On May 24, 2001, the *Jerusalem Post* printed an article entitled 'THINK AGAIN: God didn’t say “You might want to ...”’. In this article, ‘ultra-Orthodox’ columnist Jonathan Rosenblum castigates a prominent Conservative rabbi for asserting that the exodus from Egypt did not in fact occur. ‘No plagues, no splitting of the sea – all a fairy tale’, as Rosenblum puts it. He suggests that what the Conservative rabbi is actually saying is that ‘It doesn’t really matter that the Torah’s claim to be the word of God to man is false’, because the Torah is nevertheless ‘divinely inspired’ and embodies important ‘spiritual values’. Rosenblum asks why should Jews look to the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) for moral guidance if it consists of ‘some really huge whoppers – the Exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the stories of the alleged Patriarchs’. Rosenblum notes that the president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the principal seminary of Conservative Judaism, which is in fact less conservative than Orthodox Judaism, has dismissed the book of Leviticus as having being superseded by our ‘modern sensibility’. Rosenblum observes that if the Torah is simply the product of human authors, and if Jews can discard those parts of it they regard as incompatible with their ‘modern sensibility’, they can pick and choose those aspects of religious law they want to follow much as shoppers pick and choose in a supermarket. The result is moral chaos. This critique of Conservative Judaism would be qualified by many as ‘fundamentalist’ insofar as it insists on strict conformity to a sacred text believed to be in some sense the word of God.

Some scholars argue that the term *fundamentalism* should be used only to refer to those conservative Protestants who refer to themselves as fundamentalists. To speak of fundamentalism in other contexts, they argue, is to confuse analysis and attack, scholarship and polemic. This argument is made by people on both the theological and political right and left. From the right, scholars argue that religious liberals (those who pick and choose the commandments they will obey) use the term *fundamentalist* to denigrate those who insist on adhering to and upholding the traditional doctrines of a religion. From the left, scholars often argue that Westerners speak of ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ in order to undermine the legitimacy of Islamic movements that seek to overcome Western domination of the Islamic world. From both perspectives, the term ‘fundamentalist’ is seen as illegitimate because it serves to delegitimize.

Conservative Lutheran sociologist Peter Berger suggests that what needs to be explained is not that many people insist on defending their traditional religious beliefs, but that many liberal academics find this strange (Berger 1997). Sociologist Steve Bruce (who may not share Berger’s conservatism) elaborates on this theme as follows:
In the broad sweep of human history, fundamentalists are normal. 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 in 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. (Bruce 2000: 116–17)

Bruce goes on to say that 'Fundamentalism is a rational response of traditionally religious peoples to social, political and economic changes that downgrade and constrain the role of religion in the public world' (Bruce 2000: 117).

Edward Said approaches the subject of fundamentalism from a different perspective to Berger or Bruce. He has argued that the terms terrorism and fundamentalism are both 'derived entirely from the concerns and intellectual factories in metropolitan centers like Washington and London':

They are fearful images that lack discriminate contents or definition, but they signify moral power and approval for whoever uses them, moral defensiveness and criminalization for whomever they designate ... By such means the governability of large numbers of people is assured ...

(Said 1993: 310)

Despite this condemnation of fundamentalism as an artifact of the Western imperial imagination, Said has himself used the term. In discussing Karen Armstrong's Islam: A Short History in a review essay published in 1992, he writes:

Her book's most valuable section is that in which she discusses the varieties of modern fundamentalism without the usual invidious focus on Islam. And rather than seeing it only as a negative phenomenon, she has an admirable gift for understanding fundamentalism from within, as adherence to a faith that is threatened by a strong secular authoritarianism. As an almost doctrinaire secularist myself, I nevertheless found myself swayed by her sympathetic and persuasive argument in this section ...

(Said 1992: 74)

So here we find Said using the very term and concept he has often condemned as an egregious example of Western 'Orientalism'. Yet in this same essay, and on the same page, he reverts to his more usual position regarding 'Islamic fundamentalism' in particular:

above all, look with the deepest suspicion on anyone who wants to tell you the real truth about Islam and terrorism, fundamentalism, militancy, fanaticism, etc ... leave those great non-subjects to the experts, their think tanks, government depart-
ments, and policy intellectuals, who get us into one unsuccessful and wasteful war after the other.

(Said 1992)

So here we have one of the most influential intellectuals of the late twentieth century insisting that fundamentalism, like terrorism, is a ‘non-subject’ conjured up by Western imperialists to discredit Middle Eastern resistance to foreign domination. Yet this same intellectual speaks of ‘varieties of fundamentalism’, thus suggesting that he believes that fundamentalism really does exist outside the intellectual factories of the West. This contradiction illustrates a basic problem: Most scholars are intensely uncomfortable with the concept of fundamentalism when used outside its original Protestant context, but they often find themselves falling back on it for lack of a better alternative – when describing religious movements of which they disapprove.

In addition to the common criticism that the term fundamentalist, when used outside its original Protestant context, denigrates those who adhere to and defend the orthodox tenets of their religion, another common criticism is that the imposition of the originally Christian term fundamentalist on other religious traditions tends to force a wide variety of movements into a Procrustean model that ignores many of their distinctive features. This is in turn related to the argument that the very fact of using an originally Christian term in other religious contexts entails some degree of Christocentric distortion.

