

Fighting the Good Fight: Fundamentalism and Religious Revival
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FUNDAMENTALISM--ORIGINS

The term fundamentalism has rapidly entered the vocabulary of social science in the past two decades as a general designation for revivalist conservative religious orthodoxy. Though originally applied only to Christianity, Gananath Obeyesekere theorizes that the extension of the term to other religious traditions dates from the time of the Iranian Revolution in 1978-79. Today it is used to describe Evangelical Christians, Iranian revolutionaries, ultra-orthodox Jews, militant Sikhs, and Buddhist resistance fighters, among others. Its categorical use is so widespread and so easily applied, that the misperception persists that it has always been with us.

The specific origin of the word fundamentalism dates to an early 20th Century American religious movement. The movement took its name from a compendium of twelve volumes published between 1910 and 1915 by a group of Protestant laymen entitled: *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of the Truth*. These volumes were circulated in the millions and served as the concretization of a cross-denominational set of traditions with roots in previous centuries. It owes its existence particularly to the same evangelical revivalist tradition that inspired the Great Awakening of the early 19th Century and a variety of early millenarian movements. Spurred on by reactions to Darwin's theory of evolution, the original Fundamentalist Movement was seen as a religious revival. It came to embody both principles of absolute religious orthodoxy and evangelical practice which called for believers to extended action beyond religion into political and social life.

These four qualities: *revivalism; orthodoxy; evangelism; and social action*; are the basis for the discussion of fundamentalism (writ small) presented below. As a number of social scientists have noted, the term has come to have pejorative connotations. Nevertheless, it does seem to serve a useful purpose as a characterization of a repeatedly occurring and nearly universal human social phenomenon. The deeper comparative understanding of fundamentalism may forestall the frequent dismissive attitudes exhibited by groups sharing common beliefs toward each other. As Lionel Caplan, editor of a prominent collection of essays on the subject has noted: "an adequate understanding of fundamentalism requires us to acknowledge its potential in every movement or cause. . . . We are all of us, to some degree and in some senses, fundamentalists."

REVIVALISM--THEORIES OF SOCIAL PROCESS

It is a common mistaken practice by laymen, including government officials and journalists, to view fundamentalist movements as localized, recent phenomena. This misperception always leads to shock and surprise when these movements emerge to challenge a dominant social order. Nowhere was this more evident than in the Iranian revolution of 1978-79. Despite many decades of anti-monarchist activity, and an even longer period of Islamic revivalism throughout the region, universal surprise was expressed at the victory of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his supporters.

The key to understanding fundamentalist movements lies in the careful investigation of their history combined with investigation of the specific contemporary conditions that bring about their emergence at particular times. This revivalist character of fundamentalist movements may be their most salient aspect. Clear historical and doctrinal precedent seems to inspire confidence in movement members, who must often exhibit great courage to stand apart from the wider society. Just as the original early 20th Century Fundamentalist Movement sprung from the Great Awakening, which in turn sprung from English and American Puritanism, all fundamentalist movements have such deep historical roots.

In essence, all such movements are a natural consequence of human processes of cultural change. In every society on earth change proceeds at an uneven pace. Some society members embrace change with relish. Others find it oppressive and troubling. When people feel that change is being imposed on them, some will find it necessary to resist--sometimes violently. The dynamics of revitalization thus are tied to inter-group dynamics. When a group in society perceives itself as having its power and authority usurped in the course of social change, the group comes to blame both internal and external causes for its fall from power.

Internally, the group may blame itself for its decline. Its leaders often point to internal decadence as the principal reason. They accuse members of society of becoming weak and irresolute to the point where they let others oppress them. This invariably results in the creation of physical and mental training programs to strengthen the character and resolve of those who want to become the vanguard to restore society to its former idealized state. These practices are extremely varied. They range from prayer and meditation to ascetic practices and physical or military training.

Externally, the group objectifies an Other, and identifies it as an oppressor. Usually the movement advocates resistance-- sometimes violent--to that oppressor. The core operations of the fundamentalist movement may be varied, ranging from guerrilla warfare and attacks on public figures or facilities to more peaceful protests and non-violent action. Occasionally, these movements embrace the perceived oppressors, and direct their energies toward becoming more like them, or attracting their attention. Large scale religious conversions throughout history have often had this quality.

