

Our God Rules (Yours Doesn't)

Why Is There a Rising Tide of Fundamentalism Around the World?

1. What is fundamentalism?
2. Why is fundamentalism growing?
3. What do fundamentalists want?
4. What is the influence of fundamentalism in the world?
5. Should we study fundamentalism or secularism?

The headline in the February 15, 2008, Associated Press article read, "Youth Organization Wants a Return to Wholesomeness." Led by the Christian-based group Teen Mania Ministries, hundreds of teens took to the streets of the Big Apple, New York City, for an event called Recreate. Through chants, signs, and speeches, the youths and young adults called for recreating music, film, fashion, television, and other media without the explicit, aggressive language and imagery that is so common in these mediums. 2008 was a presidential election year, so they also announced eight questions to be sent to the presidential candidates, including, "What should be done to stop glamorizing the things that are destroying my friends, like drugs, alcohol, and sex?" And "How will you ensure that the freedom to practice Christianity will not be taken away?"

One of the young adults at the rally was Rebecca Bjerke, age 21. Along with two of her friends, she explained to a reporter why she came to the rally: "To make change for our generation, to just stand up and say, 'We're tired of all the filth.' . . . You know, music and songs that are constantly so negative—just making us numb to the abuse of alcohol and drugs and sex and pornography and all that kind of stuff."

Would you call Rebecca Bjerke a religious fundamentalist? How about the rally—was it a gathering of fundamentalists? Debra Sweet, national director of the organization World Can't Wait and part of a group standing across the street to protest the Recreate rally, certainly thinks it was. According to Sweet, "These are hard-core fundamentalists leading youth . . . on a moral equivalent of a crusade." Others among the World Can't Wait protest group, who conducted chants such as "Away with all gods," believe groups such as Teen Mania Ministries lead young people to eschew critical thought and to blindly follow their fundamentalist leaders.

So what is going on here? How can people of the same nation have such radically different views? And why are they taking these views to the streets, willing to invest their time in such events? This one event is but a microcosm of what is taking place across the globe, literally and figuratively being "recreated" in nation after nation, driven, it appears, by religious commitment.

Another newspaper headline and article can help us to understand this rising tide. The November 27, 2005, edition of the *Dallas Morning News* featured a section headlined, "10 Ideas on the Way Out. . . . [T]he world's leading thinkers identify ideas and institutions they believe are not likely to survive the next 35 years." What were two of the first three ideas not likely to survive? The sanctity of life and monogamy (religious hierarchy was fourth). Although secularized people might celebrate these changes, such proclamations are fundamentalist fuel. Perceived as direct attacks on their way of life and all that they hold dear, such predicted and actual changes serve as rallying points for millions of people around the world to organize and resist. And so they do.

Many scholars now write that without modernization and secularization there would be no fundamentalism. For centuries, it has been understood that the processes of modernization—such as urbanization and pluralism—lead to secularization. As original sociologist Max Weber and others after him have suggested, secularization is the demystifying of the world, during which religion is relegated to a smaller and smaller role among a decreasing number of people and organizations. Secularization proceeds until whole strata of people (say, the Western intelligentsia) and entire societies (say, those of Northern and Western Europe) operate without any apparent reference to or reliance upon religion. Religious faith becomes individualized and, for many, outdated, something like a historical artifact, part of the cultures of long-gone, superstitious peoples.

At least, this is the view and experience of those who developed the secularization thesis, namely Western academics. But as former secularization theory proponent Peter Berger (1992) now writes, secularization theory failed to anticipate something: that this demystification of the world provided within it the seeds both for resistance to demystification and for the world's remystification. These movements, organizations, and people who resist demystification, or who remystify, have come to be called fundamentalist.

Far from disappearing, religion and religious movements appear to be resurging around the globe. According to research, there are fundamentalist movements in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, North America, and Asia, including India. Such movements exist in multiple religions, including Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, neo-Confucianism, Christianity, and Buddhism. These movements have political influence. Gabriel Almond et al. (2003, 1) observe:

"Since the Iranian Revolution, purported fundamentalist movements have risen to the highest levels of power in five countries—in Iran in 1979, in the Sudan in

1993, in Turkey, Afghanistan, and India in 1996, and in India again in 1998 and 1999. There have been even more frequent penetrations by fundamentalist movements into the parliaments, assemblies, and political parties of such countries as Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, and the United States."

What is more, as we can see, hear, and read, fundamentalism is at times associated with violence, such as suicide bombers. Fundamentalism is in the news and is having global impacts.

In this chapter, we outline the contours of research by sociologists and others on the resurgence of conservative religion around the globe, the meaning of religious fundamentalism, its characteristics, and the implications of such movements for modern life. We review history, identify perspectives, provide a critical overview of existing research, and discuss the areas that scholars must visit to collect data if we are to move forward in understanding these world-shaping phenomena.