Despite such criticisms, some scholars defend the use of the term fundamentalism as a useful tool for comparative purposes. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby argue that the use of the term outside the Protestant context has become so common, in the West at least, that it would be impossible to eradicate this usage. They argue that no alternative term has been found for comparative purposes, and that comparison is essential if we wish to transcend the description of specific cases. Moreover, they argue, ‘all words have to come from somewhere’, therefore the Christian origin of the term fundamentalism is not an insurmountable obstacle so long as the comparative use of the term does not involve forcing all movements called fundamentalist to resemble Protestant fundamentalism (Marty and Appleby 1991a: viii). They insist that they do not want to force all movements into a Procrustean bed. They define fundamentalism as follows:

In these pages, then, fundamentalism has appeared as a tendency, a habit of mind, found within religious communities and movements, which manifests itself as a strategy, or set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group. Feeling this identity to be at risk in the contemporary era, they fortify it by a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs, and practices from a sacred past. These retrieved ‘fundamentals’ are refined, modified, and sanctioned in a spirit of shrewd pragmatism: they are to serve as a bulwark against the encroachment of outsiders who threaten to draw the believers into a syncretistic, areligious, or irreligious cultural milieu . . .

(Marty and Appleby 1991a: 835)

We shall see that this very broad conception of fundamentalism ignores many important distinctions among the movements Marty and Appleby describe as fundamentalist.
Key issues in the study of religions

In this essay, we shall speak of movements having a fundamentalist dimension only if they insist on strict conformity to sacred scripture and a moral code ostensibly based on it. These movements articulate moral outrage provoked by the violation of traditional religious values. This is true of many politicized forms of religious conservatism, notably Catholic conservatism, that do not insist on strict conformity to sacred scripture per se.

Moreover, and this is crucial, some movements that have a fundamentalist dimension also articulate secular grievances. To focus only on their fundamentalist dimension is to ignore some of the principal sources of their political significance. We should not reduce moral outrage provoked by the violation of traditional religious values to a mere epiphenomenon of ethnic, nationalistic or other social grievances, but we should also avoid ignoring such grievances when the available evidence suggests that they are in fact important sources of the appeal of some movements commonly called 'fundamentalist'.

Perhaps the most obvious problem with the Marty-Appleby conception of fundamentalism is their view that it is a reaction to 'modernity', a vague term that is best avoided. In *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World*, Almond et al. argue that 'fundamentalist movements form in reaction to, and in defense against, the processes and consequences of secularization and modernization' (2003: 93). If the rejection of the marginalization of religion is not a movement's 'original impulse and a recurring reference', they argue, it is not in fact a fundamentalist movement (2003: 94). They muddy the definitional waters, however, by declaring:

> In short, the threat to the religious tradition may come from the general processes of modernization and secularization, from other religious groups and/or ethnic groups, from a secular state (imperial or indigenous) seeking to secularize and delimit the domain of the sacred, or from various combinations of these.

(Almond et al.)

This passage blurs the fundamental distinction between a conservative religious movement that rejects innovations that violate its traditional beliefs and a movement in which religion serves primarily as a marker of identity. In the first case, moral outrage provoked by the violation of traditional religious values is of central importance. In the second case, it is not.

**Identity trumps belief: Protestant Unionism in Northern Ireland and Sikh militancy in India**

If we take the case of Northern Ireland, for example, religion serves primarily as a marker of collective identity for both Catholic and Protestant, rather than as a set of beliefs to be defended in the face of secularization. This point is illustrated by the following joke. One night, a distinguished gentleman was walking down a dark alley in Belfast. Suddenly a masked man jumped out in front of him, waved a gun in his face, and asked, 'Are you a Catholic or a Protestant?' The terrified gentleman stammered, 'W-w-w-well, I-I-I am actually an atheist.' 'Well now', responded the gunman, with what appeared to be a twinkle in his eye, 'would you be a Catholic atheist or a Protestant atheist?' Similarly, when rioting Hindus pull men's pants down to see
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if they are circumcised, they are not interested in whether or not circumcised men are believing or practicing Muslims. A circumcised penis marks a man as the killable ‘Other’ regardless of what he actually believes or does. Religion serves as a distinctive marker of identity, and notably of national identity, even in the absence of belief.

There are movements in which religion serves primarily as a marker of ethnic or national identity, but which nonetheless have a clear fundamentalist dimension, in the sense that some of their most prominent adherents insist on strict conformity to sacred scripture and a moral code ostensibly based on it. Protestant Unionism (or ‘Loyalism’) in Northern Ireland is basically an expression of the fears of Protestants who are afraid of losing their identity and their rights in a predominantly Catholic Ireland. Many Unionists are in fact quite secular and only about a quarter, or at most a third, are fundamentalists (Bruce 1998: 68). Yet the fundamentalist Reverend Ian Paisley’s Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) won more votes than any other party in Northern Ireland’s legislative elections of November 26, 2003. Since 1979, Paisley has also consistently won more votes than any other candidate in Northern Ireland’s elections to the parliament of the European Union – despite the fact that Paisley sees the European Union as a Catholic plot to undermine Protestantism (Bruce 1998: 63-4, 67). It is clear that many non-fundamentalist Protestants in Northern Ireland regularly vote for Paisley. Steve Bruce has argued that this is because of the basic role conservative evangelicalism has played in shaping Ulster Protestant identity (1998: 73). It may also reflect Paisley’s ability to articulate Protestant concerns in an earthy, populist language everyone can understand. For present purposes, the key point is that Protestantism Unionism is primarily about identity rather than about conformity to scripture even though its most famous leader is a fundamentalist.

