

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 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,