WHAT IS RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM?

Do you remember in Chapter 1 when we asked you to actually stop reading and write an initial definition of religion? We want you to do the same here, but rather than defining religion, define fundamentalism. Without definitions, it is hard for us to communicate and learn about topics. Write your definition in the box, and then read on to see how your definition compares with those of scholars who make their living thinking about such things.

BOX 6.1

Your Definition of Fundamentalism

Defining fundamentalism is not an easy task because it is such a common and loosely used term, thrown around like a baseball in the media, in political arenas, and during backyard arguments. Sometimes the term *fundamentalist* is used to describe any group that takes religion seriously or that views religion's role in public life to be greater than the labeler wishes it to be. The term also might be used for people who are regarded as being too religiously confident or who engage in action stemming from religious conviction. Thus, not only are the Christian religious right in the United States and the global Al Qaeda Muslims called fundamentalist, but so too are teen groups rallying for cleaner song lyrics and videos, or local parent groups who want restrictions placed on Internet access in local schools. Groups that want their religion to be practiced purely are called fundamentalist, as are groups pushing for an overhaul of the national or global political system, even if they are mostly culturally connected to a religion.

So what is fundamentalism? Perhaps more so than many other concepts, fundamentalism is a contextual phenomenon: It cannot be defined without understanding the social reality that surrounds it. As we noted earlier in the chapter, many scholars think that fundamentalism cannot be understood apart from modernity nor exist outside of modernity. Thus, to provide a working definition of fundamentalism, we begin with a brief overview of modernity.

MODERNITY

The social sciences arose out of the conditions of modernity, or, at the very least, modernity animated the work of early sociologists. Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and others were interested in the social implications of a modernizing world. Increasing modernity meant not only an increasing division of labor, but also a division of life (Bruce 2000). Social life was no longer a cohesive whole, but divided into distinct spheres. One's coworkers, neighbors, and fellow worshippers could be and most often were different sets of people (a situation that, by the way, often leaves us feeling stretched in too many directions and feeling exhausted). Moreover, social life became divided into public and private realms, and people were expected—nay required—to act differently in the separate arenas.

Another core aspect of modernization is the rationalization of the world. Much of life is regulated using policies and procedures, science, administrative rules, and the like. Life must be predictable. A McDonald's hamburger must taste the same no matter where it is purchased in the world, so its production and distribution must be rationalized. Deities have little role in such a worldview. The laws of the market are devoid of religious content, and the invisible hand is not supernatural.

Along with the division of social life and rationalization came industrialization and urbanization. These processes heighten cultural pluralism. They physically brought together many people who had a variety of perspectives to serve burgeoning economies or to live in new colonies. Pluralism—both cultural and structural—is often the linchpin concept in secularization theories. Given the variety of religions, coupled with both the division of social life and the primacy given to economic pursuits, religion ends up being relegated to the private sectors of social life, divorced from formal roles in government, economics, and eventually education, medicine, and other areas. What is more, exposing people to a variety of religious and nonreligious ideologies, secularization theorists argue, *relativizes* religion, a concept that is foreign to most religions, especially those with a singular god. As Peter Berger (1967) conceived of religion, it is a sacred canopy under which the entirety of life is explained and security is generated. Modernization rips the sacred canopy, and, at best, people are left with sacred umbrellas (Smith 1998).

Modernization thus squeezes out religious influences from many spheres of society and greatly reduces religion's role in others. And modernization, following its own logic, begets more advanced forms such as postmodernization, the continued individualizing and relativizing of the world. Even science comes into question in such a world. In the postmodern era, truth can only be spelled with a capital T at the beginning of sentences, for truth is individualized and relativized. Whatever works for you is good for you, and whatever works for me is good for me. And what is *good*? We each get to define that too.

Given this vast pluralism, societies and their governments are able to claim less and less as common to all. Tolerance and acceptance rise to the top as the most widely shared values. In such societies, the ultimate offense is to suppose that individuals cannot

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personally define what is good for them, to presume that there is some outside moral guide that is common to all. All previously taken-for-granted social arrangements—such as monogamy—are questioned, and the values of tolerance and acceptance make it difficult for societies to reject many behaviors and perspectives. Modernity becomes an ideology that values change over continuity, quantity over quality, and commercial efficiency over traditional values (Lawrence 1989, 27). The result of these processes is to threaten religion by reducing it to nothing but individually held beliefs, a clear Durkheimian violation of the meaning and role of religion in society.