The case of Protestant Unionism is strikingly similar to Sikh militancy in India insofar as its fundamentalist dimension is subordinate to its nationalist dimension. The militant Sikh movement first attracted attention in 1978, when the fiery preacher Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale led a march to break up a gathering of the Sant Nirankari sect considered heretical by orthodox Sikhs (Oberoi 1993: 273). Bhindranwale’s movement definitely had a fundamentalist dimension to it insofar as it stressed the need for conformity to a sacred text. But Sikh militancy was primarily an ethnic and nationalist movement, with religion serving as the principal marker of Sikh identity. That is, the Sikh militants of the late twentieth century fought primarily for an independent Sikh state in the Indian province of Punjab. While Bhindranwale and his followers did condemn Sikhs who violated the traditional Sikh moral code, the primary enemy of all the Sikh militants, some of whom were more religious than others, was the state of India rather than secularism per se. The militants condemned the government of India not for being secular, but for being biased in favor of Hindus (Mahmood 1996).

We shall now consider the principal modern movements often called ‘fundamentalist’. We shall focus on the following questions: To what extent are these movements reactions to secular ‘modernity’? To what extent do these movements articulate social and nationalistic grievances as well as moral outrage provoked by the violation of traditional religious values? Do these movements have a messianic and apocalyptic dimension? Can these movements be considered totalitarian insofar as they seek to force all aspects of society to conform to religious law or do they...
withdraw from society to maintain their way of life in secluded enclaves? And are these movements violent?

**Christian fundamentalism in the United States**

Fundamentalism the thing existed long before the word did. One could speak of the Maccabean revolt of the second century BCE as having a fundamentalist impulse insofar as it insisted on strict conformity to the Torah and Jewish religious law (Munson 2003b). Similarly, Calvin’s sixteenth-century Genevan polity and seventeenth-century Puritanism could be called fundamentalist insofar as they insisted on strict conformity to the Bible and a moral code ostensibly based on it. But the term *Fundamentalist* (traditionally written with an upper-case F) was only coined in 1920 by Curtis Lee Laws, the conservative editor of the Baptist newspaper *The Watchman-Examiner*. Laws created the word to refer to militantly conservative evangelical Protestants ready ‘to do battle royal for the fundamentals’ of Christianity (Beale 1986: 195). Fundamentalists do not simply believe; they fight to defend their beliefs against those who seek to dilute them.

Modern Christian fundamentalism emerged as a revolt against the tendency to rationalize and demythologize Protestant Christianity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In response to Protestant liberalism that watered down the basic tenets of Christianity, conservative evangelicals published a series of pamphlets entitled *The Fundamentals* from 1910 to 1915. The central theme of *The Fundamentals* is that the Bible is the inerrant word of God. That it is to say that it is without error. Associated with this idea is the belief that believers should live their lives according to a strict Biblically based moral code.

Evangelical Christians believe that the Bible is the word of God, that one can only be saved from eternal damnation by accepting Jesus Christ as one’s savior, and that the Christian is obliged to ‘evangelize’, that is, to spread the ‘good news’ of Christ’s death and resurrection for the sake of humanity. The acceptance of Jesus as one’s savior is linked to the idea of being ‘born again’ through an experience of the Holy Spirit. George Marsden has described Christian fundamentalists as evangelicals who are ‘angry about something’ (Marsden 1991: 1).

In the nineteenth century, Christian evangelicals of a fundamentalist orientation (again, the thing preceded the word) had been politically active on both sides of the slavery issue, in anti-Catholic nativism, in the fight to maintain Sunday as a day of rest, and in the temperance movement. This political activism continued in the early twentieth century, with evolution becoming a major issue in the 1920s. Christian fundamentalism also often had a strongly nationalistic dimension. During the First World War, the evangelist Billy Sunday argued that ‘Christianity and Patriotism are synonymous terms’ (Marsden 1991: 51).

Christian fundamentalists have, however, been torn by an inherent tension regarding political activism. Most Christian fundamentalists have been ‘premillennialists’. That is, they believe that Jesus Christ will return before the millennium, a thousand-year period of perfect peace, and that it is pointless to try to reform the world because it is doomed until Jesus returns. This attitude is expressed in the common expression ‘Why polish the brass on a sinking ship?’ Postmillennialist fundamentalists argue that spiritual and moral reform will lead to the millennium, after
which Christ will return. Thus whereas premillennialism logically implies political passivity, postmillennialism implies political activism. But belief and practice do not always coincide. Many premillennialist fundamentalists have embraced political activism while nonetheless anticipating the imminent return of Jesus.

Classical premillennialist eschatology meshed well with another distinctive feature of Christian fundamentalism, the doctrine of separatism. True Christians should separate themselves from the broader society in which they are immersed rather than try to reform it. Yet Christian fundamentalists have nonetheless periodically entered the political arena. The conventional wisdom is that after the Scopes trial of 1925, most Christian fundamentalists avoided the political arena until the late 1970s. This is to some extent true, but not entirely so. Some Christian fundamentalists ran for public office in the 1930s and 1940s on platforms that combined anti-Semitism, anticommunism, populism, and Christian revivalism (see Ribuffo 1983). From the 1950s through the 1970s, fundamentalist preachers like Billy James Hargis combined similar themes, minus the explicit anti-Semitism, with opposition to racial integration.

Although Christian fundamentalist ministers were active in opposing the civil rights movement and communism in the 1960s, they remained politically marginal. No president would have invited a man like Billy James Hargis to the White House. In 1979, however, the Reverend Jerry Falwell formed the Moral Majority in collaboration with important mainstream conservatives in the Republican party to defend religious Christian values. He was often invited to the White House by Ronald Reagan. Falwell, like most fundamentalists and some other Americans, felt that the feminist movement, the prohibition of school-sponsored prayer in public schools, the teaching of sex education, the gay rights movement, and the legalization of abortion all represented a process of moral decay that had to be halted. While most liberal intellectuals would see opposition to these developments as a rejection of secular 'modernity', most religious conservatives would see them as a fight to save their nation's moral integrity.

