stability of the world.

What I believe the assessed intelligence has established beyond doubt is that Saddam has continued to produce chemical and biological weapons, that he continues in his efforts to develop nuclear weapons, and that he has been able to extend the range of his ballistic missile programme.

...his [Saddam's] military planning allows for some of the WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them.

In today's inter-dependent world, a major regional conflict does not stay confined to the region in question. Faced with someone who has shown himself capable of using WMD, I believe the international community has to stand up for itself and ensure its authority is upheld.

The threat posed to international peace and security, when WMD are in the hands of a brutal and aggressive regime like Saddam's, is real. Unless we face up to the threat, not only do we risk undermining the authority of the UN, whose resolutions he defies, but more importantly and in the longer term, we place at risk the lives and prosperity of our own people.⁶¹

Whether it was Blair's intention or not, this assessment would provide the basis for the infamous '45 minute' claim made by sections of the English press which in turn only heightened the idea of impending apocalypse. For instance, the *Sun*'s headline on September 25, 2002, was 'BRITS 45mins FROM DOOM: Cyprus within missile range'.⁶²

This globalizing rhetoric of the Clash of Civilisations (whether openly acknowledged or not by Blair), and the more precise allegations of WMDs, were given a distinctive nationalizing spin by picking up on the myth of Churchill.⁶³ But the Churchill–Hitler/Blair–Saddam parallel runs into obvious difficulties (as any attempt at precise historical paralleling is

61. *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction – The Assessment of the British Government* (September 24, 2002), available at <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page271.asp>.

62. Compare also: '45 MINUTES FROM ATTACK: dossier reveals Saddam is ready to launch chemical war strikes', *London Evening Standard* (September 24, 2002); 'MAD SADDAM READY TO ATTACK: 45minutes from a chemical war', *Star* (September 25, 2002).

63. Cf. J.G. Crossley, 'Defining History', in J. G. Crossley and C. Karner (eds.), *Writing History, Constructing Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 9-29 (15-17); Fisk, *Great War for Civilisation*, pp. 1140-44.

wont to do⁶⁴) in its application, certainly in distribution of power between the nations involved. In his speech to Parliament on the eve of the Iraq war, Blair was aware that the analogy could not be developed too precisely and acknowledged that there were ‘glib and sometimes foolish comparisons with the 1930s... [H]istory does not declare the future to us so plainly’. But develop the historical analogy he did, albeit developing its ‘lessons’ more generally. Blair discussed a newspaper editorial from 1938 which declared that peace was upon the nation and from this we learn: ‘It is that, with history, we know what happened. We can look back and say, “There’s the time; that was the moment; that’s when we should’ve acted”.’ But the 1930s became more decontextualised and, like Churchill versus Hitler, is placed firmly into a Manichean framework. Moreover, it is at this crucial point in his argument (‘why I believe that the threat we face today is so serious and why we must tackle it’) that Blair brings in quasi-biblical and primordial language of chaos and order:

The threat today is not that of the 1930s... [T]he world is ever more interdependent... The key today is stability and order. The threat is chaos and disorder – and there are two begetters of chaos: tyrannical regimes with weapons of mass destruction and extreme terrorist groups who profess a perverted and false view of Islam.⁶⁵

We should not forget that this speech was not only given on the eve of the Iraq war but that it was also an attempt to persuade the Labour Party in particular to endorse the invasion. This is important because the idea of what we might even call messianic interventionism was previously developed in Blair’s speech to the Labour Party conference in September 2001 where the quasi-biblical and apocalyptic language was, if anything, even more emphatic (e.g. ‘an act of evil’, ‘we were with you at the first. We will stay with you to the last’, ‘the shadow of this evil’, ‘lasting good’, ‘hope amongst all nations’, ‘a new beginning’, ‘justice and prosperity for the poor and dispossessed’, ‘the starving, the wretched, the dispossessed, the ignorant, those living in want and squalor’):

64. As Blair himself claimed in 1982: ‘Historical analogies can be superficially attractive, but on close analysis, plain wrong’. See T. Blair, ‘The full text of Tony Blair’s letter to Michael Foot written in July 1982’, *Telegraph* (June 16, 2006), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1521418/The-full-text-of-Tony-Blairs-letter-to-Michael-Foot-written-in-July-1982.html>.

