

That Which Moves

Accounting for the Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements. Edited by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

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ACCOUNTING FOR FUNDAMENTALISMS is the fourth volume in a series of studies of religious fundamentalism which began in 1988. The volume reviewed is part of a massive study project sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and carried out under the direction of the distinguished American religious historians Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby. The principal task of the volume was to identify, describe, and analyze the relationship between the "organizational characteristics of fundamentalist movements . . . and their changing world views, ideologies, and programs" (3). Three earlier volumes in the series set out to describe and define fundamentalism (volume one); examine its impact on the intimate and social zones of life: family, education, communications etc. (volume two); and ascertain its influence on political life and the state (volume three). The results, in *Accounting for Fundamentalisms*, both in the individual studies and in the volume as a whole, are informative, illuminating, and occasionally incomplete.

This volume and its companions

in "The Fundamentalism Project" are meant to serve as "major resource(s) for students, commentators, and policy analysts" (4) who are perplexed by and misinformed about the contemporary, worldwide phenomenon of religious fundamentalisms. The "Project" is based on the major premise that behind the great diversity of manifestations, there are significant "family resemblances" between fundamentalisms; whether the community is American fundamentalist Protestant, Iraqi Shi'ite, the Jewish Gush Emunim, Sinhalese Buddhist, all share the task of: "Selective retrieval, embellishment, and/or construction of 'essentials' or 'fundamentals' of a religious tradition for the purposes of halting the erosion of traditional society and fighting back against the encroachment of modern secularity" (4). Of course, it is the militancy and growth of fundamentalisms which account for the enormous resources dedicated by the institutions of the "established order" to the study of fundamentalists/isms. Established elites hope, no doubt, that if they can identify those substantive similarities and account for the conditions which create and shape them, then the phenomenon can be understood, co-opted, and eventually contained.

By virtue of its sheer mass, specialization, and price, *Accounting for Fundamentalisms* is not destined for most personal libraries. It is, however,

along with the other volumes in this series, an indispensable reference source for understanding the bewildering array of fundamentalist movements and ideologies. No doubt university and "think tank" reference librarians are well aware of the fact. The series will be readily available and should be widely read.

Accounting for Fundamentalisms is the combined work of thirty authors (twenty social scientists, nine historians, and one philosopher) and is divided into four major sections, each dealing with a different "member" of the fundamentalist "family": Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and southern Asian. The scholarly production of papers in each area of study was supervised by an associate editor who, after reviewing the papers, provides a very helpful synthetic essay summarizing and analyzing the finds and themes in the section.

The book's virtues are legion. The constraints of a review format allow mentioning only a few.

Fascinating Stories. This volume is a trove of narratives of or allusions to striking historico/religious events: the Guatemalan evangelical soldier who, by force of his commitment to the gospel of Christ, converts hardened revolutionaries and countermands secret military orders to summarily execute rebel fighters (122n25); the effectiveness of Luigi Guissani to combat the submission to secularity by two generations of Italian university students (124-48); Jerry Falwell's description of the festivities of the Clinton inauguration as a Walpurgis night of the cohorts of Satan (93) (I just thought that it was overblown and mediocre!); the distinction between haredim (Jewish Ultra-Orthodox) in Jerusalem and New York City and their treatment of

gentile commercial customers (186); the report of the Iranian delegation's pledge, in a 1993 International Islamic Conference, to support Islamic groups in the overthrow of the Mubarek government (in Egypt) as the "key to the creation of the Islamic *umma* (people, or pan-national popular will)" (368); the list could go on at greater length.

Illuminating Analysis. Certain "mysteries" attendant to the phenomena of fundamentalism are made more intelligible by insightful analysis. A sample: what fundamentalist Protestant have to gain economically from political activism (32-33, 36-37); why women support fundamentalist movements (53-54); how American fundamentalists justified the innovation of political activism through a re-reading of dispensational hermeneutics (70-72); how indigenous people in Ecuador, converts to evangelical Christianity, are not passive receptacles of foreign culture but shapers of and participants in an extraordinary synergy of cultures modern and ancient (79-98, esp 98); how prayer "keeps alive a critical consciousness" (161), and study of sacred texts preserves the world (180-81); why Jewish fundamentalism is inherently limited (193), and Islamic fundamentalism prone to co-optation by the organs and leaders of the state (368); how one can account for the process of religious conversion to and mobilization within fundamentalist movements (187-97). There is no dearth of insights into the history and mechanics of organizations, ideology, and mobilization within religious fundamentalism in the pages of *Accounting for Fundamentalisms*; this is the text's particular strength.

Characters in Search of an Author. What is missing from the pages of *Accounting for Fundamentalisms* are, first,

compelling first-hand accounts and rationalizations by fundamentalists themselves for participation in and allegiance to their movements and leaders, and, second, phenomenological accounts of the religious experiences of fundamentalist participants, and how those experiences are translated into religious militancy. Any serious, in-depth "accounting for fundamentalisms" absent this essential line of inquiry is incomplete. It is largely missing from the pages of the book under review.

This particular criticism is not minor due to two internal factors. First, the editors urged the authors of each paper to be sympathetic in rendering a portrait of the fundamentalist experience to the extent that the fundamentalist, even if he/she disagreed with the author's conclusions, would at least recognize him/herself in the scholar's portrait. Second, the editors promised an examination of the relationship between organization and "worldviews" (4). How can either of these criteria be met when the immediate encounter between the religious "actor" and Transcendent Reality—which surely must be the very basis for belief and activism—is left unexamined or dismissed by one author as only "psychological" (789)?

The examples of missed opportunities are too numerous to mention.

But representative of them is in Hugh Roberts's otherwise excellent historical and sociological account of Algerian Islamic fundamentalism (428-89). In this massive article, he opines that the resurgence of mosque building in the aftermath of the Algerian struggle for independence and religious reform can be ascribed merely to the support for the project given by businessmen "anxious to consolidate or enhance their social standing" (444). While materialist explanations are surely in order, they cannot account exhaustively for this or other examples of public piety. Tod Swanson's account of Andean evangelical practice (78-98), and Aviezer Ravitzky's rendering of the Lubavitcher Hasidic cosmology (303-27), come closest to answering this need. Both are exemplary in their sympathetic and imaginative renditions of unique evangelical and hasidic beliefs and practices.

To critique is easier than to create. I am well aware of my derivative undertaking (see Mark Lilla, "The Riddle of Walter Benjamin," *New York Review of Books*, 25 May 1995, 38). *Accounting for Fundamentalisms* is ambitious, instructive, and challenging. And yet I look forward to a future volume entitled *The Varieties of Fundamentalist Religious Experience: A Book of Sources*.

Mormons and UFOs

Millennium. By Jack Anderson (New York: Thomas Doherty Associates, 1995).

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TOWARDS THE END OF JACK ANDERSON's first novel, *Millennium*, syndicated columnist Mick Aaronson announces: "What I am about to tell you