Members of fundamentalist movements see themselves as saviors of society. For this reason they are able to justify almost any action, however extreme, and any personal sacrifice, however great, for their cause. There is a tendency to see the world in black and white terms. People are clearly enemies or friends. Actions are good or bad. The unrelenting commitment and conviction of the members of the movement is eventually the element that often leads the larger society to see them a social threat, even when their methods and strategies are peaceful

All of these movements invariably create a dual myth. This myth links a supposed Golden Age in the past with a Utopian future. The past Golden Age is seen as a time when the members of the movement or those they identify with were strong, vital, and in control of the world. The Utopian future presages a time when movement members will return to that sense of group strength and wholeness. In seeking to do this, they adhere to a clearly specifiable orthodoxy, but no easily predictable political ideology. They are as likely to be liberal as conservative in their solution to the problem. Religious belief is the most frequent motivating and organizing principle, although purely secular concerns may also dominate. Most cultures have seen a number of fundamentalist revival movements throughout their history, and all such movements appear to have common features which bear a resemblance to general human ritual practice.

Theories of Revivalist Process

Contemporary anthropological understanding of these movements has been shaped by the work of Anthony F.C. Wallace on *revitalization movements*, which are conceptually equivalent to the fundamentalist revival movements that are the subject of this discussion. Wallace was deeply impressed by the history of an important Native American movement in the late 18th Century centering around an Iroquois prophet who bore the leadership title Handsome Lake. This prophet drew on pre-existing religious traditions. He claimed to have had a supernatural vision warning the then demoralized Iroquois against alcohol, witchcraft, love magic, and abortifacants. His preaching and other miraculous events gained him great credence with the Iroquois, and mobilized and revitalized their flagging society.

Wallace took Handsome Lake's history as a model for other similar social movements. He suggested that all revitalization movements go through several stages. Wallace's original analysis is reformulated here in slightly updated terminology.

1. Social change produces cultural tension among members of society.
2. The cultural tension produces an attempt to accommodate, leading to distortion and change in social patterns, causing social disruption.
3. As a response to cultural tension, fundamentalism emerges in the form of an orthodox restatement of cultural patterns. This new that is spread through evangelism, often through the office one or more charismatic figures.

Wallace's analysis of revitalization bears a good deal of similarity to the structure of "social dramas" as described by Victor Turner. Turner's account is drawn loosely from Van Gennep's analysis of *rites de passages*. Turner likens all social change to a ritual process. In ritual, individuals are transformed from one status to another by first being removed from society to a "liminal space" (from L. *limen*=threshold). In this betwixt-and-between state they receive special training and instruction pertinent to their new status. Normal rules of social life are suspended in this liminal period. The transformed members are then reincorporated in the larger society in their new status.

In social dramas, society undergoes transformation when a "social breach" occurs. The social breach can be seen as the first stage of Wallace's analysis as presented above. In Turner's view this leads to a period of liminality when change takes place. During this period likewise normal social rules are suspended or even reversed. This period corresponds to the second stage. In the final stage for both Turner and Wallace a new social order is established.

Turner's schema was developed to explain events of more limited duration than the revitalization movements analyzed by Wallace. Nevertheless, the similarities are clear. Religious revival is actually a kind of double process in Turner's sense from the perspective of the participants in the religious revival. Society is seen as undergoing a Turnerian social breach as tension from social change increases. Liminality occurs as society is seen as unsuccessfully trying to accommodate to change, thereby suffering a breakdown of its social institutions. Finally, a fundamentalist movement emerges which aims to reinstate social order through evangelical action.

Fundamentalists movements are themselves liminal. Normal social rules are suspended within the movement. Members undergo special rituals and training. Their goal is usually to enact an extended social drama, leading an entire society into a liminal state which will eventually bring about total change. Because of the intensity needed for such activity, and because it is usually undertaken by a minority group, the goal of total social transformation is achieved only rarely; but when it is, it is a form of social revolution.

A similar structure to explain the rise of fundamentalism was suggested by the religious scholar Eric Sharpe. Sharpe posits three phases of development of fundamentalist movements. The first is that of *rejection*, when traditionally accepted authority is challenged. In the second phase, *adaptation*, an attempt is made to accommodate the old philosophy with the new. The third phase, *reaction*, is when fundamentalist practice arises. Sharpe's schema, which has been widely used in recent studies of fundamentalism owes a great deal to Wallace's earlier analysis.