65. ‘Iraq’, Hansard: Commons Debates (March 18, 2003), Columns 767-68, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmhansrd/vo030318/debtext/30318-07.htm>.

In retrospect, the Millennium marked only a moment in time. It was the events of September 11 that marked a turning point in history, where we confront the dangers of the future and assess the choices facing humankind. It was a tragedy. An act of evil... We [the British nation] were with you [the American people] at the first. We will stay with you to the last... It is that out of the shadow of this evil, should emerge lasting good: destruction of the machinery of terrorism wherever it is found; hope amongst all nations of a new beginning where we seek to resolve differences in a calm and ordered way; greater understanding between nations and between faiths; and above all justice and prosperity for the poor and dispossessed, so that people everywhere can see the chance of a better future through the hard work and creative power of the free citizen, not the violence and savagery of the fanatic. I know that here in Britain people are anxious, even a little frightened. I understand that... Don't kill innocent people. We are not the ones who waged war on the innocent. We seek the guilty... Today the threat is chaos... The starving, the wretched, the dispossessed, the ignorant, those living in want and squalor from the deserts of Northern Africa to the slums of Gaza, to the mountain ranges of Afghanistan: they too are our cause. This is a moment to seize. The kaleidoscope has been shaken. The pieces are in flux. Soon they will settle again. Before they do, let us re-order this world around us.⁶⁶

Of course, we cannot entirely rule out the influence of apocalyptic thinking in American evangelical Christianity and Christian Zionism, particularly among those groups with which Bush associated and in the language that found its way into the rhetoric of the 'war on terror'.⁶⁷ But, while there are some general overlaps, this form of evangelical Christianity does not have much emotional currency in the UK. Likewise, there may be the influence of Thatcherite thinking on the Cold War, but directly invoking the 'toxic' Thatcher brand would always be problematic, even for Blair. In fact, given that Blair's speeches were designed to persuade the Labour Party – much of which was jittery or at least ambivalent about Bush and the invasion of Iraq⁶⁸ – there is a more important 'apocalyptic' influence to be found here.

66. Available at <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/labour2001/story/0,,562006,00.html> (part 1) and <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/labourconference2001/story/0,1220,561988,00.html> (part 2).

67. On the general background to which see e.g. M. Northcott, *An Angel Directs the Storm: Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004); M.L. Taylor, *Religion, Politics, and the Christian Right: Post-9/11 Powers and American Empire* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005); Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror*, Chapter 5.

68. Cf. Kampfner, *Blair's Wars*, pp. 122-23.

The Beveridge Report famously spoke about ‘evil giants’ of ‘want’, ‘squalor’, ‘disease’, and ‘ignorance’, and was the kind of language that influenced the famous 1945 manifesto of (what would become) arguably the most widely admired Labour government of arguably the most widely admired post-war Labour leader, Clement Attlee. The 1945 manifesto was written in the aftermath of the Second World War against ‘Japanese barbarism’ and ‘Nazi tyranny and aggression’, claiming ‘Victory in war must be followed by a prosperous peace’ and that ‘we should build a new United Nations, allies in a new war on hunger, ignorance and want’.⁶⁹ Order and chaos – key terms in Blair’s speech to Parliament on the eve of the Iraq War – likewise echo the 1945 manifesto, albeit to be given a notably Blairite reinterpretation. As the manifesto stated, ‘The Labour Party stands for order as against the chaos which would follow the end of all public control. We stand for order, for positive constructive progress as against the chaos.’