Defining Fundamentalism

So what is fundamentalism? In one of the first and most careful sociologically based theoretical works on fundamentalism, Riesebrodt (1990 [1993 trans.], 9) defines fundamentalism as “an urban movement directed primarily against dissolution of personalistic, patriarchal notions of order and social relations and their replacement by depersonalized principles.” The fact that he defines it as an urban movement is most interesting, given that fundamentalists are often characterized as backwater, country folk who are out of step with the modern urban world. In the follow-up book to the five-volume *Fundamentalism Project*, Almond et al. (2003, 17) define fundamentalism as “a discernible pattern of religious militancy by which self-styled ‘true believers’ attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors.” Antoun (2001, 3) offers a definition of fundamentalism in the context of modernity as a religiously based cognitive and affective orientation to the world characterized by protest against change and the ideological orientation of modernism.

My, oh my, what do these definitions really mean? We will explore their meanings in more detail soon, but let's first consider what they have in common and examine some initial objections to these definitions. Each of these definitions supposes that fundamentalism has a transnational, transcultural character. That is, they suppose that fundamentalism can be defined apart from its specifically unique historical circumstances. Some critics of these definitions argue that the term *fundamentalism* only applies to theologically conservative U.S. Protestants. They make this argument because the term was first used to describe the Protestant movement (see next section), and because it is meant to apply only to a subset of people within a religious tradition. Muslims, for example, often argue that they cannot be called fundamentalist simply because they take the teaching of the Qur'an and their faith seriously. If that were the criteria, they say, then all Muslims are fundamentalist. And if this is true, the term ceases to be of use.

Serious critiques have been leveled at work that examines fundamentalism as a global phenomenon. Critics charge that such work often conflates conservative religious movements with postcolonial national religious movements. Others criticize what they view as the immensity of differences that have to be brushed aside to view, for example, U.S. Protestant fundamentalists and Hindu national fundamentalists as the same conceptually. Some scholars are willing to apply the term to conservative movements within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but not other religions. Riesebrodt (2000) has responded that from a sociological perspective, the fact that resurgent conservative religious movements share many features in common is highly relevant, because it suggests that such movements have risen under similar sociological conditions. For this reason, he argues, despite important

differences across these movements, knowledge can advance by considering fundamentalism to be a sociological category in need of theoretical and empirical development.

How fundamentalism is defined and interpreted depends a great deal on one's perspective. From a modern, secular viewpoint, fundamentalists are reactionaries, radicals attempting to grab power and throw societies back into the dark ages of oppression, patriarchy, and intolerance. These fundamentalists are misguided, scary, and even evil. Supporters of modernization view themselves as being unlike these fundamentalists. They see modernists as good, reasoned people, lovers of freedom and human rights. Again, from their own viewpoint, because they believe that they think more clearly than fundamentalists and value empirical evidence and individual rights more highly, modernists can see that fundamentalists are wrong.

But fundamentalists and their sympathizers feel like Western versions of modernization are rushing over them in a tidal wave of change, ripping apart communities and destroying values, social ties, and meaning. To these changes, some groups say, "No." When they do so out of their religious conviction, they are called, by modernists, religious fundamentalists. Think back to the opening of this chapter, which described the youth gathering Recreate on one side of the New York City street and the "modernists" on the other side of the street protesting these misguided youths' rally.

Fundamentalists and their sympathizers see their stand against the tidal wave of change as honorable, right, life preserving, and a life calling. They are people fighting against the heavy hand of secular oppression, emptiness, anomie, destruction, and the restriction of their freedom to believe and practice as they wish. As Bruce (2000, 117) states, "Fundamentalism is the rational response of traditionally religious peoples to social, political and economic changes that downgrade and constrain the role of religion in the public world. . . . [F]undamentalists have not exaggerated the extent to which modern cultures threaten what they hold dear."

THE "FIRST" FUNDAMENTALISM

So where did we get this term, fundamentalism? The term was first used to describe a conservative strain of Protestantism that developed in the United States, roughly from 1870 to 1925. During at least a portion of this period, the United States was arguably the world's leader in modernization. As U.S. religious historian George Marsden (1980) and others discuss, this original fundamentalist movement was foremost a religious movement and took its name from a series of pamphlets called "The Fundamentals: A Testimony of the Truth," which were published from 1910 to 1915. These pamphlets outlined the fundamental, nonnegotiable aspects of the Christian faith, as agreed on by conservative religious leaders of the time. Unlike many fundamentalist movements today, U.S. Protestant fundamentalism of the early twentieth century was not so much a battle with the secular state as it was an intrareligion fight with other U.S. Protestant people and organizations. These other U.S. Protestant people and organizations were attempting to modernize their religion to be, in the progressive Protestant view, relevant for a new time. Fundamentalists of this era were militantly opposed to modernizing the Christian faith and militantly opposed to cultural changes that were endorsed by modernism. As Marsden (1980, 4) notes, "fundamentalism was a loose, diverse, and changing federation of cobelligerents united by their fierce opposition to modernist attempts to bring Christianity into line with modern thought."

