

Chapter 1

The Problematic

DELIMITATION AND DEFINITION—WHAT IS FUNDAMENTALISM?

"Fundamentalism has become an evocative image *in* our time," observes Lionel Caplan, of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, in his *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism*.¹ "There can be few terms which have, of late, obtruded on popular consciousness in the West as persistently."

Fundamentalism "is not one revolt but a series of revolts by those who uphold deep-seated religious values"—in this way Bruce B. Lawrence characterizes "the new religious Right" in a variety of religions.² Pointing to the notoriety that fundamentalism has received in the media, he calls it "a blue-chip stock" for journalists and notes that its advocates are "marketable symbols."³

Fundamentalist symbols and myth, more than the arguments used in the defense or refutation of the position they represent, deserve much greater attention than they have received. Analysis is not easy here, given the fact that there are a number of fundamentalisms and not just one. The outlook seldom

has taken the form of a single unified movement in any major religion; yet there are repeated symbolic patterns and themes that continue to reappear in fundamentalist ideology. For example, fundamentalists typically seek to return to an alleged golden age when their own particular type of piety and belief was dominant. The roots of this longing lie deep in both the history of religion and the individual religious experience. Fundamentalists support their position by appealing to the "timeless and unchanging truths of Scripture," seldom taking into account the wide variety of expression in humankind's religious past. At issue is not only tolerance and pluralism, but the historical character of religious insight. Characteristically for most fundamentalists, the idea that their own pattern of interpretation is not unique, and the absolute truth, is "unthinkable."

A European critic protests against the judgment that "no one who does not share fundamentalist conviction can be a true Christian."⁴ As he sees it, fundamentalism was first a reaction against the process of modernization in religion and the Enlightenment—not just contemporary "secular humanism" or modernism. This is a premise that will be discussed in greater detail in examining fundamentalism in particular religions.

Christian fundamentalism is identified in the European study as a phenomenon directed

1. against every theological, cultural, and political liberalism;
2. against the historical and critical view of Christian faith documents (Scriptures, etc.; against the infallibility of the pope, the infallibility of the Bible is affirmed);
3. against the theory of evolution as compared with a literal understanding of the biblical creation stories; and
4. against every syncretism as seen in all interreligious dialogue, in ecumenics, and (secularly) in the League of Nations and the United Nations.⁵

It is easy enough for opponents to dismiss "the fundamentalist phenomenon" as a kind of passing fanaticism—but this does not inhibit "true believers" from making converts. More than ever before, the fundamentalist cause seems to be growing as "defenders of God" seek to impose their religious views on the community at large. Fundamentalism has been gaining popular appeal both within Christianity and in other world faiths as well during the last quarter of the twentieth century. As it is now a worldwide phenomenon, its ideological as well as its sociological bases also need to be appraised. An alternative strategy to the critics' dismissal of fundamentalism as short-lived or so vague as to defy any analytic definition is to relate its symbols and doctrines to the much older

and more encompassing history of religions. This, of course, requires a cross-cultural view. Lawrence writes: "Comparison alone reveals what is common, and also what is unique, in each fundamentalist cadre."⁶

Fundamentalism stands at the far right of a spectrum of ideologies ranging from secular humanism, liberalism, and modernism, on the left, through traditionalism (and neotraditionalism) and orthodoxy (and neoorthodoxy), to evangelicalism and fundamentalism, on the right. In the United States, right-wing television evangelists of "the electronic church" like Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Jimmy Swaggart dominate television religious programming. Falwell has described his own kind of dogmatic scripturalism as "reactionary Evangelicalism." Although individual revivalist preachers of this type, now using the "larger tent" of television, may come and go, the populist folk piety to which they appeal continues to be a seedbed for their message.