The federal government's attempt to deny the tax-exempt status of many Christian schools founded to circumvent the federally mandated racial integration of public schools was also one of the reasons for the formation of the Moral Majority, but in the 1980s many southern Christian fundamentalists disavowed their earlier opposition to civil rights. The Christian Right nevertheless remained an overwhelmingly white movement that was viewed with suspicion by most African Americans.

Marty and Appleby, among others, have argued that 'fundamentalism contains within it a totalitarian impulse' because fundamentalists seek to structure all aspects of state and society on the basis of religious law. (Marty and Appleby 1991b: 824). This was not true of most activists in the Christian Right of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Most of the Christian fundamentalists (and conservative Catholics and Mormons) who were active in this movement focused on moral issues such as abortion, prayer in schools, homosexuality, and the teaching of 'creationism', rather than on restructuring all aspects of society on the basis of scripture. They saw themselves as defending their values in the face of the onslaught of liberal and secular values in American society rather than as trying to impose their values on others.

Some late-twentieth-century Christian fundamentalists in the United States did advocate the creation of a state and society based on strict conformity to Biblical law. They were known as Christian Reconstructionists (Martin 1996: 353–5). But
they constituted a small minority of the activists in the Christian Right, and they have been criticized by more moderate evangelical Christians such as Ralph Reed. Some critics of the Christian Right argue that the apparent moderation of evangelicals such as Ralph Reed (who would reject the label fundamentalist) was just a tactical maneuver and if they were ever able to establish a totalitarian state based on Biblical law, they would do so. This is a difficult claim to test. All we can say with certainty is that there was nothing explicitly totalitarian about the goals of the mainstream Christian Right in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

**Politicized Jewish Orthodoxy in Israel**

Three politicized forms of Orthodox Judaism in Israel (and elsewhere) have often been called 'fundamentalist': militant religious Zionism, Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodoxy, and the Shas party, which represents Jews of Middle Eastern origin. These groups are called 'fundamentalist' by their critics, not their supporters (Heilman and Friedman 1991; Hirschberg 1999; Sprinzak 1999).

Since the fall of Jerusalem's second temple in CE 70, most Jews have lived in the diaspora, that is, dispersed far from the Land of Israel promised by God to the Jewish people according to the Hebrew Bible. During their prolonged 'exile' (galut) from the Land of Israel, Jews all over the world prayed daily for the coming of the Messiah who would bring the Jews back to the Land of Israel and deliver them from their gentile oppressors. Zionism secularized this traditional messianic theme. Instead of waiting for God and the Messiah to bring the Jews back to the Land of Israel, Zionists argued that Jews should take it upon themselves to return to this land.

Most Orthodox rabbis opposed Zionism on the grounds that it involved humans doing what only God and the Messiah could do. In traditional Judaism, the return to the Land of Israel was inseparable from the messianic redemption of the people of Israel. For humans to return to this land and create a state there was to defy God's will and postpone the real redemption and the real ingathering of the exiles. Another reason for Orthodox hostility to Zionism was that most of the early Zionist leaders were clearly not interested in a state based on strict conformity to Jewish religious law.

In speaking of Orthodox Judaism, we should distinguish between the 'modern Orthodox' and the 'ultra-Orthodox'. (The ultra-Orthodox themselves generally object to the latter term.) The modern Orthodox insist on strict conformity to Jewish law, but they have nonetheless devised ways to participate in modern society in both the diaspora and Israel. The ultra-Orthodox are more traditional and insist on strict separation from gentile society as well as separation from Jews who do not follow Jewish law as strictly as they do. Hostility toward Zionism prevailed among both modern Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox rabbis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, though it virtually disappeared among the former when the Holocaust appeared to confirm the Zionist argument that Jews could only be safe in their own state.

Some modern Orthodox rabbis sought to legitimate Orthodox participation in the Zionist movement by severing it from the idea of the Messiah. Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines (1839–1915), who founded the Mizrahi religious Zionist movement in 1902, agreed with the ultra-Orthodox that Jews should not try to 'force the End' on their own initiative. He embraced the traditional belief that Jews should passively await the coming of the Messiah, but, unlike the ultra-Orthodox, he argued that the Zionist set-
tcrement of the Land of Israel had nothing to do with the future messianic redemption of the Jews and thus did not constitute a heretical defiance of God’s will. This form of religious Zionism was soon displaced by a radically different view, namely that Zionism was itself part of the gradual messianic redemption of the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. The secular Zionists were doing the work of God and the Messiah but they did not yet know it. This argument was made by Rabbi Avraham Kook (1865–1935), and it has remained a basic theme in religious Zionism (Ravitzky 1996).

Religious Zionists are usually referred to as the ‘national religious’ (datim le’umim) in Hebrew. This term captures the fusion of modern Orthodoxy and nationalism that has always characterized religious Zionism. Unlike the ultra-Orthodox, the religious Zionists have always been willing to cooperate with the far more numerous secular Zionists who were primarily responsible for creating the modern state of Israel. Traditionally, the religious Zionist National Religious Party and its predecessors concerned themselves with domestic religious issues, such as the observance of Shabbat and who is a Jew, and left foreign affairs to the Labor party. They were certainly not a ‘totalitarian’ party.