In the aftermath of the 1925 Scopes Trial—a trial drawing intense national publicity that pitted traditionalists against modernists over the teaching of evolution—in which fundamentalists went from being respected members of society to a ridiculed group, fundamentalists essentially retreated into their own private world, where they stayed for many decades. While they were there, they quietly developed their own institutions that were parallel to those of modernist organizations, created strategies for influencing society, and prepared well-trained leaders. Their reemergence in the public eye in the 1970s coincided with the resurgence of conservative religious movements around the globe.

FUNDAMENTALISM RISING

In the 1970s, fundamentalism appeared to hit the world stage from out of thin air. Although there were earlier movements, such as the Jewish Gush Emunim (the Bloc of the Faithful) in 1974, the Iranian Revolution was the first unmistakable indicator of a growing phenomenon. Fundamentalism also resurged in the United States, this time as a much more politically active strain. Fundamentalist movements emerged in most of the world's religions on most of the earth's continents. Something was happening. In a 1979 article, Ethridge and Feagin noted that there was no coherent sociological definition or theoretical context for the term fundamentalism. And no wonder. The accepted wisdom among those who studied religion and society was that societies were secularizing. According to secularization theories, religion was not supposed to resurge and take a center spot on a global stage.

Nancy Ammerman was among the first sociologists to conduct an in-depth study into the lives of contemporary fundamentalists and to draw connections between fundamentalism and modernity. Her book *Bible Believers* (1987) described U.S. fundamentalists. Ammerman's work was followed by Bruce Lawrence's book *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age* (1989), in which he argued that fundamentalism is an ideology rather than a theology and that it is formed in conflict with modernism. His study set the groundwork for the study of fundamentalism in sociology; in his view, fundamentalism is a transcultural phenomenon that is located in a developmental historical framework. He understood fundamentalism as a sociocultural category with common roots in its encounter with the modern world.

In interpreting the resurgence of religion, sociologists have largely gone in two different directions from that of Ammerman. Some have held fast to secularization theory and viewed the wave of fundamentalisms around the globe as a collective last gasp of old-time religion. In this view, modernism has swept the globe, and religions are making one final but ultimately futile attempt to preserve themselves as social players.

Another school of thought—what Warner (1993) calls the “new paradigm”—argues that modernization and secularization serve as fertile soil for religious resurgence, especially of the more fundamentalist strains. As we discussed in the last chapter, where the signs of modernization are strongest—measured as religious pluralism and urbanization, for example—so too is individual religious involvement (Finke and Stark 2005).

There are other, smaller voices contributing to understanding the global rise of fundamentalism. But as Riesebrodt (2000) outlines, all these explanations, dominant or not, are lacking in that they do not adequately answer three vital questions: (1) why these movements emerged, (2) why they emerged at this point in history (largely since the 1970s), and (3) what their future significance may be. Much work must yet be done to answer these questions.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

To date, the most comprehensive study of fundamentalisms around the world has been carried out by religious historians Martin Marty and Scott Appleby. After a decade of exhaustive case study research, with contributions from dozens of scholars studying fundamentalist groups and movements across five continents and within seven world religious traditions, and after five volumes of reporting and analysis, this global study identified nine interrelated characteristics of fundamentalist groups, five ideological and four organizational. (See Table 1.)

On the basis of these characteristics, Almond and colleagues argue that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which have clearly defined sacred texts, dualistic worldviews, and "end times" theologies, have the most fully developed fundamentalisms across the world's religions. But there are also critiques of these fundamentalist characteristics. For example, Larry Iannaccone (1997) points out that the authors of these traits say that only 2 of the 18 religious movements they studied score high on all nine traits. In contrast, he states, religious movements that were not given any consideration by this or most other research, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, score high on every trait. Some religious movements are called fundamentalist even if they do not seem to perfectly fit the characteristics, whereas other movements that do fit the characteristics are not called fundamentalist. This finding points to weakness either in clarity or consistency of definition. Many studies of fundamentalism implicitly assume that fundamentalists can only exist within established world religions. Do you think this is a reasonable assumption? Why?

FUNDAMENTALISM AND OTHER ASPECTS OF SOCIAL LIFE

In addition to studying the rise of fundamentalism, studies are increasingly examining the relationships between fundamentalism and social life. Some studies look at the relationships between fundamentalism and race, class, gender, family, education, and age. Other studies examine innovative techniques and the particular views of fundamentalists, their moral reasoning development, and their relationship to science.

