

Review per class

What if Fundamentalism

start [I am going to try to explain
I've been asked to "explain" the reason so many religious groups in our world seem to defy reason, seem to disdain science, and in general, want nothing to do with modern ways of thinking. This phenomena is not the belief of only one religion. All three monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, share this to a greater or lesser extent.

~~In this presentation~~ I am indebted to a writer, Bruce B. Lawrence whose book "Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist revolt against the modern age" forms the basis of this lecture. ~~Since it was published in 1989, I have updated many of the ideas from several news sources.~~

Because of its common usage, I will use the term "Fundamentalism" to cover this understanding. I will define fundamentalism as "the affirmation of religious authority as holistic and absolute, admitting of neither criticism nor reduction". It is expressed thru the collective demand of the faith community that specific creedal and ethical dictates derived from scripture be publicly recognized and legally enforced. Remove scripture and you no longer have fundamentalism but some other non-religious social movement. Fundamentalism is an IDEOLOGY NOT A THEOLOGY.

Fundamentalists do not deny or disregard the modern age. They protest as moderns against what they see as the "heresies" of the modern age.

So what is Modernism? I will define it as the search for individual autonomy driven by a set of socially encoded values emphasizing change over continuity; quantity over quality; efficient production, power, and profit

over sympathy for traditional values or vocations, in both the public and private spheres.

At its utopian extreme, it enthrones one economic strategy, consumer-oriented capitalism, as the surest means to technological progress that will also eliminate social unrest and physical discomfort.

The word Fundamentalist in English is linked to turn of the 20th century protestant Christianity, yet fundamentalism has become cross creedal and multicultural. It is as intrinsic and inevitable to Israeli ultra conservatives and sunni or Shia Muslims as it is to american protestants.

Who are they? they see themselves as the last ditch defenders of God.

Fundamentalism has been called the only new heresy. This is because without the modern world there are no fundamentalists, just as there are no modernists. The identity of fundamentalism, both as a psychological mindset and as an historical movement, is shaped by the modern world..

Either way, one cannot speak of premodern fundamentalists. Thus, the timeline for discovering, describing, assessing and explaining fundamentalists depends upon the modern way of seeing reality, for fundamentalists are a product of the modern world.

The groups we are talking about are caught in a peculiar tension: they accept the benefits of the modern world, often thriving thru their use of technology, while explicitly rejecting modernism as an ideological framework. They are moderns but not modernists.

What are fundamentalists reacting against? In a word, the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment is the declared enemy, for it undergirds

the modern world. Not only science, which is seen as part of the enemy, but also the modern study of religion.

For virtually all fundamentalists, the three thinkers who are most hated are Darwin, Freud and Marx, but particularly Darwin.

Because the modern world is now global, so is fundamentalism. It is coextensive with our world. It will change, adapting to new circumstances, but it will not disappear. It seems neither scholars nor journalists have really grasped the larger context within which fundamentalism must be viewed.

Fundamentalism is a series of parallel socioreligious movements in the modern world that accept the instrumental benefits of the modern world but NOT its values.

All fundamentalists, whatever their faith, embrace their own canon of scriptural authority as self-conscious advocates of anti-modern values. Fundamentalist loyalty is hatred of the modern value agenda.

The single most consistent denominator for fundamentalists of all three monotheistic faiths is opposition to all those individuals or institutions that advocate Enlightenment values and wave the banner of secularism or modernism.

Nothing has defined the tone of fundamentalist rhetoric as much as the hatred, and also the FEAR, of Modernism.

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Part of the modern age has been the rise of Nationalism. The one thing nationalism and fundamentalism have in common is they are Universalist in nature.

They not only incorporate universal norms, but they strain for universal compliance with those norms. This has forced the monotheistic traditions to weigh their own survival in the public arena.

Thus, separation of church and state might be better termed the preservation of church (or synagogue, or mosque) from state.