Many religious Zionists saw the Six-Day War of 1967 as a miracle and as a major step forward on the way toward the messianic redemption of the Jewish people. East Jerusalem, the Temple Mount, Judea, the very heart of ancient Israel, were now once again in Jewish hands. To return any of this land to the Arabs would be to defy God. The religious Zionists who felt this way began to settle in the territories occupied, or as they saw it, liberated, in the Six-Day War. It should be stressed that there is also a religious Zionist peace movement, known as Meimad, which advocates giving up much of the territory won in 1967 in return for peace.

For the militant religious Zionists in the settler movement, settling the land won in 1967 and preventing the government from withdrawing from it took priority over anything else. These militant religious Zionists did advocate the creation of a state based on strict conformity to what they consider the laws of God and they did conform strictly to these laws in their everyday lives. But their political activities focused primarily on settling and retaining the land won in 1967 rather than on creating a state and society based on strict conformity to religious law. Thus, while militant religious Zionism has a ‘fundamentalist’ dimension, it is also important to remember its nationalist dimension and its roots in the Revisionist Zionist idea that force must be used to fight the inherently anti-Semitic gentile. Indeed, the religious Zionists tap some basic themes in mainstream Zionism, notably the idea that the goal of Zionism is to create a new Jew who will never submit to oppression. For militant religious Zionists, this involves a return to the Judaism of the Maccabees who fought Hellenism in the second century BCE much as religious Zionists fight decadent secularism today (Munson 2003b).

The ultra-Orthodox are often referred to in Hebrew as Haredim, or ‘those who tremble’ in the presence of God because they are ‘God-fearing’. Unlike the modern Orthodox, who are virtually all religious Zionists, the ultra-Orthodox continue to reject Zionism, in principle at least, as a blasphemous attempt to bring about the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel by human means when God intended this to be effected by the Messiah. In practice, this rejection of Zionism results in a variety of different political positions ranging from that of the politically insignificant Neturei Karta to Haredi political parties that sometimes determine which of
Israel's major parties gets to govern. (Israel's major parties often have to make concessions to small religious parties to win the support of a majority of the members of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, and thereby form a government.)

The Ashkenazi Haredim, that is, the ultra-Orthodox of eastern European origin, differ from the ultra-Orthodox of Middle Eastern origin, who will be discussed below. Unlike the religious Zionists, whose political activities since 1967 have focused primarily on settling and preventing withdrawal from the territories occupied in the Six-Day War, the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) political parties have continued to concentrate primarily on obtaining funding for their community and on enforcing strict conformity to their interpretation of Jewish religious law with respect to issues like observance of the Sabbath, conversion, Kosher dietary laws, and the desecration of the dead by archaeologists. Since the Six-Day War, however, most Ashkenazi Haredim have tended to support the hard-line position of the militant religious Zionists regarding 'land-for-peace' despite their continued theoretical opposition to Zionism and the state it produced. This is a striking example of how changing social and political contexts can affect religious beliefs.

The Ashkenazi Haredim traditionally withdrew from surrounding gentile society in the diaspora and continue to separate themselves from mainstream Israeli society. Yet in the last few decades of the twentieth century, they became increasingly aggressive in trying to incorporate their moral code into Israeli law. Like Christian fundamentalists in the United States, they have been torn between the desire to withdraw from society and the desire to reform it. Because of their high birth rate, their numbers have grown, and this has meant greater electoral power. This has been especially evident in Jerusalem, which elected its first Haredi mayor in 2003.

The third major form of Jewish militant Orthodoxy in Israel often called fundamentalist is represented by the Shas party, Shas being an acronym for 'Sephardim Guardians of the Torah' in Hebrew. Although the term Sephardim originally referred to Jews of Spanish origin, it has come to be used to refer to Jews of Middle Eastern origin. The Sephardim are, by and large, less well educated and less well paid than the Ashkenazim, and many of them feel that Israelis of European origin discriminate against them. In addition to celebrating Sephardic identity and advocating strict conformity to God's laws, Shas provides schools and other social services for poor Sephardim. Shas is similar to some Islamic movements in this respect (Hirschberg 1999).

One can speak of a fundamentalist dimension to Shas insofar as it consistently supports legislation to enforce strict conformity to Jewish religious law. But much of its popular support is rooted in the frustration, resentment, and even rage of those Jews of Middle Eastern origin who feel they have been discriminated against by the Ashkenazi elite of European origin. Most Sephardim who vote for Shas do not themselves conform to the strict moral code advocated by the party. Like the strongly nationalistic religious Zionist settlers, Shas demonstrates that movements often called fundamentalist often owe their political success to secular grievances as well as strictly religious ones.

Many secular Israelis do perceive the Ashkenazi and Sephardi ultra-Orthodox and the militant religious Zionists as seeking to create a totalitarian state in which aspects of Israeli life would be structured according to Jewish religious law. And many Haredim and militant religious Zionists would in fact favor such a state. But as a
practical matter, such a state is out of the question until the Orthodox outnumber the secular. In the mean time, the parties representing these movements generally operate within the framework of Israel's parliamentary democracy. (They generally receive less than 25 percent of the total vote in national elections.) It is true, however, that militant religious Zionists have sometimes resorted to violence.