As we saw in Chapter 1, a long-established strand of the English radical tradition, from Winstanley and the seventeenth-century radicals through Blake to the Nonconformist influence on the modern Labour movement and figures such as E.P. Thompson (who became critically engaged with the Labour Party), has long been infused with biblical, quasi-biblical, and even millenarian language of utopianism and heaven-on-earth. In fact, ‘Jerusalem’, based on Blake’s poem ‘Milton’, was also invoked by Attlee and the Attlee government which has since become almost synonymous in British political discourse with the idea, which has a long history in the Radical Bible tradition, of building a New Jerusalem (Rev. 3.12; 21.3).⁷⁰ Indeed, ‘Jerusalem’ is still sung at the end of post-war Labour Party conferences and the language of New Jerusalem is still invoked in Labour debates.⁷¹ While invoking the precise phrase ‘New Jerusalem’ might have been fraught with some difficulties in a speech inaugurating the war on terror, apocalyptic language of dramatic social transformation for the victims of want, squalor, disease, and a new life for the poor, oppressed, dispossessed, ignorant, and wretched of the earth, is clearly something that has an emotional hold on the Labour Party. That said, as we also saw in Chapter 1, Winstanley,

69. ‘1945 Labour Party Election Manifesto: Let Us Face the Future’, <http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1945/1945-labour-manifesto.shtml>.

70. On ‘New Jerusalem’ and the Radical Bible see e.g. J. Kovacs and C. Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 21–22, 72–74, 226–43.

71. E.g. J. Cruddas, ‘On building the new Jerusalem’, *New Statesman* (September 30, 2012).

Blake, Thompson, and other representatives of this apocalyptic and utopian strand of the Radical Bible were part of revolutionary thinking in the old fashioned sense of opposing the dominant powers – including those at home. Clearly, that is not something Blair would entertain – whether in party political terms or capitalist ownership – and so with Blair we have the transformation of this aspect of the Radical Bible which may use its language but, significantly, is in line with the Liberal (-interventionist) Bible and its generic emphases on democracy, rights, tolerance, and freedom. While the idea of facilitating the radical transformation was retained, it was now the radical transformation of other societies into one like ours. As we have seen and will see again, what we have here is an important moment in shifting the Radical Bible away from mainstream politics by adopting its language but ultimately rejecting, or at least displacing, its revolutionary ideology.

Yet like an occasional Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, or Alan Simpson remaining somewhere on the Labour back benches post-1997, the Radical Bible could still be heard, as it still would be through the reference to Winstanley in Gordon Brown's speech on international capitalism cited above. In fact it was an echo of the Radical Bible in the 'prophets versus kings' tradition that apparently caused Blair's 'wobble' in his handling of the British and American bombing of Iraq in 1998 and where, presumably, John the Baptist confronting the court of Antipas was not sufficiently analogous to a Prime Minister and President of major world powers confronting what by now was effectively a third-world, tin-pot dictatorship. According to Alastair Campbell's diary entry:

Wednesday 16 December [first day of bombing] TB was clearly having a bit of a wobble. He said he had been reading the Bible last night, as he often did when the really big decisions were on, and he had read something about John the Baptist and Herod which had caused him to rethink, albeit not change his mind.

Campbell explains in the accompanying footnote: 'After John the Baptist denounced the marriage of Herod Antipas, Herod ordered him to be imprisoned and later beheaded'.⁷² But, as with other big decisions, biblical stories about challenging power did not change Blair's mind. Like Labour's reassessment of Clause 4 before it, the Radical Bible was going to change in the hands of New Labour. It is of some significance that for someone as powerful as Blair to make claims about challenging power, he instead has to adopt the language of benign power, such as

72. Campbell, *Power and the People*, p. 596.

establishing order from chaos or bringing peace through destruction. John the Baptist was thought to be a prophet; is this one not implying that he is more than a prophet?

3. As Is Written: Pure Democracy

Blair is still regularly mocked for behaving like a ‘Messiah’ or accused of having a ‘Messiah complex’.⁷³ But, widespread though they undoubtedly are, it is not just his detractors in the media who have made such remarks. Of his post-prime ministerial work as special envoy and representative for the Middle East Quartet, a ‘long-time associate’ is reported to have said, ‘Tony acquired a Messiah complex after the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland... He brings the same optimism to the Quartet job.’⁷⁴ If it were not Blair’s intention to present himself in such elevated terms, his speeches and soundbites, particularly when coupled with military intervention and peace negotiations, do not help. And nor does some of his more recent behaviour help, even if he did not expect to it to become public. For instance, when prompted to write the location of ‘home’ in the VIP visitors’ guest book at the British Embassy in Washington, Blair wrote not ‘London’ or ‘Buckinghamshire’ (the locations of his townhouse and mansion respectively) but ‘Jerusalem’, where he spends occasional time at the American Colony hotel as part of his work for the Quartet.⁷⁵