Nationalism, even in religious guise (ex: the tea party) pushes up against the limits of religious norms. Nationalists are pitted against religion, and it is the fundamentalists who have understood the high stakes in this struggle.

All three monotheistic religions face the same question vis a vis nationalism: How can believers preserve their symbolic identity within a public order that is structurally anti-religious? These are not mere contraries, they are genuine contradictions and the outcome has not been decided.

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A LOOK AT ALL THREE FAITHS

Fundamentalism as a religious ideology is defined by its unremitting opposition to nationalism as the most tenacious ideology of the technical age. It is a battle of ideologies that is at work here tho the markings are different for each monotheistic tradition. To how that plays out in each of the three faiths I will not turn.

Protestant Christianity

The position of Protestant Christianity is at once the most moderate and the most ambivalent. Protestant Fundamentalists succeeded in America because of the elective affinity between them and their fellow citizens.

There is a tacit congruity between the scripturally mandated faith of fundamentalists and the constitutionally sanctioned ethos of the majority of Americans.

Together they forged the dominant value system of middle America. Henry May described it as Progressive Protestant Patriotism or PPP. Progressive because it believes in the forward march of history towards some shadowy utopia; Protestant because it accepts, to some degree, the separation of church and state, with the right to practice one's own faith or even to deny all faith as a "God-given right"; and patriotic because it was only in the U.S. that the optimal expression of innate human dispositions can flourish.

The old bumper sticker, "America, Love it or leave it" echos the most extreme version of this view. Many American fundamentalists exalt territorial aspirations to the level of a universalist mandate, for instance on foreign policy issues that involve Israel.

Yet many of these protestant fundamentalists are at odds with their fellow citizens. They see a point of tension between the demands of faith and the exercise of public authority. They would like to compel all Americans to adopt their interpretation of the Constitution.

They have often tried , as for example, with prohibition, to bring about the changes they desire or to change the court decisions they

6

oppose (for ex: roe v wade) but they have never tried to undermine the peculiarly American system of governance.

While they have enjoyed only slight success in reshaping the public sphere of American life, all their efforts are exerted WITHIN rather than AGAINST the framework of democratic institutions. They want to replace one set of laws with another, one policy with another but not abandon or subvert the political arena, only redirect it.. *- See next page ->*

~~The one major exception to this is a group called THE CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTIONIST MOVEMENT. Coming originally out of the Calvinistic tradition (presbyterian) it crosses all denominational lines, with adherents in most conservative denominations. It believes all the 613 laws given to Moses are binding on people of all nations, cultures and religions forever, except for those that have been modified by further revelation.~~

~~It is a political movement to convert the U.S and eventually, the whole world, into a theocracy in which dissenters, adulterers, sexually active homosexuals, witches, sorderers, etc. would be exterminated by stoning.~~

JUDAISM

While Protestant fundamentalists remain both progressive and patriotic, with this exception, and standing out for their relative moderation with respect for the political process, Jewish and Islamic fundamentalists have not experienced the development of their communities in tandem with the modern age..

- b.p. 70

The major movement of Christian Fundamentalism is known as Dominion "seven mountain" theology. It is a theocratic ideology that seeks to implement a nation governed by conservative Christians ruling over the rest of society based on their understanding of biblical law.

These are theologically diverse, including the Calvinist Reconstruction movement and the charismatic/pentecostal Kingdom Now theology and New Apostolic Reformation.

The term "Dominion Theology" was derived from the King James Bible's rendering of Genesis 1:28 in which God grants humanity "dominion" over the Earth.

Christians usually interpret this passage as meaning God gave humankind responsibility over the Earth but the distinctive aspect of Dominion Theology is that it is interpreted as a mandate for Christian stewardship in civil affairs, no less than in other human matters.

The contemporary movements labeled Dominion theology arose in the 1970's in religious movements reasserting aspects of Christian nationalism.