One consistent finding of these studies is that fundamentalists are strong traditionalists on matters of family and gender relations. Patriarchal families, with distinct and separate roles for males and females, are core components of fundamentalist beliefs and practices across religions and continents. Certainly this is a major clashing point with modernity and a central social arrangement that fundamentalist groups fight to maintain. Because traditional families and gender roles play a core role for fundamentalists, they are, not surprisingly, strong opponents of homosexual behavior or any official acknowledgment or sponsorship of alternative family arrangements. Such acts and arrangements are viewed as cooperating with sin and simply cannot be accepted. They also are direct challenges to the worldviews of fundamentalists. As much as any other aspect of modernity, the push to change the definition of family, gender, and acceptable sexual activity has pulled fundamentalist groups into active political involvement. Indeed, as we noted earlier, Riesebrodt (1990 [1993 trans.], 9) goes so far as to define the essence of fundamentalism as concerted resistance to the "dissolution of personalistic, patriarchal notions of order."

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TABLE 6.1 Nine Characteristics of Fundamentalist Groups

Ideological	1. Reactivity to the marginalization of religion: Fundamentalism is first and foremost a defense of a religious tradition that is perceived to be eroding or under attack by modernization and secularization. Without this scenario, a movement is not properly labeled fundamentalist. 2. Selectivity: Fundamentalism is selective. Rather than simply defending a religious tradition, it selects and reshapes aspects of the tradition, particularly aspects that clearly distinguish the fundamentalists from the mainstream. What is more, such movements affirm and use some aspects of modernity, such as much of modern science, modern forms of communication, and other technologies. Finally, certain consequences or processes of modernity are singled out for special attention and focused opposition (such as abortion for U.S. Christian fundamentalists). 3. Dualistic worldview: Reality is clearly divided into the good and the evil, light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness. 4. Absolutism and inerrancy: The texts of the tradition (the Qur'an or Bible, for example) "are of divine (inspired) origin and true and accurate in all particulars" (Almond et al. 2003, 96). Fundamentalist movements in religions that do not have a clear sacred text (such as Hinduism) often hold one text, or set of texts, over others. 5. Millennialism and messianism: History has a miraculous and holy end. At the end of time, at the entry or return of the hoped-for one (the messiah, the hidden Imam, etc.), suffering will end, evil will be vanquished, and believers will be victorious. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam offer the most certain assurances; other traditions, although they tend to borrow from religion's "end times" certainty of these three, lack such fully elaborated assurances.
Organizational	6. Elect, chosen membership: Those in fundamentalist movements view themselves as called, selected out, and set apart for their mission to defend the religious tradition. 7. Sharp boundaries: People are either members of the fundamentalist group or they are not. The boundaries are clearly set; there is no confusion. A person is saved, righteous, a follower of Allah, or a defender of the faith, or else that person is not. 8. Authoritarian organization: Fundamentalist movements are typically organized around a charismatic leader or leaders, while others are the followers. The leader is viewed by the followers as someone who is specially chosen by the deity, someone who has near supernatural qualities or special access to the deity, and someone who is virtuous, a model for the followers, and in possession of special training and insight into the sacred texts. 9. Behavioral requirements: As an extension of the dualistic worldview, behavioral requirements are both elaborate and specific. Rules about appropriate speech, dress, sexuality, drinking, eating, family formation, children, entertainment pursuits, and other behaviors are common and create sharp boundaries.

Source: Almond et al. (1995)

In an effort to better understand the rise of fundamentalism, some scholars are examining what are called contextual effects. Contextual effects consider the impact of the composition and values of the surrounding neighborhood, community, or region on the rise and makeup of fundamentalism. For instance, Moore and Vanneman (2003) have studied the effects on gender attitudes of the proportion of fundamentalists in a U.S. state. They find that greater proportions of fundamentalists in U.S. states are associated with more conservative gender attitudes of white nonfundamentalists in those states, even after controlling for individuals' own religious affiliation, beliefs, and practices. So fundamentalist movements may have an effect on the overall gender attitudes of people in their state. Or possibly it is the opposite—that more conservative gender views lead to more fundamentalists. In another study, Lizardo and Bergesen (2003) use a contextual approach that shows much promise for understanding why some fundamentalist movements are violent and some are not, an issue we explore in the next section.

ARE FUNDAMENTALIST MOVEMENTS VIOLENT?

On a global scale, religious violence seems to occur nearly every day. On the day that this section was written, 33 women and children receiving holiday toys from soldiers in the Middle East were killed by religiously motivated violence. During the time it took to write this chapter, literally hundreds of people lost their lives as a result of religiously motivated violence. Religious groups plot and kill people from other religions; they kill people in their own religion whom they view as either accepting modern, Western ways or selling out their religion; they kill people who are simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The groundbreaking work *Terror in the Mind of God* by Mark Juergensmeyer (2003) provides a sociologically rich perspective for understanding the links between fundamentalism and terrorism and violence. First, not all religiously based violence is carried out by fundamentalists. Sometimes, in fact, religion is used as a justification for violence by people and groups without specific religious ties. Second, not all fundamentalist groups are violent. In fact, most are not. Even though there are many fundamentalist people and groups in the United States, for example, there has been less violence here than, say, in many nations of the Middle East. And when fundamentalist-based violence has occurred in the United States, it is often the work of an individual operating alone, without the organized support of a religious group.