If Blair is the Messiah, then he is a thoroughly modern, liberal, multicultural, interfaith Messiah, who might still vanquish evil and his enemies but never on grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or even religion. In many ways this is a typical position within the liberalism and multiculturalism of the past forty years and one which has been

73. E.g. (among many), R.D. North, *Mr Blair’s Messiah Politics: Or What Happened When Bambi Tried to Save the World* (London: Social Affairs Unit, 2006); B. Budowsky, ‘Tony Blair’s messianic justifications for the Iraq war’, *The Hill* (February 1, 2010), <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international-affairs/79041-tony-blairs-messianic-justifications-for-the-iraq-war#ixzz2R0MXgtxz>; D. Owen, *The Hubris Syndrome: Bush, Blair and the Intoxication of Power* (New York: Methuen & Co., 2012); D. Sandbrook, ‘Hubris and a man who thinks he can only be judged by God’, *Daily Mail* (September 28, 2012).

74. L. Barber, ‘Tony Blair: An Exclusive Interview’, *Financial Times Magazine* (June 29, 2012). Even Campbell claimed that ‘Joking aside, I warned him against world-leader-it is’ (Campbell, *Power and the People*, p. 67).

75. S. Walters, ‘An identity crisis for Blair: Former PM describes Jerusalem as “home”’, *Daily Mail* (April 12, 2009).

associated with neoliberalism. This kind of liberal multiculturalism has the constant qualification that the Other has to be both embraced and yet understood in terms of dominant liberal discourses with anything problematic removed or stigmatised.⁷⁶ Or, as Slavoj Žižek memorably put it in his summary of the limited toleration of multiculturalism in relation to contemporary capitalism: ‘On today’s market, we find a series of products deprived of their malignant property: coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol...’⁷⁷ The more crushing aspect of this embrace has been that liberal tolerance typically reinscribes difference and, as in the contemporary case of the ‘war on terror’ and the Clash of Civilisations rhetoric, can be employed as part of a liberal imperialistic and interventionist agenda to remove any global illiberal Otherness. We will return to this point in more detail in Chapter 9 and it should already be clear that Blair’s understanding of ‘religion’ is a prime example of such an ideological position. Unsurprisingly, then, we also get what we might call decaffeinated exegesis. For example, rather than emphasise Gospel texts which talk about how a Gentile woman and her daughter represent dogs eating crumbs of the food given to the children (Mark 7.24-30; Matt. 15.21-28), Blair instead claimed that ‘an abhorrence of prejudice based on race, class, gender or occupation is fundamental to the Gospels. It is what draws so many Christians into politics, across the political spectrum.’⁷⁸ In terms of scriptural assumptions, it is significant that Blair claims to read both the Bible *and* the Qur’an ‘every day’. This is in part to understand global events (‘to be faith-literate is crucial in a globalised world’) but ‘mainly just because it is immensely instructive’.⁷⁹

76. See e.g. S. Žižek, ‘Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism’, *New Left Review* 1/225 (1997), pp. 28-51; S. Žižek, ‘Liberal multiculturalism masks an old barbarism with a human face’, *Guardian* (October 3, 2010); W. Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); D.T. Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); A. Lentin and G. Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age* (London: Zed Books, 2011); J.G. Crossley, ‘The Multicultural Christ: Jesus the Jew and the New Perspective on Paul in an Age of Neoliberalism’, *BCT* 7 (2011), pp. 1-9; Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Neoliberalism*.

77. Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, p. 96.

78. T. Blair, ‘Faith in Politics’, Speech to the Christian Socialist Movement (London, 2001), <http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=280>.

79. T. Adams, ‘This much I know: Tony Blair Interview’, *Observer* (June 12, 2011). See also Rawnsley, *Servants of the People*, p. 276, and Rawnsley, *Last Party*, p. 36.

