

## **DT028 - Rushdie or Runcie?**

The eleven Christian bishops (Letters 22 September 2001) are patently wrong in saying that the present struggle to suppress terrorism has nothing to do with Islam. The 1989 furore over Satanic Verses and the fatwa against Salman Rushdie brought us all up against what religion involves. Exclusive fundamentalism, whether Christian, Islamic or other, is the only possible stance for a true believer. The New Testament presents Christianity as the only true religion: 'no one comes to God except by me' (John 14.6). The Koran makes a similar claim for Islam. True believers must treat apostasy and blasphemy as ultimate transgressions, for they defame the very God they believe in.

Sceptics adopt the stance either of a Rushdie or a Runcie. A Rushdie propagates doubt or disbelief by satire, irony, or other debunking. A Runcie achieves the same result by watering down his faith in a manner inconsistent with the nature of faith. I prefer the stance of a Rushdie, as more honest. Those who follow the Runcie doctrine that all religions are worthy of equal respect deny the meaning of religion, for between mutually exclusive creeds, only one can be true.

In the days of the Crusades, that was the stance of all Christian adherents. Now only a comparative few, mainly evangelicals or Roman Catholics, remain true to it. With Muslims it is otherwise.