Still, many cases of religious violence are committed by extremist fundamentalist groups and the number of these cases is growing. But why? Juergensmeyer finds in his extensive research among Sikhs, Muslims, Jews, Christians, and the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo sect that the confrontation between religion and the secular state is increasingly framed as a cosmic war that one group or the other will win. For fundamentalists, it is a battle between the good, true, and right versus the bad, false, and wrong. The end goal is to see religion restored to its position at the center of public consciousness. The result is that politics become increasingly "religionized" (as opposed to religion becoming increasingly politicized). Religion is making its claim on public life, rejecting relegation to the private sphere. To make this claim, religious groups sometimes (or for some groups, *often*) use violence to make their position and presence known. Religious violence, Juergensmeyer argues, is theater. It dramatizes conditions and perspectives. As part of this theater, "images of martyrdom, 'satanization,' and cosmic war have been

central to religious ideologies" (Juergensmeyer 2003, 219). These images and ideas have empowered people and groups to act, provided them with an identity, and given them political legitimization. "Performance violence" by religious groups is almost exclusively symbolic. It is performed to dramatize a cause and it is buttressed by absolutism and moral justification.

What is more, because the war is framed in cosmic terms with a millennial outcome (the good will triumph eventually), fundamentalists do not believe any length of time is too long to fight the battle. Some leaders of fundamentalist groups expect battles to continue for hundreds of years, and others do not even expect the war to be completed in human history. Within such views, compromise is not an option. The end result is that religion, in spiritualizing violence, has given terrorism tremendous power. The reverse is true as well. Terrorism has given religion power. Neither can be ignored in our current world.

But we are left with the question of why fundamentalism leads to or condones violence in some cases but not in others. Iannaccone (1997), among others, argues that violence should be attributed to the religious-political environment rather than to religion itself. He claims that when religion is unregulated by the government—that is, when the state allows religious diversity, does not squelch religion, and does not favor one religion over another—violence is rare and limited to isolated individuals. Violent religious groups arise in countries where the state suppresses religious freedom or favors one religion over others. "Whereas government regulation and state-sponsored religion encourage sects to fight both church and state, a truly competitive religious market encourages religious tolerance and mutual respect if only as a matter of necessity" (Iannaccone 1997, 114). Considering that religious violence and terrorism are playing an apparently increased role around the globe, we are improving our understanding of violence and religion but still have much more to learn. Perhaps you can contribute to our understanding.

Lizardo and Bergesen (2003) provide one promising approach to better understand religious violence. They look at terrorism—religious and nonreligious—contextually. They consider the important context to be a nation's location in the world and historical period. They find that during periods of hegemonic supremacy, terrorist activity is concentrated in the periphery. When terrorism occurs in core nations (in Cold War terms, the United States and its allies), it comes largely from native leftist groups. That is, attacks are concentrated internally, within the group's own nation, and tend not to be religiously motivated. During these periods, the international community considers such violence to be the purview of the specific states. But the systemic anomie resulting from a more competitive configuration of power and from hegemonic decline projects violence transnationally, from attacks in the semiperiphery to attacks on the core, on targets that are both within core nations and on core outposts. What used to be called "local problems" come to be viewed as crimes against humanity and civilization. As Russian and U.S. global power have declined, religiously motivated transnational violence from people and groups in semiperiphery nations has increased.

On the theme of context, scholars of fundamentalist movements have noted that fundamentalist strategies and approaches differ by region, religion, and type of nation-state. Although some fundamentalist Muslim groups may use acts of violence or attempted (and at times successful) coups, for instance, U.S. Protestant fundamentalists have largely followed the strategy of working within the system by influencing a political

party and affecting change via the party platform, selected candidates, and elections. Violent acts perpetrated by U.S. Protestant fundamentalists, such as abortion clinic bombings, underlie political agendas but do not characterize their overall strategy of creating political and social change. This strategic difference may be in part due to their structural location in a core nation of the world.

HOLES IN CONCEPTUALIZING AND UNDERSTANDING FUNDAMENTALISM

Measuring Fundamentalism

Quantitative studies of fundamentalism often don't define or measure fundamentalism consistently or completely, so it is difficult to compare findings across studies. For comparative-historical approaches, fundamentalism is most often measured as organizations and movements that are identified as such. There is, of course, some tautological reasoning here: First, one selects fundamentalist groups and movements, and then one studies them to see what they have in common, and the result is fundamentalism.