This is a crucial move because there is good reason why scriptural texts are so central for Blair: they come to represent the pure form of tolerant, liberal, democratic religion which can always be found behind the later corruptions of history.

However, in his quest for purer origins, Blair can condemn parts of Christian history in the distant past for persecuting non-believers and heretics because this kind of behaviour is a distortion of Christianity which is a religion, he suggested, based on compassion and love.⁸⁰ But, according to this logic with a Blairite spin, it is Islam that needs addressing in the present. Blair gives a potted history of Islam which is one of gradual decline into dictatorship and, ultimately, the deeply entrenched political stance today of those on the ‘wrong’ side of Blair’s spectrum. For Blair, his appreciation of this history has helped him understand what he did not in 2001 when he thought it was just a few fanatics who could be defeated with ease and he would have been deeply disturbed if he knew fighting would still be taking place in Afghanistan (though claimed he would still have made the same decisions about Afghanistan and Iraq).⁸¹ It is significant for understanding Blair’s argument – as well as for understanding the arguments of a number of anti-theistic public intellectuals like Richard Dawkins – that he does not consider, at least in this context, the history of the battle-hardened Mujahedeen of the 1980s, the history of imperial disasters in the Afghanistan region, or the histories of different groups in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of his understanding for the ongoing fighting in the ‘war on terror’. Instead, the idealist distortion of ‘religion’ provides the most crucial explanatory factor for Blair, a view repeated throughout the ‘war on terror’, including Blair’s response to the July 7 attacks which infamously did not address the issue of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁸² However, once we peel back to, or contrast with, the heart of Islam – True Islam in Blairite terms – we learn that it is in fact entirely compatible with enlightened government featuring morally upright leaders. Within twenty years of Islam beginning, Blair explains, it developed a government but it was also an attempt to bring the Abrahamic faiths back to their roots with an emphasis on principles,

80. Blair, *Journey*, p. 347. Blair long held such views. E.g. Blair, ‘Foreword’, p. 9: ‘Christianity has been used for dubious and sometimes cruel purposes wholly at odds with its essential message. But at its best, it has inspired generations of people throughout almost 2000 years to believe in and work for a better, more humane and more just world.’

81. Blair, *Journey*, p. 347.

82. ‘In full: Blair on bomb blasts’, *BBC News* (July 7, 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4659953.stm>.

rationality and morality. In fact, he adds, merciful and devout Islam initially provided a sharp contrast with Christianity which, at the time, so Blair suggests, was tending to butcher enemies and contained priests more interested in debauchery and vice.⁸³

In fact, Blair developed the argument that this form of Islamic government could even justify intervention into less enlightened countries, and not just any country but one which has particular relevance for Blair: he claimed that as Islam grew and spread geographically it was even seen as a liberator, even by some Christians such as the Nestorians in...Iraq. And the justification for, and ultimate origins of, this tolerant, rational, and principled system of government in Blair's argument is God-given scripture, the revelation given to the Prophet from God via the angel Gabriel, that is, ultimately, the direct word of God.⁸⁴ In keeping with his quest for pure origins, Blair has even claimed to have read three versions of the Qur'an in order to find passages to counter extremist positions.⁸⁵

Of course, Blair is aware that there is plenty in the Bible – and 'religion' more generally – which is not so easy to boil down to the essentials required for a modern liberal democracy and so he focuses on 'the values like love of God and love of your neighbour' as the core features of religion rather than 'doctrine and practice': 'one of the things I do through my Foundation, through trying to bring different religious faiths together, is to show how, actually, there is a huge common space around these values between the different religious faiths.'⁸⁶ This, inevitably perhaps, means that Blair is comfortable reading scriptures 'less literally' and 'more metaphorically'. But, in a hermeneutical move again made by Obama, there is a flexibility with the biblical texts whereby those controversial aspects for modern liberal democracies can also be problematised, attributed to radically different ancient social contexts, and compared with other alien practices that are not readily endorsed by contemporary Christians in liberal democracies. So, for instance, Blair can claim, in language curiously reminiscent of the so-called antithesis in Matthew (Matt. 5.21-48) and his own relentless political rhetoric of 'modernising' Labour from Old to New, that,