There is widespread consensus among social scientists and historians of religion researching fundamentalism that it is first and foremost a defensive reaction, a negative response to what is seen as the specter of modernity. In the United States, where the term fundamentalism first was coined by Curtis Lee Laws in 1920, Protestant hegemony began to crumble under growing pressure even before the First World War.⁷ Generations-long cultural and religious syntheses were challenged by evolution and higher criticism. There were, however, other factors that brought on the disintegration of the "Evangelical Empire" of the nineteenth century.

Industrialization and urbanization contributed to a growing secular ethos. The arrival of large numbers of non-Protestants—Jews and Roman Catholics—as immigrants from Europe brought about significant sociological shifts in the population at large. Protestants were forced to choose between accommodation and defensiveness, modernism and fundamentalism. Fundamentalism was an attempt to protect their domain. Marsden uses the analogy of immigrants coming to the New World to describe the drastic cultural changes that took place. The uprooting was equally as revolutionary as crossing the ocean. Modernists were somewhat similar to immigrants who welcomed the different way of life in the new country. Fundamentalists were like the groups who resisted assimilation and built their own defensive culture. Indeed, they are not only sheltered "behind an ideological ghetto wall, but the wall itself . . . [is] heavily fortified and regarded as the very wall of Zion."⁸

To explain the continuation of this phenomenon today, we need to identify a number of distinctions. It is important to differentiate between Christian fundamentalism and evangelicalism as well as between secularism and secularity. While the term *secularism* is often used to indicate a confessionally neutral area in community life—for example, the separation of church and state—*secularity* implies total exclusion of religious influence from public life.

IN SEARCH OF A MODEL

In reaction against secularity, fundamentalists have sought to impose their own conviction and its symbols not just on personal and family morals but on entire nations. Falwell's role in the Reagan era is an example par excellence. To be sure, the Moral Majority, which he led, now has been disbanded, and he is receiving less national press coverage than before. In his case, the fundamentalists' program is no longer simply one of sectarian separatism or otherworldly salvation (as in the 1920s). Instead, it offers an inclusive ideology and worldview that have been allied with right-wing political causes. Its advocates even accommodate in limited measure to modern science (tapping the resources of technologies and the communication revolution), certain that they can win over skepticism and unbelief.

In principle, "the new fundamentalism" and its model needs to be distinguished from orthodoxy. Its expectations are more messianic and even apocalyptic as believers anticipate the fulfillment of scriptural prophecies in a number of religions. Their view of creation (so-called scientific creationism) as well as eschatology, "last things," is highly literalistic. The beginning of the world (or the fulfillment of history) all too easily is reduced to being one event among others rather than the unique foundation of existence (or the end of time). Our concern will be to "unpack" such a paradoxically literal interpretation of traditional symbols, locating its parallels in the longer history of religion. Whereas orthodoxies have been more cautious, fundamentalists generally give graphic and detailed descriptions of world beginnings. Can the description of these "border" or "limit" situations, standing as they do at the intersection of time and eternity, really remain so unambiguously factual and without mystery?

As will be explained later in detail, in this study, the terms *myth* and *mythical* will not be employed simply in the everyday derogatory sense of an untrue story, a legend or fairy tale. Historians of religion today define myth broadly as a symbolic model or archetype. *Mythos* will be used here in a very specialized sense to identify a group of related myths (or microparadigms) that make up an inclusive archetypal model (or macroparadigm—in short, a larger, more seminal mythology). The premise is that symbol and narrative are more primordial than their rationalization. That explicit theological interpretation is a later development is something fundamentalists almost entirely ignore.

Actually, fundamentalism is not as radically novel as is often alleged. In the larger context of the history of religion, it soon becomes clear that most of its claims have precursors and parallels in the past. What is intensified, if not entirely new, is the revolt against modernity. Emmanuel Sivan of the

Hebrew University in Jerusalem has researched recent Jewish and Muslim as well as Christian fundamentalisms.⁹ He confirms that (as we have already suggested) they project a mythical view from the past—often an earlier golden age—into the future; actually, this has been a widespread phenomenon throughout the history of religion. From such a symbolic model, more powerful than a simply political one, religious revivalists seek the transformation of today's world and the resolution of its malaise in the restoration of an earlier sacred order.