According to Woodbury and Smith (1998), fundamentalism may be a binary variable, but it cannot be measured simply along the characteristics discussed above. Rather, one must add historical understanding to particular religious movements to know which are fundamentalist, which are not, and why. Woodbury and Smith focus on conservative U.S. Protestant Christianity to argue that there are historical, organizational, and ideological differences between fundamentalists and evangelicals, two groups that are often treated both in sociological literature and media reports as the same group.

Imagine you wanted to develop a survey to see whether you or any of your classmates are fundamentalists. What questions would you use? That is to say, how would you "operationalize" the concept of fundamentalism so that you could actually measure it? To date, quantitative operationalization of fundamentalism lacks richness of measurement, often owing to data limitations. Most often, in order to identify U.S. Christian individuals (usually Protestant) who are fundamentalist, the concept is operationalized as believing that the Bible is literally true, word for word. Other common measures are membership in a denomination determined to be fundamentalist and professing to be "born-again." Although all these measures may be indicators, they are by themselves weak indicators of fundamentalism. We must develop better multiple measures and include them on surveys, or our knowledge of fundamentalism will continue to be incomplete and perhaps even wrong. The measures we need to develop should operationalize our theoretical understanding of fundamentalism.

Self-identification is an alternative measurement strategy. It is used on its own or in conjunction with other indicators. The strategy consists of asking people whether they consider themselves to be fundamentalist. Certainly there can be problems in this measurement method. Do all people who are fundamentalist know this is the term that describes them? And do all people who are not fundamentalist know not to describe themselves that way? And do people who are fundamentalist and know it want to describe themselves with the term, or do they prefer a different one because of the negative connotations of fundamentalism?

In sum, fundamentalism can be and has been measured by denominational or group affiliation, beliefs, practices, and self-identification. Because the concept is so

complex, single measures should be avoided. It's important to note that if fundamentalism is a generalizable concept, then the study of fundamentalism should explore measures that can be used across religions and regions.

Should We Study Fundamentalism or Modern Secularism?

If fundamentalism is rooted in the context of modernity, might modernity and its followers be the topics on which scholars should focus their study? Consider the words of sociologist Steve Bruce (2000, 116–17):

"In the broad sweep of history fundamentalists are normal. There is nothing unusual in people taking religion very seriously. What we now regard as religious 'extremism' was commonplace 200 years ago in the Western world and is still commonplace in most parts of the globe. It is not the dogmatic believer who insists that the sacred texts are divinely inspired and true, who tries to model his life on the ethical requirements of those texts, and who seeks to impose these requirements on the entire society who is unusual. The liberal who supposes that his sacred texts are actually human constructions of differing moral worth, whose religion makes little difference to his life, and who is quite happy to accept that what his God requires of him is not binding on other members of his society: this is the strange and remarkable creature."

Most Western-trained academicians and journalists are carriers of modernism and secularization (Berger 1992). According to their worldview, fundamentalism is odd. But given the broad sweep of history, perhaps knowledge of religion and the state would advance more rapidly if it focused more closely on the "strange and remarkable creature" that walks without a god and on the societies that operate without religious suppositions. As Christian Smith and his colleagues have argued, secularization is not the inevitable result of some invisible hand of modernity. Rather, it is the result of careful, planned, coordinated events and confrontations over the course of decades within multiple sectors of society (Smith 2003). It may be fruitful to study such processes and the actors involved in them.

European Exceptionalism?

So what's up with Europe? It has modernized, just as the United States has. It has secularized, just as the United States has. But throughout the world, Northern and Western Europe stand alone as the only places where modernization and secularization have not given rise to a fundamentalist response. Why did Europe secularize so thoroughly, with so little religious pushback compared to other places?

Scholars who are developing or working within the sociology of religion's "new paradigm" posit that state-sponsored churches in European nations led to the demise of religion when modernization and secularization set in. Supported by the state, religious professionals were not motivated nor forced to find ways to make religion appeal to the populace. Their churches and their salaries were guaranteed. When its actors lacked an entrepreneurial drive, religion became outdated for the masses.

But this does not seem to be a wholly adequate answer. Is it true that every state-sponsored religion dies out in the wake of modernization and secularization? Do only nations that have state-sponsored religions secularize? Do all nations that have state-sponsored religion secularize? Do all nations without state-sponsored religion remain highly religious? Or if pluralism leads to secularization, as many scholars have suggested, why does pluralism seem to have such wildly varying effects on different nations?