83. Blair, *Journey*, p. 347.

84. Blair, *Journey*, p. 347.

85. Rawnsley, *End of the Party*, p. 44.

86. J. Hari, 'A Civil Partnership: Interview with Tony Blair', *Attitude* (April 8, 2009), pp. 50-52 (52).

when people quote the passages in Leviticus condemning homosexuality, I say to them – if you read the whole of the Old Testament and took everything that was there in a literal way, as being what God and religion is about, you'd have some pretty tough policies across the whole of the piece...and you've got the Old Testament kings with hordes of concubines, and so on. There's no way that you could take all of that and say, we in the 21st century should behave in that way.⁸⁷

Yet there are still hermeneutical controls for Blair, even within the biblical (and quranic) texts, though they are effectively general concepts compatible with liberal democratic values, and they involve that classic move towards the figure of Jesus, though Blair now logically has to extend this to include Mohammad. Again, Blair uses an antithetical argument and again these figures are, crucially for Blair's hermeneutic, tolerant and progressive so, no matter what the rest of the biblical and quranic texts say, the core figures retain the essence of True Religion (and Politics):

And actually, what people often forget about, for example, Jesus or, indeed, the Prophet Mohammed, is that their whole *raison d'être* was to change the way that people thought traditionally. Christianity was very much about saying, no, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' is not the right way to behave. And the Koran was, of course, an extraordinary, progressive – revolutionarily progressive – document for its time. That's why many of the old pagan practices that the Prophet was keen to wean people away from were dispensed with.⁸⁸

One of the notable things about Blair's hermeneutics is that echoes of the Radical Bible again remain, in this instance the kind of idea of communal checks on interpretation that so fascinated the Marxist Christopher Hill (see Chapter 2), though inevitably the potential for conflict is downplayed by Blair. So, for instance, Blair can praise the Catholic Church and religious leaders like the Pope but, echoing the main lesson he has claimed to have learned in politics, he ultimately echoes David Brent in seeing hope in 'the people' ('What makes me optimistic? People. Since leaving office, I have learned one thing above all: the people are the hope').⁸⁹ Again with echoes of his own rebranding of Labour as New Labour and presentation of his own fresh-faced rise to

87. Hari, 'Interview', p. 52.

88. Hari, 'Interview', p. 52.

89. Blair, *Journey*, p. 691. Blair is therefore also able to make the claim that a Muslim leader – crucially an *elected* leader – could be open to gay rights because ultimately 'people will find their way to a sensible reformation of attitudes' (Hari, 'Interview', p. 52).

power in the 1990s, Blair is regularly insistent, as we saw above in his own echoes of 'The Greatest Love of All' (the Whitney version), that the younger generation are the ones most likely to bring change and ensure the 'evolution' of biblical interpretation. In this instance, the younger generation likewise do not share official or traditional views on homosexuality more typical of an older generation (especially the leaders) but even so Blair appears to extend the communal wisdom to the whole congregation:

what is interesting is that if you went into any Catholic Church, particularly a well-attended one, on any Sunday here and did a poll of the congregation, you'd be surprised at how liberal-minded people were... On many issues, I think the leaders of the Church and the Church will be in complete agreement. But I think on some of these issues, if you went and asked the congregation, I think you'd find that their faith is not to be found in those types of entrenched attitudes. If you asked 'what makes you religious?' and 'what does your faith mean to you?' they would immediately go into compassion, solidarity, relieving suffering. I would be really surprised if they went to 'actually, it's to do with believing homosexuality is wrong' or 'it's to do with believing this part of the ritual or doctrine should be done in this particular way'.⁹⁰

Note again that for Blair change comes through general principles of 'faith' compatible with liberal democratic ones ('compassion, solidarity, relieving suffering').

