

# *The Spiritual Scientist*

An ezine for those who think!

## *The Litmus Test of Fundamentalism*



**Question:** Why do people fight in the name of religion?

**Answer:** Because of immaturity.

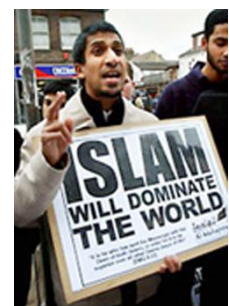
All of us, at our core, are spiritual beings, children of the one supreme God, and so are members of the same one family. Unfortunately, due to our present materialistic misconceptions, we are unable to realize this spiritual inter-connectedness of all living beings. That's why God and his representatives have given the various great religions of the world as methods to cure us of this disease of materialism and to restore our original spiritual health and harmony.

The founders of the great religions have made some statements saying that the way they are teaching is the only way. But if we study their teachings carefully, they have also made some other statements saying that those following other paths should be allowed to peacefully pursue their paths. How are we to reconcile these apparently contradictory statements? The "this is the only way" statements are meant to create a focus, a one-pointedness that can lead to wholehearted application and practical transformation. But if these "only way" statements are seen as absolute, universal truths that apply at all times and all places, then they contradict the other words of those very seers – and also defeat their ultimate purpose.



Here's an example to understand how they defeat the purpose. When competent doctors treat patients, they request, even insist, that their patients follow their prescribed treatment exclusively, without taking treatments from other doctors. But if the patients take such statements of the doctors to imply that all other doctors are quacks, then they miss the essential point of the doctor: to focus on their own treatment.

Those religionists who focus on applying the teachings of their founders soon advance to the spiritual level where they can see the truth in other religious paths – and thus understand the context and purpose of "the only way" statements in their own scriptures. Therefore, here's a simple acid test for spiritual immaturity and religious fundamentalism: if the teachers and followers of a particular path stick to "the only way" literalistic interpretation of their scriptures, then they can be safely classified as fundamentalists, who are soon going to turn intolerant and violent against those following other religions – and thus defeat the purpose of the very God in whose name they claim to be fighting.



But if the teachers and followers of a path acknowledge the truth and the validity of other paths based on objective criterion, then they have understood the essence and purpose of scriptures – and they and they alone will actually fulfill the purpose of God: to bring peace and harmony in this world and to lead people back to the spiritual world.