Management and sociology professor Wayne Baker (2005) offers an explanation for why levels of modernization do not universally predict the degree of a society's secularization. Addressing the discrepancy between the recent rise of fundamentalism in the United States and its relative absence in Europe, Baker notes that a different type of cultural heritage is at work in the United States compared with the heritage in European countries. The cultural heritage of the United States is based not on common ancestry or language, but on Civil Religion. The cultural core of the United States is ideological and traditional and is therefore not as susceptible to secularization in response to modernization. Traditional values that are considered to be religious do not depend solely on the prominence of religious institutions. Baker notes that the United States has maintained its overall level of adherence to traditional values from 1981 to 2001 and remains extremely traditional as a whole compared with its modernized European counterparts. Baker's insight that traditionalism and secularization are tied to a country's cultural heritage seems to be an important one that can help generate sociological explanations of the emergence of fundamentalist movements and of European exceptionalism.

Is There Such a Thing as Fundamentalism?

Some scholars completely reject not only the term *fundamentalism*, but the entire scholarly enterprise studying fundamentalism. For example, Iannaccone (1997) argues that the reason scholars struggle to find agreement about the content, causes, and consequences of fundamentalism is that the concept, theoretically, leads us down a dead-end path.

Instead, he argues that we should study sectarianism. "Sectarian religion is high-powered religion rooted in separation from and tension with the broader society" (Iannaccone 1997, 114). The tradition of contrasting and studying strict and lenient forms of religion is old, dating back not only to the beginnings of the sociology of religion, but to Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776 [1965]). Studying sectarianism allows researchers to build on much solid theory and empirical work, such as the social benefits of strict religions, the reasons that people join such religions, and the reasons that such religions are attractive to people at the margins of society. Moreover, rather than viewing resurgent conservative religion as rooted in conditions of recent modernity, scholars analyzing sectarianism can view such movements as a pervasive tendency that is found to a greater or lesser degree throughout history. Studying sectarianism avoids the problems of explaining why fundamentalism seems only to have appeared on a global scale since the 1970s, long after modernity had appeared on the scene in some places, and only shortly after it had appeared on the scene elsewhere. Even more importantly, working from a classical understanding of positivist science, the sectarian concept allows us to perform clear tests of hypotheses, aiding theoretical advancement.

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Even if they do not accept such critiques, scholars of fundamentalism still must address these critiques and demonstrate why conceptualizing fundamentalism as something relatively new is advantageous for advancing our knowledge of religion and society.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Volumes of research have been published on fundamentalism in the past 25 years, far more than can be summarized in these few pages. Yet it is clear that substantially more scholarly work remains. In this chapter we have highlighted some of the vital questions that still lack answers. For all the usefulness of the concept, and for all the progress that sociologists have made in studying the worldwide resurgence of religion, there are still essential debates and questions that must be addressed.

Even as scholars continue to focus on fundamentalism, they do so in conjunction with their understanding of modernity, its processes, and its carriers. Understanding both concepts and their interrelations better will push our knowledge forward. Scholars should also take Iannaccone's (1997) challenge—that we study sectarianism rather than fundamentalism—seriously. Perhaps the view that religion experienced a general decline only to resurge since the 1970s is not the most advantageous theoretical viewpoint. Considering that the number of sectarian groups has fluctuated for a very long time, perhaps we need to redefine fundamentalism. When the field has more conceptual and theoretical coherence, it will need some standards for measuring fundamentalism. Too many different and, in our view, incomplete ways of measuring fundamentalism now pass the eyes of reviewers and end up in journals, muddling our understanding of the concept. For example, when we examine the relationship between religion and environmentalism in Chapter 13, we will encounter a number of other ways in which social scientists have measured “religious fundamentalism,” each of which has the weaknesses identified here.

We think it will prove fruitful to conceptualizing, theorizing, and measuring fundamentalism for scholars to undertake more ethnographic work on fundamentalist movements, attempting to understand who joins fundamentalist movements and why, what their goals are, how they view nonfundamentalists, and how they view and interpret life events. At the same time, in keeping with our suggestion of understanding fundamentalism by studying modernism, ethnographic work asking these same questions is essential to understanding modern, secular movements.

It will also prove fruitful for sociologists to undertake more comparative studies of fundamentalism that place the movements in their proper historical context. Such work can help us understand how—if at all—fundamentalism is related to changes in globalization (increasing trade flows, greater economic integration, threat of homogenization, and loss of communal identity) and nations' locations in the world. Ultimately, scholars must seek to understand the role that resurgent religion will have in the future, including its connection to violence. Will secularized nations and peoples be a temporary phenomenon in the long religious history of the world? Will modernity eventually offer all that people seek, and will religions weaken? Will religion and secularism continue battling endlessly? Will religion continue battling religion?

These issues and queries must now be taken up with great care, precise thought, and the best research tools available. As world events suggest, ignoring these issues and questions is a luxury we can no longer afford.

SUGGESTED READING

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