The Islamic Fundamentalist Revival Movement

The Middle East offers a wide spectrum of examples of fundamentalist revivalist movements of which the contemporary "Islamic Movement" is perhaps the most important. The movement originated around 1875. Throughout the previous century, European powers, fueled by wealth of the Industrial Revolution, had usurped economic and military power throughout the region. This change in the political and economic order of the world was devastating to Muslims. The leaders of the consequent Islamic movement spurred their followers

with idealizations of the Golden Age of the great Islamic Empires stretching from the 8th to the 18th Centuries when Muslims were wealthy, independent, pious and militarily strong.

The principal originator of the Islamic movement was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, an Iranian political leader who aroused Muslims throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Al-Afghani advocated a return to personal piety, reform of Islamic law to meet the requirements of a modern age, and violent resistance to Westerners who had usurped power from the Islamic world. He saw the governments in the Middle East as hopelessly corrupt--undermined by Western forces and Western values. His solution was a three-pronged effort consisting of a renewal of personal religious piety, reform and modernization of Islamic law, and resistance of foreign influence.

Al-Afghani's movement was widespread. His successors have included a variety of movements and social groups. Given his broad revivalist agenda, it is not surprising that these successors manifested a remarkable variety of methods for accomplishing the Islamic revivalist goal. They include far-sighted legal and social reformers, such as the eminent Egyptian jurist Muhammad Abduh. They also include relatively moderate reform groups such as the Islamic Brotherhood, now active throughout the Middle East. More violent fringe groups include the assassins of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, and Palestinian nationalist groups, such as Hamas, a group responsible for a series of devastating suicide bombings of Israeli citizens in the Spring of 1996

The Islamic Movement had at least one full realization of successful fundamentalist revival in the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79. The shah of Iran was toppled from power by a coalition of religious and political forces with a pedigree dating back to Al-Afghani. The Revolution emphasized martyrdom in the service of the higher cause of moral and political reform. The explicit message of the Revolution was to return Iran to a period of harmony and religious strength previous to the secular government of the shahs (cf. Beeman 1983a, 1983b, 1986, 1996). Whereas Muslims in the rest of the Islamic World do not necessarily agree with the religious and political agenda of the Iranian revolutionaries, they have been inspired by the Revolution as proof that an fundamentalist Islamic revival can take place, and can involve a whole society.

ORTHODOXIES

A different kind of analytic scheme to account for fundamentalist movements has been suggested by Niels C. Nielsen, Jr.. Nielsen's schema draws on the idea of *paradigm shift* inspired by Thomas Kuhn's important work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn promulgated the thesis that a given set of axioms and beliefs constitute a paradigm, which dominates thought in a scientific community until successfully challenged by changed cultural circumstances. Nielsen points out that fundamentalists have a distinct orthodox paradigm which the only one allowed their believers. Kuhn himself acknowledged the similarity between his scientific paradigms and religious paradigms in a discussion with the religious scholar Hans Küng, who likewise sees the development of religion in terms of paradigmatic periodization.

Religious orthodoxies are seen to be like Kuhnian paradigms because they constitute all-encompassing world views with set assumptions and theories of how the world operates. In fundamentalist movements orthodoxies are more than theory. They are bodies of inviolate belief to which all members must subscribe to remain in good standing within the movement.

Kuhnian paradigms also imply praxis--a body of procedures and methods that follow from the basic theories and assumptions. In the scientific world, this praxis is made up of the experimental procedures of laboratory testing operations in which hypotheses are tested and theories generated. In fundamentalist movements praxis is made up of the expected conduct of members of the movement which flows from the underlying beliefs of the group.

A model for the specific body of orthodox belief of Christian fundamentalists was proposed by James Barr. In his influential study, *Fundamentalism*, Barr identifies four basic fundamentalist "characteristics" paraphrased here:

1. Inerrancy of scripture
2. Individual salvation
3. Personal witness to belief, abstracted from social context
4. Invalidity of hermeneutic exegesis of scripture.

Barr's study of Christian fundamentalism has served as a model for the study of fundamentalist orthodoxies outside of Christian tradition and is widely acknowledged in contemporary studies.