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTIONISM

This movement originated in the 1960's and 70's with the teachings of R.J. Rushdoony. This focused on Theonomy, the rule of the law of God, a belief that all of society should be ordered according to the laws that governed the Israelites in the Old Testament. His system is strongly Calvinistic, emphasizing the sovereignty of God over freedom and action, and denying the operation of charismatic gifts in the present day. This includes stuff like stoning those found in adultery or homosexual relationships, etc.

KINGDOM NOW THEOLOGY Is another branch of Dominion theology but is within the Pentacostal movement that began in the mid 1960's. It attracted attention in the late 1980's and does believe that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit are still present.

Kingdom Now theology believes that altho Satan has been in control of the world since the Fall, God id looking for people who will help him take back dominion. Those who yield themselves to God's authority will take control of the kingdoms of this world, being defined as all social institutions, --Education, culture science, arts, etc. --the seven mountains of society. This also goes back to John Calvin.

In the late 80's sociologist Sara Diamond began writing about the intersection of Dominion theology with the political activists of the Christian right. She argued that it was a biblical mandate to "occupy" all secular institutions and has become the CENTRAL UNIFYING IDEOLOGY of the Christian right.

It has been pointed out, in 1992, that in the context of American evangelical efforts to penetrate and transform public life, the distinguishing mark of a dominionist is a commitment to defining and carrying out an approach to building society that is SELF-CONSCIOUSLY DEFINED AS EXCLUSIVELY CHRISTIAN, and dependent on the work of Christians rather than based on a broader consensus.

This theology is, according to Diamond, "prevalent on the christian right. Their idea is to "take control of a sinful secular society."

In 2005 characteristics shared by all forms of dominionism were listed. they are:

1. Dominionists celebrate Christian nationalism, in that they believe that the US once was, and should again be, a Christian nation. They deny the Enlightenment roots of American democracy.
2. Dominionists promote religious supremacy, and generally do not respect the equality of other religions, or even other versions of Christianity.
3. Dominionists endorse theocratic visions, insofar as they believe that the ten commandments or "biblical law," should be the foundation of American law, and that the US constitution should be seen as a vehicle for implementing biblical principles.

In short, a 1987 book called "the changing of the guard: biblical principles for political action" said

"Christians have an obligation, a mandate, a commission, a holy responsibility to reclaim the land for Jesus Christ--to have dominion in civil structures, just as in every other aspect of life and godliness....but it is dominion we are after. Not just a voice...Christian politics has as its primary intent the conquest of the land -- of men, families, institutions, bureaucracies, courts, and, governments for the Kingdom of Christ."

One other comment before we leave Dominionism. Ted Cruz's father is a major preacher in the dominion movement.

go back top. 6

10

Their situation reflects the growing disparity between the monotheistic traditions as the Technical age advances. They have not been equally privileged in finding a subordinate place within the new order symbolized above all by the power of the nation state.

Jewish Fundamentalists have to grapple with modernism in the form of one of the most successful of all nationalist ideologies, ZIONISM, which came out of the liberal Reform movement started in Germany in the early 19th century.

Those originally opposing the Zionist movement, the Orthodox now are attempting to control marriage and conversions in Israel.

There are several different ultra conservative movements in Israel today: Neturei Karta, Gush Emunim and the Kach party, related to Rabbi Meir Kahane.

It was Hasidism which arose in the Eastern Europe in the early 18th century that provided the spiritual model for Jewish Fundamentalism. With the advent of Hasidism (which simply means pious ones) the REBBE took the place of both the Torah and the scholars. He personified the Torah.

NETUREI KARTA has accommodated to it by remaining in the heart of the state and opposing its persistent efforts to develop a civil religion. Instead of compliance with the requirements of a modern nation-state, they have proposed a strict attention to traditional observances within their confines.

Gush Emunim, followers of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, believes that only when the Jews retake all the land David once had for Israel will the Messiah come. These are the folks trying to settle everywhere, no matter if

11

its Palistinean land or not. Neturei Karta and Gush Emunim are highly atagonistic to each other.