THE EVOLUTION CONTROVERSY

The evolution controversy of the early 1920s highlighted dramatically what was going on in the United States, where the "fundamentalist phenomenon" was first described after the turn of the century. The satirist H. L. Mencken quipped, "Heave an egg out of a Pullman window, and you will hit a Fundamentalist almost anywhere in the United States."¹⁰ Mencken despised what he regarded as inexcusable parochialism and stupidity. Attending the Scopes trial, at which William Jennings Bryan opposed evolution, he attacked the "silver tongued orator" bitterly. When Bryan died a few days after the trial, Mencken wrote that he "had lived too long and had descended too deeply into the mud to be taken seriously by fully literate men, even of the kind who write school books."¹¹ Fundamentalism, according to Mencken, was not only obscurantist, but a rural outlook. Bryan delighted in "the tune of cocks crowing on the dung hill." Becoming a country saint, he had died appropriately in a "one horse Tennessee village." Mencken speculated that the politician was moved "by hatred of city men who had laughed at him—if not at his baroque theology, then at least at his alapaca pantaloons."¹²

Critics like Mencken have presumed in their polemics that fundamentalists are obscurantist, radical, extremist, and antisecular. Garry Wills puts the issues in better focus, pointing out that Mencken was an adamant follower of Nietzsche. Mencken was an anti-Semite who applied Darwinism uncritically to human ethics. Mencken wrote: "The struggle for existence went on among the lions in the jungle and the protozoa in the sea ooze, and . . . the law of natural selection ruled all of animated nature—mind and matter—alike."¹³ Wills comments:

Thanks to Mencken and to *Inherit the Wind*, a 1950s play that continually re-creates (quite inaccurately) the famous trial on stage and on screen, Bryan is now best known as the fuddled biblicist of Dayton. . . . It was a sad end to a career launched with the "Cross of Gold" speech at

the Democratic convention of 1896. For thirty years after that, Bryan was the most important figure in the reform politics of America. . . he . . . championed in their embattled earlier stages—women’s suffrage, the federal income tax, railroad regulation, currency reform, state initiative and referendum, a Department of Labor, campaign fund disclosure, and opposition to capital punishment.

Wills adds:

Bryan’s career had been a sign of the possible integration of progressive politics and evangelical moralism. That seemed an incongruous union to Darrow and others, who meant to end it by destroying fundamentalism. Science demanded nothing less.¹⁴

To be sure, Bryan’s opposition to evolution was in keeping with his failure to recognize the radical character of the scientific revolution since Galileo. His critics saw more clearly than he that religion could not ignore the change of model brought on by evolution. The creation paradigm of a fixed world order which, it was believed, could be verified empirically by common sense was destroyed in Darwin’s discoveries. Bryan supposed that it was still possible to harmonize religion and science in terms of the model that premises a “two book” theory. The two books of nature and Scripture witness harmoniously to divine truth, it is premised. Fundamentalism, which still invokes this model (in scientific creationism), sees harmony where others see only the survival of the fittest.

Confusion has arisen, paradoxically, because the new religious Right has become more sensitive to problems of language and communication than commonly supposed. Its leaders now widely recognize that names have symbolic power, and only a small party of believers welcomes the appellation *fundamentalism*. Hence, in the second post-world-war wave of the movement, Billy Graham and his entourage used the name *Evangelical* to distinguish their outlook from an earlier, less open, and more polemical stance. But Graham’s first premises remained premillennial-dispensational.

Fundamentalists, Muslim and Buddhist as well as Christian, perennially call on common sense in support of their outlook. Without any symbolic grid, they are only reading reality directly, they allege. Such claims are widely supported by folk piety. Their religious message and preaching (terms analogous to *mythos*) in this setting often are claimed to be given directly, even propositionally, in revelation. Viewed externally, of course, there is a variety of revelations, each claiming authority.