Orthodoxies for different fundamentalist traditions will reflect the character and history of the religions which they represent, but they are generally an amalgam of doctrinal beliefs and specific practice flowing from those beliefs that are unassailable and incumbent on believers. The Habad Hasidic movement, better known in the United States as the Lubavitch Hasidic movement embodies such a mix. Lubavitchers, who are centered in the borough of Queens in New York City, combine a fervent belief in absolute scriptural truth with an equally fervent belief in the imminent coming of the Messiah who will subsequently establish his kingdom on earth. In this belief, they reject the world Zionist movement and the establishment of the State of Israel. The Ten Commandments of Moses as well as the full set of Noahide laws are not only alive for this group, but are seen as incumbent on all people for the social order of the world. Lubavitchers are encouraged to make every encounter with other Jews, and theoretically with non-Jews as well, an opportunity to bring them closer to observing these laws. Consequently, within the Jewish community the Lubavitchers see themselves as the guardians of rabbinic law. They spare no expense using modern publication and electronic media to supplement direct personal confrontation as a means of bringing errant believers back to orthodox ritual practice. This fascinating mix of traditionalism and willingness to embrace the technology of the modern world to achieve their religious goals is a hallmark of the group's orthodoxy.

Orthodoxy can often engender unusual paradigm shifts as the assumptions of a particular world view are played out and strengthen over time. One example is the evolution of Shinto in Japan from a medieval reification of feudal relations between the ruling classes and their serfs and vassals to a full blown state religion in the 20th Century (cf. Bellah 1970). In its earliest form in the 8th and 9th centuries the deities of Shinto seem to have been derived equally from animistic personifications of local objects and forces of nature such as mountains, streams, forests, the sun, moon, and wind coupled with deific representations of deceased personages of importance, such as feudal lords. The doctrine that the emperor was directly descended from the most sacred deity, the Sun Goddess, combined with these beliefs and eventually created the base for a revivalist religio-political state in the 19th Century. By World War II this doctrine had evolved into a state orthodoxy in which a divine emperor was seen to reign over a sacred land. All warriors dying in defense of the emperor and Japan were themselves recognized as specially designated deities residing in a special State shrine in the afterlife. The orthodoxy of this period continues to be a controversial force in Japanese life today, despite the fact that the United States forced the emperor to renounce his divinity after the war. The majority of Japanese followed suit and rejected state-Shinto, but it continues as a strong force among the most conservative sectors of society. As recently as May, 2000 Japanese prime minister Yoshiro Mori faced angry calls for his resignation after one month in office following a speech in which he said: "We hope the Japanese people acknowledge that Japan is a divine nation centering on the emperor." (Kageyama 2000).

EVANGELISM

Fundamentalist movements generally are spearheaded by one or more charismatic leaders who take the lead in gathering believers and delivering the central message of the movement. Moreover, the fundamentalist movement attempts to evangelize a broader population and convince them of the truth of the group's orthodoxy. This population may be circumscribed, as is often the case with Jewish fundamentalist groups who largely limit their evangelism to Jews; or broad-based as with movements that attempt to address all of humanity.

In the Christian fundamentalist movements in recent years television preachers--sometimes called *televangelists*--such as Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson have been instrumental in evangelistic efforts, and have reached millions with their message. The contemporary fundamentalist movement in the United States is so widespread and comprehensive that it supports many charismatic leaders.

Famous evangelists abound in other religions as well. A touchstone for the contemporary Native American movement in the United States was The Ghost Dance religion that swept Native American Peoples of the Plains in the late 19th Century. A Paiute evangelist prophet, Wovoka (originally named Jack Wilson), told Native Americans that if they practiced the Ghost Dance, a hypnotic spiritual ritual, the White Man would disappear, and Native American civilization would be restored. His message spread from the Great Basin area in Utah and Nevada north and west to California, Oregon and Washington, and east throughout the Great Plains. The Lakota Sioux in South Dakota were influenced by the teachings of Wovoka, and established the Ghost Dance among themselves. The practice created fear and distrust among the white soldiers stationed in South Dakota. Eventually a confrontation between the two groups led to the famous massacre at Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890 where 200 Native American people were killed. This massacre is one of the most important events in Native American history, and is still cited as an essential remembrance in Native American religion.

Another evangelist, Elijah Mohammad, established Nation of Islam, also known as the Black Muslims in North America following World War II. This group appropriated Islamic religious ideals in a fundamentalist revival movement designed to help African Americans recover dignity and empowerment in their lives. For three hundred and fifty years African Americans had been oppressed, first through slavery, and later through discriminatory social practices. Elijah Mohammad as messenger of The Nation of Islam, prescribed separation of the Black Muslim community from dominant white society. Members of The Nation of Islam adopted orthodox practices which liminalized them with regard to general American society based on standard Islamic belief with specialized dress, family practices, and dietary restrictions. The current leader of the community, Louis Farakhan continues the evangelical tradition. He has been a powerful galvanizing force for the community, helping African-Americans find added dimensions to their lives. Articulate and powerful as a speaker, Farakhan has predictably disturbed many Americans outside of his community through his separatist rhetoric.