However, these ultra orthodox have slowly gained more power over the years. The Ultra orthodox jews are the fastest growing sector in Israel, often holding the balance of power in coalition governments and open strains between the more liberal community and the orthodox are far more common.

A few ~~weeks~~^{years} ago, American Jews and Israeli Jewish leaders held a conference trying to iron out their differences but to no avail. the two communities are at odds over everything from religious rituals to gender roles.

Despite the secular majority, ultra-orthodox rabbis strictly govern Jewish practices such as weddings, burials and conversions. The Ultra-Orthodox only allow them for those who meet orthodox definitions of a Jew. Any Jew can become a citizen but once in Israel they find they can't get married or have a jewish burial.

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ISLAM

It is important to remember that Christian and Jewish fundamentalists differ markedly from Islam in their interpretation of nationalism. For most of them it was the benefits of the modern age that colored their reaction to nationalism.

Both America and Israel are contained in a geographic area. However, the opposite is true of Islam. Tho Islamic expansion was limited to the afro- Eurasian world it was a vast domain.

Within its vast and disparate parts, Muslim elites had enjoyed political power and global preeminence for more than a thousand years, till the advent of the technical age.

European colonialism challenged the indigenous politics and agents created their own elite counterparts in the once proud Muslim empires. Even with the end of colonialism, the values persisted.

Thus 20th century nationalism produced a cleavage of enormous magnitude, both between Muslims and the dominant culture of Western Europe and also between Muslims who openly accommodated to western values and those who seemed to oppose them.

Since both the modernizers and their opponents tended to be the urban elites, neither group expressed the fears or hopes of the majority who were mostly rural and illiterate.

The problem is that these Islamic countries have been straightjacketed into an imposed system of government and cannot adapt it to their own values. In theory these should have become nations when they won their independence, but instead they adopted the rubric of statehood without the substance of nationhood.

The Muslim experience is immensely complicated by the fact that Islam, like Judaism, stakes out claims to be a holistic ideology, competent to address every activity of life and every sphere of human society.

Even though Islam claims to be universal, nationalism arising against European and other Islamic countries meant that each country saw themselves as "sacred" over against all others, even other Muslim countries.

Thus nationalism wedded to patriotism suggests that the only ideal worthy of pursuit is territorial or, even more narrowly, racial. Both appeals lead their constituents to be at heart "anti-religious".

Just as European nationalism rang the death knell for any hope of a "Holy Roman Empire" in Europe, so its echo response among arabs and asians precluded any ultimate success for a pan-Islamic movement.

Islamic fundamentalism thus began as a reaction to the dramatic price increases by OPEC in 1973. This produced regional revolution of expectations and further separated the elite from the masses. The disparity between the so called "first world" countries for whom the oil was being produced and the still third world countries that produced it was very visible. Beginning in the 70's a compensatory reaction set in with government sponsored "Islamization" programs to build pride.

this did not erase the underlying problem: the sense of exclusion from the major issues and the ongoing dramas of the technical age felt by Muslim elites and non-elites alike.

In 1979 the takeover in Iran and the little publicized take over of the mosque in Mecca at the same time, signaled more than the beginning of a new islamic century. It also signaled the possibility of a restoration of Islamic values to the center stage of world events.

Thus, the nation-state has become as normative a structure for Muslims as for non-muslim countries. It embodies little of Islamic ideals for social justice. It projects either tribal stratification or military authoritarianism, or both.

4

Thus, Islamic Fundamentalism arose as a response to the failure of Muslim nationalisms. Had the transition from dependence to independence worked there would have been no Islamic fundamentalism, or at most, it would have been a modest movement. Instead, independence proved a severe disappointment to most Muslims. The reaction has been for these fundamentalist movements, such as the wahabi in Saudi Arabia, and an offshoot the Taliban in Afganistan, to attempt to recover what they believed to be the original golden age of Islam.