COMTE'S POSITIVISM AS A SECULAR OPTION—REJECTION OF MYTH OR REDEFINITION?

The popular debate has been not simply about religious models such as modernism and fundamentalism, but between religious and secular models as well, including so-called secular humanism. There can be little doubt that a widely accepted secular futurology stands in contrast to religious eschatologies. From the fundamentalist point of view, human beings claim to have taken charge of history, and God's providence is no longer accepted, they point out. What is at stake can be illustrated by reference to the three-stage scheme proposed by the French sociologist and "father of positivism," Auguste Comte, in the middle of the last century.¹⁵ Comte recognized that initially, at the outset of their life on earth, human beings looked to religious myths for explanation of the world. In a new era, however, such symbolism became gradually rationalized and transcended in philosophical speculation and reflection. In a third period of human history, the answers formerly provided by religious beliefs and symbols as well as by philosophical reflection are being replaced by the factuality of scientific discovery.

On Comte's view, religious myth became outdated. Dismissing what is now called "onto-theological" metaphysics, he claimed to have discovered a framework that could accommodate all of the meanings necessary for human understanding and survival without any recourse to "obscurantist mythology" or the sacred. Fundamentalists, of course, reject Comte's view of religion. But paradoxically, as Langdon Gilkey, who taught theology at the University of Chicago, pointed out, their literalism has affinities with Comte's positivism.¹⁶ Like Comte they leave little or no place for symbolic interpretation.

Comte's chronological scheme has not stood the test of time. It, too, has been used as an alternative inclusive macroparadigm with its own symbols and mythology. A less positivistic, less reductionistic approach to religion's past is needed to explain the fundamentalist phenomenon. As we have already suggested, scholars from a variety of disciplines, literature and philosophy as well as theology, now use the term *myth* in a more positive sense. They speak of a family of related myths making up an encompassing paradigm or worldview, a pattern (macroparadigm) that we are identifying by the term *mythos*.

IN SEARCH OF A MODEL—A TYPOLOGY OR TAXONOMY OF FUNDAMENTALISMS

An alternative strategy to any simplistic description is consideration of fundamentalism's distinctive characteristics in a variety of settings. This may

serve to clarify the fundamentalist model more than any single definition. Indeed, it is the widespread strategy employed in trying to interpret the phenomena (of the new religious Right) both sociologically and historically.

Scholars reflecting on fundamentalism are sure not only that it exists across religious boundaries, as I have already emphasized, but also that it is contagious. Typically, they point out, fundamentalism is ideologically reactive with a Manichaean-like sense of good and evil and stresses inerrancy, messianism, and millennialism. The guiding fundamentalist premise, of course, is that truth is religious and that religion exists in sacred texts. Known through revelation, religious truth is interpreted by accepted authority figures. In this setting, reason is subservient to revelation. Researchers identify an enclave dynamics of small, close, and exclusive groups of right-wing believers in a diversity of religions. Personal identity is founded on membership in the group, and the spirit is antipluralistic.

It would, however, be false to view fundamentalism as being simply irrational. On the contrary, advocates see themselves as existing in a well-ordered world that is now challenged by nihilism. Analysts speak of a binary perception of past and future: Both are perceived as having been in principle good before a watershed decline set in. For fundamentalists, the sacred house is on fire. Their goal is not just conversion or reform. They are motivated as well by fear that the tradition that guarantees them religious truth is threatened and dying out.

Robert Frykenberg has researched fundamentalism internationally, in various parts of the world, over three decades.¹⁷ The term *fundamentalist* was first used in the United States in the early twentieth century, following the publication of a series of pamphlets, *The Fundamentals*. It now has become detached from its American, Christian, Protestant, and Evangelical origins, Frykenberg notes. Frykenberg argues that there exists a generic connection between fundamentalisms from different cultural settings, even though they vary in quality and intensity. In support of this thesis, Frykenberg develops what he calls a "taxonomy" or "typology" of fundamentalisms as they have grown up since World War II in particular. He finds that a fundamentalist movement generally consists of a conjunction of at least four kinds of doctrinal elements.