SOCIAL ACTION

Fundamentalism strives to change the world through evangelistic promulgation of its belief structure. Therefore social action, beyond the observance of religious orthodoxy, is a regular feature of the behavior of movement members. At times such social action can be the principal activity of the group. Such social action can take many forms ranging from informational efforts, to political participation, to active or passive social resistance, to violent struggle. It is at this point where the actions of fundamentalist religious revival groups blur and begin to resemble the behavior of political activists.

Indeed, a small amount of reflection will confirm that there is no absolute separation between fundamentalist movements and other kinds of social movements and civil struggles. Elements of fundamentalist thinking can be seen in almost all struggle--armed and peaceful--against standing governmental bodies. The Irish Republican Army, the Naxalite movement in India, and the Tamil nationalists in Sri Lanka are just a sampling of groups that are willing to use extraordinary action to achieve "justice" for the societies within which they live. Such groups frequently justify their actions in moral terms verging on religious orthodoxy.

Often fundamentalist groups are driven to social action when their orthodox evangelical goals are frustrated by the events of changing social and political environments in the broader society. Fundamentalist Christians have seen themselves forced into extreme social action as a result of legislation legalizing abortion. These actions have included assaults on physicians performing abortions and bombings of abortion clinics.

An oppressed population defending itself from an oppressor is favorably viewed by most people. For this reason fundamentalist movements often gravitate toward creating martyrs or emphasizing their oppression by the larger society in order to increase the appeal of their objectives both for their members and for the outside world. In today's world where finance and information have become globally pervasive, good press is essential for the continuance of any movement, and fundamentalists movements have proved masterful in presenting themselves as underdogs.

Operation Rescue, an important American activist group fighting abortion has reacted to criticism of its work even by other fundamentalist Christians, by pointing up the bravery of its adherents as crusaders for God. This is opposed to the traditional pastors and televangelists whom movement founder Randall Terry likens to "pillars of jello". Another group, the Traditional Values Coalition, a fundamentalists Christian organization headed by Reverend Louis Sheldon claiming to represent 36,000 churches in the U.S. opposes abortion, homosexuality and sex education in the schools. In 1998 when President Clinton proposed to extend legislation to prosecute "hate crimes" in the United States to include sexual orientation, Sheldon's organization issued the following statement: "the administration's effort to expand the definition of a hate crime is nothing less than a premeditated assault on religious Americans who oppose homosexuality."

The Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) are an example of a non-militant Israeli Jewish fundamentalist group that felt itself driven to violent social action for theological reasons. The Gush Emunim began as an ideological and non-violent movement with theological roots in pre-Israeli Palestine. It regards the Zionist movement as sacred, and the occupation of traditional Jewish homelands by Jews as a fulfillment of prophecy leading eventually to the coming of the Messiah. Gush members were greatly encouraged by the capture of West Bank Territories from Jordan in 1967. As long as progress was made toward the occupation of Palestinian territory by Jews, no violent political action was contemplated by the group.

The first militant actions by the Gush Emunim occurred following the Yom Kippur War in 1973 when the Israeli government seemed likely to return the Sinai and the Golan Heights to the Egyptians and Syrians. Gush members engaged in civil disobedience and protest to forestall this action. The rise of the Likud party in Israel in 1977 resulted in the opening of West Bank territories captured in 1967 to settlement by Jews--another encouragement to the Gush Emunim. Palestinians in the region were alarmed and reacted with violence toward the settlements. The Gush Emunim then reacted with what has been termed *settler vigilantism* against the Palestinian Arabs. This theory maintained that if the Israeli government was unable to provide adequate defense for the settlers, it was their obligation to defend themselves--even to the point of using deadly violence. The group's commitment to violent action as a means of achieving its religious goals was underscored in a plan following the 1978 Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt. This plan was to enact *messianic violence*, or cataclysmic action of such magnitude as to facilitate the coming of the Messiah. In this case, the plan was to blow up the Muslim sacred shrine, the Dome of the Rock, located on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This plan took several years to plan, but was shelved at the last minute for lack of rabbinical support. The Palestinian uprising in 1987 known as the Intifada heralded more attacks on Jewish settlers. This drew Gush Emunim members into more intense violent action, and vigilantism was religiously sanctioned by the group's rabbis.