**Islamic militancy in the Middle East**

The term Islamic fundamentalism tends to conjure up images of fanaticism and terrorism. This is one reason most scholars of Islam prefer the more anodyne term Islamist. Islamist movements, like their Christian and Jewish counterparts, come in various forms. There are moderate Islamist movements that seek to create Islamic states and societies by nonviolent means and there are others, like al-Qa'ida (al Qaeda), that do use violence to achieve their goals. Militant Islamic movements clearly resort to violence far more often than do the Christian and Jewish movements commonly called fundamentalist. It is true that Christian fundamentalists were actively involved in the terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan and similar groups. It is also true that Christian fundamentalists have been involved in attacking abortion clinics and killing doctors who perform abortions (Juergensmeyer 2000). Similarly, it is true that militant religious Zionists have engaged in some violence, notably Baruch Goldstein's massacre of 29 Palestinians praying in Hebron and Yigal Amir's assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. But Christian and Jewish fundamentalists have not engaged in the same scale of violence as militant Islamic groups like Hizb Allah (Hezbollah), Hamas, and al-Qa'ida.

This does not mean that Islam is inherently more violent than Christianity. One can find many verses extolling the slaughter of the enemy in the name of God in the sacred scriptures of Judaism and Christianity (see Deuteronomy 7: 1–2, 7: 16 and 20: 10–18). The history of Christianity is full of holy wars and massacres of Jews condemned as 'Christ-killers'. If violence is more commonly used by militant Islamic movements than by militantly conservative Christian and Jewish movements, this is because of the prevailing social and political situation in the Islamic world, and not because of some immutable feature of Islam.

Whereas messianic and apocalyptic themes are of considerable importance for the conservative Protestants and Jews often called fundamentalists, this is much less true of 'Muslim fundamentalists'. Islam certainly has a messianic dimension, which is especially conspicuous in Shi'ite Islam. But while some militant Islamic revivalists do invoke messianic and apocalyptic themes, such notions are generally of little or no political significance (Gorenberg 2000; Almond et al. 2003: 64–69).

Another feature that distinguishes Islamism from conservative Christian and Jewish militancy is its anti-imperial dimension. When the European empires subjugated the Islamic world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Muslims perceived their wars against European imperialism as forms of jihad, or holy war. The distinction between Muslim and infidel became intertwined with the distinctions between the colonized and the colonizer and the oppressor and the oppressor. Thus traditional hostility toward the unbeliever as an unbeliever was now infused with new meaning. This had unfortunate consequences for religious minorities in the Islamic world (much as Irish Protestants suffered from sharing the religion of England).
This anti-imperial dimension persisted in the Islamist movements of the late twentieth century. On February 19, 1978, on the fortieth day of mourning for the 'martyrs' who had died in the first protests that eventually mushroomed into Iran's Islamic revolution, the revolution's leader the Ayatollah Khomeini declared, 'As for America, a signatory to the Declaration of Human Rights, it imposed this shah upon us, a worthy successor to his father. During the period he has ruled, this creature has transformed Iran into an official colony of America' (Khomeini 1981: 215). When Khomeini landed at the Tehran airport on February 1, 1979, after fourteen and a half years of exile, he declared: 'Our triumph will come when all forms of foreign control have been brought to an end and all roots of the monarchy have been plucked out of the soil of our land' (1981: 252). On September 12, 1980, Khomeini told the Iranian pilgrims to Mecca, 'For more than fifty years, the Pahlavi puppet [the shah] has dragged our country down, filling the pockets of foreigners – particularly Britain and America – with the abundant wealth of our land . . .' (1981: 303).

All these fiery denunciations of the Western domination of 'our land' demonstrate that there was a nationalist dimension to Khomeini's militancy. We see this also in many of the slogans chanted during the marches that eventually coalesced into Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1978-9: 'We will destroy Yankee power in Iran! Death to the American dog! Shah held on a leash by the Americans! Hang this American king!' (Munson 1988: 63, 123). Iran's Islamic revolution was, among other things, a nationalist revolution against American domination.

For Khomeini, the goal of creating a strictly Islamic state and society based exclusively on Islamic law was inextricably intertwined with the goal of overcoming foreign domination. In 1972, he declared:

If the Muslim states and peoples had relied on Islam and its inherent capabilities and powers instead of depending on the East (the Soviet Union) and the West, and if they had placed the enlightened and liberating precepts of the Quran before their eyes and put them into practice, then they would not today be captive slaves of the Zionist aggressors, terrified victims of the American Phantoms, and toys in the hands of the accommodating policies of the satanic Soviet Union. It is the disregard of the noble Quran by the Islamic countries that has brought the Islamic community to this difficult situation full of misfortunes and reversals and placed its fate in the hands of the imperialism of the left and the right.

(Khomeini 1977: 156-7; Khomeini 1981: 210)

Passages like this are commonplace in the Islamist literature, though we do find some variation in this respect from country to country and group to group. In many cases, the resentment of foreign domination articulated in such passages is expressed in terms of preposterous theories that attempt to blame 'crusader' and Jewish plots for all the problems of the Islamic world. As nonsensical as such conspiracy explanations may be, the nationalistic and anti-imperial resentment that spawns them is real. And it is a major source of the appeal of Islamism.

For Islamists like Khomeini, the idea of a 'return to Islam' is linked to the goal of overcoming foreign domination as follows: The believers are suffering because they have deviated from the laws of God. To end their suffering, they have to conform to
God’s laws. God has allowed the infidels to dominate the believers because they have deviated from His laws. Once they conform, He will grant them victory. Such reasoning is often meshed with more subtle themes, notably that of cultural authenticity. The return to Islam becomes a means of regaining one’s true cultural identity – as opposed to mimicry of the dominant West. Thus, Khomeini’s fundamentalism has an anti-imperial dimension lacking in Christian fundamentalism in the United States.