First, the Truth, the central corpus of the ideology or message. Usually its mythos (as we refer to it) is objectified in a body of scripture or a text, sometimes in an oral tradition, as "The Faith once delivered to the Saints." A sacred or transcendent status is given to this nucleus—the Law, the Gospel, the Word, or the ideology. A distinctive worldview and sense of ultimate reality is at the core of this mythos. It serves as a point of division and separation in almost Manichaean terms. Generally accompanying such truth is a broker of truth, a magic personality, a charismatic preacher or prophet who brings a wis-

dom from on high, generating a mixture of enthusiasm, awe, deference, reverence, and submission.

Second, in keeping with this view of mythos, there is strict delineation of insiders and outsiders, true believers and unbelievers, in the fundamentalist model. Outsiders are pagans, idolaters, gentiles, goyim, or kafirs. The insiders are united by a sense of being a specially chosen or peculiar people, the faithful, a brotherhood or elect nation. Third, the fundamentalist paradigm almost always includes hope of a heaven on earth—a new heaven and a new earth in the near future. In short, there is millennialism and utopianism accompanied by a sense of preordained destiny. Fourth, opposition from a sinister (often mythologically defined) enemy, godless and heathen, is expected.

Frykenberg also identifies what he calls the “functional” or “tactical” features of fundamentalist movements: (a) radical conversion; (b) radical reconversion or revivalism; and (c) militant separatism (in order to preserve purity). He defines conversion as an “altogether total transformation, a complete and drastic change” (whether a single event or a process) from one condition or state of being to another; from one worldview or way of life to another; from one set of beliefs to another. Revivalism, by contrast, is a strategy for bringing back and restoring the vitality of convictions.

A MYTHICAL MODEL, AN AMERICAN CASE STUDY

Fundamentalism is a phenomenon both universal and culture-specific. This will become clearer in the following as we consider a specific American example. Nancy Ammerman, of Emory University, whose sociological research we draw from, has reflected that until recently, modernity has reigned with little challenge. Now this is no longer the case, and it is no longer an unquestioned good. In this setting the society and its culture are ready for something different. Still, to Ammerman it is not at all clear that fundamentalism can lead and provide a way to the future.¹⁸

Ammerman’s case study, *Bible Believers, Fundamentalists in the Modern World*, in many aspects describes a very simple fundamentalist model. She researched and interviewed members of a New England congregation that she gave the pseudonym “Southside Gospel Church” in writing. The congregation advertised itself as being “Independent, Fundamental, Premillennial and Baptist.” Members regularly read fundamentalist literature—periodicals and books—published nationwide. Ammerman concluded that Southside Gospel Church exemplified the distinctive paradigm of low-church Protestant fundamentalism: separation from the world, dispensational premillennialism, and biblical literalism. In short, its members were self-consciously fundamentalist and not just evangelical. She distinguishes between the two, remarking:

They also shun the Evangelical's "civil" responses to cultural pluralism in favor of old-fashioned "hell-fire and damnation." Fundamentalists are convinced that their differences from others make them superior not only because they have something better but because theirs is the only truth, the only right way to live.¹⁹

Outside of the congregational church setting, the world is evidently chaotic and without sensitivity to right and wrong, the members believe. Ammerman describes the fundamentalist project as follows: "At the most basic level, salvation itself is an exchange of right living for blessings in this life and the one to come."²⁰ To the Bible believers whom she studied, God's plan of salvation does not appear mysterious (mystery generally is not a fundamentalist category). God's revealed will provides structure and brings blessings to the saved. From a sociological point of view, fundamentalists construct a world in which God is in control, Ammerman observes. Life is no longer a puzzle. "Being saved is the first step in God's plan. It opens all the doors that make understanding of the rest of God's will possible."²¹

In this setting, Christian faith is a practical, not just theoretical, matter. The shared premise of the Southside Gospel Church is that God shows concern for everyday matters, such as jobs, food, clothes, travel, and repair of automobiles, and family life, including the choice of a mate. In short, God is not far away. Moreover, he has an "orderly and absolute plan" for each Christian life. Ammerman interprets what is going on in terms of Peter Berger's concept of a sheltering sacred canopy: The orderly world of the fundamentalist is such a sheltering canopy.

The sacred cosmos, which transcends and includes man in its ordering of reality, thus provides man's ultimate shield against the terror of anomy. To be in a 'right' relationship with the sacred cosmos is to be protected against the nightmare threats of chaos. To fall out of such a 'right' relationship is to be abandoned on the edge of the abyss of meaninglessness.²²

Basic to Christian life in this model is trust in the Bible, and its authority is claimed unequivocally: Its revealed truth is timeless and as authoritative as when it was written. Fundamentalists do not deny that much that goes on in the world contradicts Scripture, but from their point of view they know the Bible's truth is not just to be argued about but to be lived out. They affirm that it is not only true literally, but an encyclopedia of all truth: Anything that is true must somewhere be found within its pages. Of course, the Book is interpreted authoritatively for the congregation by its pastor; hence the importance of

choosing the right church. With "spiritual eyes" and with the help of fellow believers, God's will is discerned; God is seen to be "opening and closing doors."²³ Liberal churches do not seem to be real churches to members of the Southside congregation. In their intense concern to know and do the will of God, they recognize "signs"—mostly in hindsight. Providence becomes evident, and the claim is made that "God was leading in this way!"

What distinguishes fundamentalists—and makes them sectarian from a sociological point of view—is their eagerness to show and tell others how different they are from the rest of the world. Believers are expected to witness to the world, even as they remain separate from it and upright in life. More than many other Christians, fundamentalists are missionary-minded. Having experienced the new birth, they recount their own experiences of salvation and quote Romans 10:9: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Faith is active, and it gives them a clear identity in which salvation is the cornerstone of their lives. Of course, such a Puritan model prohibits vices such as swearing and drunkenness

Ammerman observes that clear lines exist, as between God's eternal favor, right and wrong doctrine, and correct living, on the one hand, and apostasy, promiscuity, and damnation, on the other. Differences have to do with worship and authority—but most of all with lifestyle. Ammerman quotes a member whom she interviewed: "When you're with someone who's not saved, you can almost sense a total difference. Sense? I think that's the word. Not feelings or vibration, but like a sixth sense."

For fundamentalists, the model is one of a "social world in which their ideas make sense and another in which nothing makes sense." Christians alone are on God's side in their struggle against sin and evil in an evil world. Ammerman sums up:

For the members of Southside Gospel Church, the outside world can be dangerous and unpleasant. . . . the whole world seems to be wanton, permissive, and selfish. They venture into that outside world only to try to snatch away the few people who seem open to salvation. For most believers, the orderly world inside is so much more attractive than the chaos outside that they choose to leave behind nonbelieving friends, family members, and organizations to devote all their time to the Bible, the church, and Christian friends²⁴

How do the fundamentalists Ammerman studied vote? Of course, the political issues concern not just individual morality but the life of institutions as well. To merit fundamentalist approval, an institution must either be run by

saved persons or, if this is not the case, at least follow biblical rules. Not just Christians, but also unbelievers, can adhere to the latter pattern. The congregation Ammerman studied believed strongly that Americans, whom they see as belonging to a Christian nation, can and should honor God. But even when this is not the case, fundamentalists seek autonomy for their own institutions, such as Christian schools. Still as Ammerman observes, the boundaries of God's kingdom can change. Fundamentalists who expect the near end of the world at times do adjust to the needs of the hour without giving up their trust in God's long-term plan. Remaining critical of both doubt and pluralism, they have built their own institutions even if they were not able to dominate society.