FUNDAMENTALIST MOVEMENTS AND THE BROADER SOCIETY

Fundamentalist movements can be both positive and negative in their consequences for broader society. They can turn the downtrodden and disillusioned into productive, forward looking individuals and give them purpose in life. A fundamentalist revival movement can serve as a check against negative tendencies in society as a whole, and can eventually serve as a focus for beneficial directed social change. On the other hand because such

movements often objectify the larger society as Other and oppressor, they can produce participants who are defiant of civil authority, and difficult to predict or control. They often operate on the edge of the law creating automatic tension with the society in which they exist.

Because of this mixed set of effects, it is sometimes difficult for public officials to decide how to interact with fundamentalists. Their mere separation from society at large can seem threatening to public order. Zealous officials may seek prophylactic action against a given movement for no better reason than that they appear secretive and suspicious. Often the line is drawn at violence. No matter how justified the cause of a movement, or how beneficial its activities, in most societies it will meet official resistance when it espouses violent action. Additionally, in societies like the United States the government frequently intervenes with force to protect individuals from harm even when they seem to be willing participants in their own destruction through participating in the actions of the movement

The unintended consequence of this kind of police action is frequently a strengthening of the resolve of the fundamentalist movement to resist. Two government actions in the United States in recent years directed against fundamentalist movements attracted widespread criticism because the members of the movement, while behaving in a decidedly asocial manner, did not manifest violence, and yet were killed.

The first of these incidents was an action taken by the police of the city of Philadelphia against a communal urban political and spiritual organization called MOVE in May, 1985. The group was living in abandoned buildings, and refused to vacate when ordered. The police then set fire to the buildings resulting in a number of deaths. Critics claimed that the police took the action they did because the group was largely black, and because they were secretive and defiant. The repercussions of this action continue to be a potent force in politics in Philadelphia today.

The second case was a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) assault on a Christian religious-political movement, the Branch Davidians, in Waco, Texas in 1993. The group lived in cult-like isolation and advocated the destruction of the U.S. government. They also had a large arsenal of weapons, but had not manifested any violent actions. The FBI laid siege to the group's compound for many days and eventually drove them to mass suicide.

The demise of the Branch Davidians became a *cause celebre* with a small fraction of Americans as an example of extreme government interference in individual religious liberties and civil rights. Eventually, a great tragedy ensued. On April 19, 1995, the United States Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, was bombed killing 168 innocent adults and children. This was the worst terrorist action ever committed in on American soil to that date. The convicted perpetrators of this crime, Timothy McVeigh and Lawrence Nichols, apparently were associated with a para-military "militia" group based in the state of Michigan. Testimony at their trial revealed that they believed that the bombing would trigger the overthrow of the U.S. government and lead to a public awakening resulting in a new social order. This new order would embody the values and principles of an imagined earlier age when government exercised minimal control over individual liberties. The perpetrators of this crime espoused an extreme action--in this case the bombing of innocent citizens--in order to further what they believed to be a spiritual and moral cause.

Members of the American militias are undoubtedly a fringe group at present. With an estimated 15,000 members, their fundamentalist movement is not widespread enough to ensure its eventual success throughout American society. Nevertheless, despite their outlying position in American social and political life they, like extremist fundamentalists elsewhere, depend on a base of supporters who are sympathetic but not personally activist. If the overall national climate of opinion shifts toward accepting their ideology, their perceived mandate for action will also increase.

In the meantime, like many of their fundamentalist counterparts in other parts of the world, the American militia members will see arrest and punishment at the hands of the government as proof of the value of their actions

and gain encouragement from their repression. In this manner violent actions such as the Oklahoma City bombing may increase, even as they are decried by the larger society.

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This massive five-volume work edited by two distinguished religion scholars is the culmination of a multi-year scholarly study involving dozens of researchers, including a number of anthropologists. The project has also inspired a video series for public television. The individual contributions are exceedingly variable in quality, but all contain useful descriptive information on fundamentalist movements in many societies.

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In a sea of volumes of edited papers this single-authored volume is a fresh and original attempt to develop a comprehensive, theoretical approach to the study of fundamentalism.

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