The anti-imperial dimension of Islamic militancy can also be seen in the rhetoric of Osama bin Laden. Given the common assertion, in the United States at any rate, that Bin Laden ‘hates us because of our freedoms’, it is important to note that he became politically active as a result of his resentment of Western domination. From 1979 to 1989, he actively supported armed resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. He inevitably saw this struggle as a jihad. He felt it was his duty to help the oppressed believers of Afghanistan to fight the Russian infidels who were oppressing them. Once again, the distinction between believer and infidel was fused with the dichotomies of oppressed and oppressor and colonized and colonizer.

Resentment of the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia and what bin Laden viewed as the subjugation of Saudi Arabia pervaded his early statements (see Munson 2004). Indeed, bin Laden has condemned the Saudi regime as heretical because of its subordination to the United States. This is significant. Saudi Arabia is viewed by most outsiders, including many Muslims, as a thoroughly fundamentalist state in which all aspects of society are governed by Islamic law. Yet bin Laden condemns the Saudi government for serving the interests of American imperialism!

As he became more famous, bin Laden downplayed the specifically Saudi grievances that dominated his early statements and focused more on the Palestinians and the deaths of Iraqi children because of sanctions. Thus in his videotaped message of October 7, 2001, after the attacks of September 11, he declared:

What America is tasting now is nothing compared to what we have been tasting for decades. For over eighty years our umma [the Islamic world] has been tasting this humiliation and this degradation. Its sons are killed, its blood is shed, its holy places are violated, and it is ruled by other than that which God has revealed. Yet no one hears. No one responds . . .

A million innocent children are being killed as I speak. They are being killed in Iraq yet they have done nothing wrong. Yet we hear no condemnation, no fatwa from the reigning sultans. And these days, Israeli tanks wreak havoc in Palestine, in Jenin, Ramallah, Rafah, Beit Jalal and elsewhere in the land of Islam, and we do not hear anyone raising his voice or moving.

(bin Laden 2001)

Bin Laden’s statements invariably focus on what he sees as oppression of Muslims by the United States and Israel, rather than on moral issues like the status of women or homosexuality. He would of course take very conservative, if not reactionary, positions on such issues, but he rarely mentions them in his public statements. His emphasis on the suffering of the Palestinians and Iraqis has made him a hero even in the eyes of many Muslims who might be unsympathetic to his goal of a totalitarian Islamic state. Gilles Kepel found that even Arab girls in tight jeans saw bin Laden as an anti-imperialist hero. A young Iraqi woman and her Palestinian friends told Kepel
in the fall of 2001, 'He stood up to defend us. He is the only one' (Kepel 2002: 65–6). Bin Laden's heroic stature in the eyes of many Muslims is illustrated by the following joke often told after September 11, 2001. A woman is walking toward the men's room in a restaurant. Several employees of the restaurant try to stop her. She then asks, 'Is Bin Laden in this restroom?' They say no, and she responds, 'Then I can go in because there is only one man left in the Arab and Muslim world: him' (Kepel 2002: 41). This joke reflects the sense of impotence and the rage that pervade much of the Islamic world. Many Muslims feel that the United States and Israel can do whatever they wish to Muslims, and their governments are incapable of fighting back. In this context, bin Laden is widely seen as a heroic Osama Maccabeus coming down from his mountain cave to fight the infidel oppressors to whom the decadent rulers of the Islamic world bow and scrape (Munson 2003b).

**Hindu nationalism**

At first glance, and even second and third, the notion of 'Hindu fundamentalism' seems preposterous. Hinduism does not have a specific sacred text to which conformity can be demanded. Another important objection to the characterization of Hindu groups such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as 'Hindu fundamentalists' is that conformity to a religious code of conduct is not of particular importance to them. They do speak of establishing a truly Hindu state and society, but for these people, Hinduism is above all a symbol of national identity rather than a set of rules to be obeyed (Raychaudhuri 1995).

The primarily nationalistic orientation of the Bharatiya Janata Party is reflected in its name, which means 'the Party of the Indian People'. Similarly, the name of a related group, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) means 'the Association of National Volunteers'. In the Hindu fundamentalist literature, the emphasis is always on the threat posed by Muslims and, more recently, converts to Christianity. The Hindu nationalist obsession with Muslims is reflected in the slogan 'For Muslims, there are only two places, Pakistan or the grave' (Musulman ke do-hi shtan, pakistan aur kabristan (Halliday 1995: 47).

Hindu nationalists do not stress strict conformity to sacred scripture or to a moral code based on it. It is true that members of the militant Hindu nationalist party Shiv Sena have attacked billboards for a film about a lesbian relationship between two Hindu women. They have also vandalized stores selling Valentine's Day greeting cards (Sengupta 2002). But by and large, puritanical insistence on conformity to a strict moral code has not been a distinctive feature of Hindu nationalism.

The activism of the people Marty and Appleby call 'Hindu fundamentalists' was triggered by the conversion to Islam of thousands of untouchables in southern India in the early 1980s. Coupled with the emergence of militant Sikh separatism, the resurgence of Muslim separatism in Kashmir, and the increasingly vocal demands of untouchables and lower-caste Hindus, some high-caste Hindus began to feel that their status in Indian society, and indeed the very survival of Hindu India, was at risk. This sense of vulnerability rather than a sense that divine law was being violated led to the increased political significance of the BJP and related groups in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In short, the basic impulse of groups like the RSS and the BJP is unquestionably nationalistic rather than 'fundamentalist'. 
Given the close relationship between religious and national identity in much of the world, it is not surprising that we do find a nationalist dimension in some of the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim movements often called 'fundamentalist'. But the Hindu case differs radically from Christian fundamentalism, for example. Christian fundamentalists do tend to see the United States as God's chosen land, a 'city on a hill', and we have seen that in the early twentieth century Billy Sunday declared that 'Christianity and Patriotism are synonymous terms'.