Seen from the longer historical perspective, the Southside Gospel Church model is only one Christian model among others, and not necessarily the only true one as its members suppose. Peter Berger, whom Ammerman cites, identifies three options the believer has in facing the challenge of modernity.²⁵ The first is the cognitive surrender that fundamentalists refuse: simple acceptance of the fact that the majority is right and the adaptation of oneself to that point of view. At the opposite extreme is cognitive retrenchment. For example, the fundamentalist rejects out-of-hand the basic assumptions of the modernist position. Berger states the matter bluntly: "The rest of you go climb a tree; we believe this, we know this, and we are going to stick to it. And if this is irrelevant to the rest of you, well, that is just too bad." A middle stance, what Berger calls "cognitive bargaining," recognizes that there are two conflicting views of the world and begins to negotiate. An attempt is made to arrive at a nonfundamentalist cognitive compromise. Berger's triad, of course, also applies to fundamentalism in other cultures outside America.

FUNDAMENTALISM "FROM THE INSIDE OUT"

Lawrence emphasizes that the fundamentalist restorationist model does not necessarily imply blind reaction against all features of contemporary life.²⁶ Fundamentalists do have a point, he argues, as they offer a critique of modernism. Social scientists researching fundamentalism often attribute its growth and power to the disintegration of self-contained societies. Communities like the Southside Gospel Church seek to revive a sense of identity and meaning in their own setting. Researchers point out that the governing myths, the accepted paradigms by which thought and life have been organized, often seemed to have lost their power in the late twentieth century.

Two powerful "thrusts" can be identified in fundamentalist movements. On the one hand, there is an individualistic thrust that is separatist and sectarian. On the other hand, the social thrust of fundamentalism has been

described by sociologists as "revolutionary traditionalism." Its political spokespersons appeal to what they claim are the beliefs of the "moral majority." New charismatic leaders engender mass followings, condemn moral laxity, and seek a remedy in personal religious experience. Their appeal is widely heard in the American setting, as ethical norms (in all but the most secularized parts of society) are still reinforced by religious models, and it is to them that believers turn. Opposing an apostate worldliness that refuses traditionally accepted religions and family standards, conservative churches have experienced new waves of growth while more liberal denominations have lost membership.

Ian S. Lustick, extending the discussion of fundamentalism beyond Christianity to Judaism, sees it as (1) basing its activities on uncompromisable injunctions and (2) considering the activities of its devotees to be "guided by direct contact with the source of transcendental authority."²⁷ To secularly minded critics, these traits seem to be a liability. On the other hand, it may be said positively that fundamentalism has much deeper existential implications for the everyday life of the believer than any rational presentation of its tenets can suggest.

Backing words with deeds, fundamentalists have developed effective political strategies. This is true in the United States, but even more so in other parts of the world: Modernity and "the West" are often attacked together. Advocates of the new religious Right are outspoken not only about the atheism of a "secular humanism" that "leaves God out"; they also attack "situational morality" and with it the "nihilism" of the so-called counterculture.

Paradoxically, the new Right has engendered a very unsymbolic argument about religious symbolism. Resisting the contextual as well as modernist premise of historical growth and development in religious truth, fundamentalists are generally convinced that the fundamentals of their religion (one might say "symbols" or "myths") cannot be given up or compromised with modernism or its ally, secular humanism. These include not only their own distinctive models of deity and the moral law, but particular confessional or kerygmatic tenets—for example, the verbal inspiration of Scripture, literalist belief in creation, or the immanent end of the world as similarly untouched by historical criticism. In principle, doctrine is timeless.²⁸

A WORLDWIDE PHENOMENON

Social scientists commonly note that fundamentalist movements are socially divisive of society and often lead to violence.²⁹ Such movements, indeed, reflect the failure of secular elites to come to grips with deteriorating economic conditions. Their leadership is replaced by new charismatic figures who have

more direct contact with followers. Fundamentalists claim that the older religious establishment has not succeeded or preserved purity. The growth of their movement is accelerated when there is no other platform for protest but religion. Nationalism at times is accepted and used, at other times opposed.

Enlightenment doctrines of human rights often are a target of the new religious Right, as T. N. Madan of the University of Delhi in India argues. Fundamentalism, often sectarian, can be totalitarian as well.³⁰ Another Indian scholar, Harjob S. Oberoi, focuses his critique on Hegel's theses about the Enlightenment as well as their contemporary defense by the living German philosopher Jürgen Habermas.³¹ According to Hegel, the Enlightenment had established (1) effective individual freedom, (2) the right to criticize established authorities, (3) autonomy of action, and (4) acceptance that one can know oneself independently of religion. These claims are disregarded and denied in most fundamentalisms, Oberoi emphasizes.

Fundamentalist militancy has become increasingly widespread since World War II, and in particular since the growing Arab-Israeli and Muslim-Hindu confrontations. Lawrence identifies Islamic fundamentalism as "a major new departure" in Islamic history, one whose advocates seek to confront, challenge, and in the end defeat modernity and the secular West.³² The worldwide attraction of the religious Right, like that of the political Right, coincides most conspicuously with the collapse of liberalism. It grew especially in the era of the war in Vietnam and the Arab defeat in Palestine. A phenomenon that at first seemed to be local soon had major consequences for international politics.

There are, no doubt, significant outstanding differences as well as parallels between fundamentalisms in different world faiths, for example, Christianity and Islam. To say the least, fundamentalist ideology varies even within particular religions, as, for example, between Southern Baptists and Pentecostals in low-church Protestantism. The pattern is not the same among the majority Muslim party, the Sunnis, and Khomeini's Shi'ite followers. It is clear that the causes championed are not always the same. In spite of all differences, our conclusion will be that fundamentalists all over the world share a common revivalist paradigm whose "built in" dilemmas are intrinsic to their ideology, and that these cannot be resolved apart from a comprehensive revision of their symbolic models—which need to be not only demythologized but historicized.³³

Of course, when developments are analyzed sociologically and psychologically, the modern phenomenon of nationalism must be taken into account. Fundamentalists have drawn strength from it, but at times also opposed it, as in Egypt, where fundamentalists reacted against Nasser's union of socialism and nationalism. Moreover, fundamentalism in Asia—among, for example, the Sikhs in India, Hindus, and Muslims—needs to be seen against the background of communalism. In the end, however, the reaction against secularity in

the growth of fundamentalism cannot be ignored and calls for careful analysis of its religious roots.

THE CONTEMPORARY SETTING—IN THE WAKE OF TWO WORLD WARS

To a significant extent, fundamentalism's appeal grew out of the pessimism resulting from the tragedy of two world wars. For better or worse, an earlier "Christian"-European dominance (and colonialism) had come to an end. The accompanying synoptic vision of Christianity as the highest religion, confirmed by the progress of Western civilization (so Hegel believed), was radically challenged.³⁴ Revivalists and nationalists in other major faiths have rejected this vision most emphatically.

The question remains why historical developments often led to fundamentalism instead of pluralism and a renewed realism. (The term *fundamentalism* is a twentieth-century one; the roots of the phenomenon, of course, are much older.) One answer is that the optimistic rationalism that had grown up in Europe since the Renaissance and in particular the Enlightenment, was under siege. Christendom as it was imposed on other parts of the world (in the later colonial era) found itself in crisis. The relation between religion and culture was a much more important issue than fundamentalists realized. More than they have understood and at times even unwittingly, they have raised again the question of how much the norms of civilized life are based on religious symbolism. As we noted, fundamentalists have not given up their belief in a millennium (brought by God), in spite of all the evils of the time. Today, they also are more than ever convinced that the present world cannot be surrendered to antireligious forces.