As it happens, we have some indication that Blairite hermeneutics are now established within the Labour Party and this is shown precisely on the issue of homosexuality and the parliamentary debate over same-sex marriage in February 2013.⁹¹ Two now perhaps expected examples of biblical support came up: loving the neighbour and the singling out of Jesus. Toby Perkins (Labour, Chesterfield) claimed that 'as a Christian' he had 'no worries about voting for this Bill' because 'what greater example of the equalities agenda could there be than Jesus Christ himself?... Jesus Christ led the way on promoting equalities.' Notice also that there are echoes of the Radical Bible but the confrontational element is now more about defending victims of oppression which in turn provides the justification for equality: 'There are any number of stories in the Bible that make it absolutely clear that Jesus stuck up for groups that had been oppressed over the years'. The other use of Jesus came from

90. Hari, 'Interview', p. 52.

91. 'Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill', Hansard: Commons Debates (February 5, 2013), Columns 125-230, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130205/debtext/130205-0001.htm>.

David Lammy (Labour, Tottenham) and likewise we get the shift from Jesus the state criminal to Jesus defending victims of oppression: ‘the Jesus I know was born a refugee, illegitimate, with a death warrant on his name, and in a barn among animals. He would stand up for minorities. That is why it is right for those of religious conviction to vote for this Bill.’ Lammy also made sure that alternative understandings of the Bible which are not compatible with liberal democracies were assumed to be highly irrelevant: ‘those on the extremes of our faith have poisoned what is an important debate with references to polygamy and bestiality’.

But this Liberal Bible is not restricted to Labour (or the Liberal Democrats). Minus the echoes of the Radical Bible, the Conservative MP Peter Bottomley argued in favour of same-sex marriage with biblical support. The ‘primary commandment is to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength’ and this ‘should be used as a way of defining the second great commandment, which is to treat my neighbour as myself’. This was interpreted to mean that ‘we are asking whether we can remove the barriers that stop same-sex couples enjoying the commitment—the “at one” meaning—of marriage. That is what the Bill comes down to. It does not redefine marriage; it just takes away barriers.’ The Bible of Perkins, Lammy, and Bottomley is a Bible deprived of its malignant properties, the Bible shorn of any Otherness problematic for liberal democracy, tolerance, and equality.⁹² This is a development of Thatcher’s Bible of tolerance but now further applied to issues Thatcher’s government would not become associated with,

92. As we will see in the final chapter, homosexuality and the Bible remains a strand in the Radical Bible tradition. However, when we contextualise Perkins, Lammy, and Bottomley, it is clear that they are not in this tradition. The most obvious point is that they are all arguing in favour of opening up access to, and potentially promoting, a traditional institution: marriage. Bottomley is, obviously, a Tory and not part of the Radical Bible tradition. Though not entirely to the right of the Labour Party, Perkins was elected in 2010 and supported the New Labour candidate, David Miliband, in the Labour leadership race. Lammy’s voting pattern on key issues since 2001 has been a checklist of New Labour policies removed from its radical tradition, as we see from TheyWorkForYou.com (http://www.theyworkforyou.com/mp/david_lammy/tottenham):

Voted *very strongly* for introducing *foundation hospitals*.

Voted *very strongly* for the *Iraq war*.

Voted *very strongly* against an *investigation* into the *Iraq war*.

Voted *moderately* for a *stricter asylum system*.

Voted *very strongly* for introducing *ID cards*.

Voted *very strongly* for Labour’s *anti-terrorism laws*.

although Thatcher herself had a history of a more liberal position on homosexuality.⁹³ Yet Blair's modified version of the Thatcher Bible is, as we will now see, the Bible most influential among the political classes running the Conservative-led Coalition government but, as we will also see, not quite the same Radical Bible of those who have a different take on same-sex marriage.

93. Untypically of Conservative thinking of the time, Thatcher had voted in favour of legalising homosexuality. See e.g. 'Sexual Offences (No. 2)', Hansard Commons Debates (July 5, 1966), Columns 259-67, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1966/jul/05/sexual-offences-no-2>; Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, pp. 150-53; Campbell, *The Grocer's Daughter*, p. 192. However, Section 28 (and the so-called promotion of homosexuality in schools) was tied in with concerns for a 'Christian' perception of 'traditional morality' and was a controversial feature of her time as Prime Minister.