However, late-twentieth-century Christian fundamentalism in the United States was fueled primarily by the moral outrage provoked by abortion, the banning of school prayer, feminism, gay rights, the teaching of evolution, and similar issues. Such moral issues have been largely absent from the rhetoric of Hindu nationalism.

Among the most salient issues associated with Hindu nationalism is that of the destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya and the rebuilding of the Hindu temple said to have existed on this site before its destruction by the Muslim Mughal dynasty. While there was undoubtedly some real religious fervor associated with the belief that Ayodhya was the birthplace of Ram (avatar of Vishnu and hero of the Ramayana), the impact of the conflict at Ayodhya was above all a reflection of the Hindu nationalists' emphasis on the essentially Hindu character of India and their view of Muslims as inherently alien enemies of Hindu India. The destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 led to widespread rioting in which Hindus killed several thousand Muslims.

Rather than insist on strict doctrinal purity, Hindu nationalists try to encourage Sikhs and Jains to think of themselves as Hindus despite the distinctiveness of many of their beliefs. Some Hindu militants have admittedly tried to systematize Hinduism in the manner of the Western monotheisms. One group has proposed, for example, a uniform code of conduct for all Hindus, with the Bhagavad Gita serving as the sacred text of all Hindus. But the fact remains that the defense of the Hindu community, seen as synonymous with the Indian nation, has been the main theme of Hindu militancy rather than the goal of creating a Hindu state and society based on strict conformity to Hindu religious law. Referring to Hindu nationalism as 'fundamentalism' is thus misleading. (There is no messianic or apocalyptic dimension to Hindu nationalism.)

**Conclusion**

The use of 'fundamentalism' as an analytical category for comparative purposes remains controversial. In fact, one good reason to avoid the term is to avoid having to waste time defending it. That said, we can discern a fundamentalist impulse in the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh movements commonly called fundamentalist insofar as they insist on strict conformity to holy writ and to a moral code ostensibly based on it. (The actual links between moral codes and sacred scriptures are sometimes more tenuous than religious conservatives recognize.) Such an impulse is lacking in Hindu nationalism and it is not of equal significance in all Christian, Jewish, and Muslim movements.

We have seen that militant religious Zionism has a very strong nationalist dimension, with the Maccabees seen as models of the Jew who refuses to submit to the gentile. It is very hard to draw the line between the religious and national dimensions
of religious Zionist militancy. This makes it possible for secular Zionists firmly com-
mitt ed to the retention of the territories Israel won in 1967 to cooperate with mili-
tant religious Zionist settlers despite their lack of interest in a Jewish state based on
strict conformity to religious law. Militant religious Zionists would agree with most
religious conservatives on issues like homosexuality and abortion, but their political
activities have focused primarily on settling and retaining the land Israel won in 1967
rather than on moral issues involving the regulation of personal conduct.

There is also a nationalist and anti-imperial dimension to most Islamic militancy.
Hamas is a fundamentalist movement in the sense that it advocates a state based on
strict conformity to Islamic law and the followers of Hamas are expected to follow
a strictly Islamic code of conduct. At the same time, however, Hamas is clearly a
Palestinian nationalist movement that echoes most of the traditional demands of the
Palestinian Liberation Organization before it accepted the idea of the partition of
pre-1948 Palestine into a Jewish state on 78 percent of the land and a Palestinian
state on the remaining 22 percent (Munson 2003a). To speak of Hamas only in
terms of its fundamentalist dimension while ignoring its nationalist dimension would
be to distort the nature of the movement. There is also a social dimension to Hamas.
Like Shas in Israel, and like Hizb Allah in Lebanon, Hamas provides an extensive
network of social services that serves to attract supporters (Roy 2003).

The case of Shas illustrates the fusion of politicized religious conservatism with
demands on behalf of an ethnic group that believes it has been discriminated against.
To speak of Shas only as a fundamentalist movement without reference to the sense
of ethnic grievance that fuels it would be, once again, to ignore the social and polit­
ical context that produced it. Just as religion often serves as a badge of national
identity, so too does it often serve as a badge of ethnic identity within nations.

To speak of all groups that have a fundamentalist dimension simply as 'revolts
against modernity' is inadequate insofar as it tends to downplay or ignore the nation­
alist and social grievances that often fuel such movements. This is not to suggest
that religious outrage provoked by the violation of traditional religious values cannot
induce people to undertake political action. If someone believes that abortion is
murder, then it is perfectly natural that such a person would engage in political
action to prevent abortion. And it is a mistake to attempt to ignore what people
say when they explain their political acts in terms of their religious beliefs and assert
that they really do what they do because of some sort of alleged disorientation caused
by 'rapid modernization'. But while we should avoid reducing all apparently religious
motivation to underlying secular causes, we should also recognize that moral outrage
provoked by the violation of traditional religious values is sometimes meshed with
outrage provoked by nationalistic and social grievances. (This too may be a form of
moral outrage.)

Comparing the various politicized forms of religious conservatism and religiously
tinged nationalism is useful. But this must be done with careful attention to the
distinctive features of the movements in question and the specific historical contexts
that have shaped them. The neglect of such features and contexts can transform
comparison into caricature.
Bibliography


RELIGION

TO THE STUDY OF

THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION