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HISTORY IN THE FUNDAMENTALIST IMAGINATION

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Source: *Journal of American History*, 89:2 (2002), 498–511.

The fundamentalist past as prelude

Historians are not alone in reconstructing the past. Richly imagined and ingeniously documented versions of the past shape and sustain religious, social, and political movements. Such is the case with the antisecular, antimodernist religious movements that are sometimes compared under the term "fundamentalism." In this essay I first examine fundamentalist reconstructions of the past as a way of understanding the distinctive world views such histories reinforce and the appeal they hold for individuals and movements. In the second part of the essay, I explore the experience of the Islamic world in the twentieth century as it has been historicized and popularized by Sunni Muslim extremists such as Sayyid Qutb (1903–1966) and one of his contemporary disciples, Osama bin Laden.

The mentality of fundamentalists is shaped by a tortured vision of the past—a construction of history that casts the long and otherwise dispiriting record of humiliation, persecution, and exile of the true believers (punctuated by an occasional, atypical golden age of faith) as a necessary prelude to the decisive intervention of God and the final vanquishing of the apostates.

That sentence deserves several qualifications. First, the blanket use of the term "fundamentalism" may incorrectly suggest that Protestant fundamentalism—an early case of organized, militant religious opposition to secular modernity and its accomplices (pluralism, relativism, feminism)—is the template for all other fundamentalisms. The scriptural inerrancy invented by critics of the higher criticism of the Bible in the late 1880s, however, is hardly the defining mark of all such religious movements that arose in reaction against the modern nation-state with its absolutist pretensions and ever-increasing reach. Almost a generation before U.S. Protestant fundamentalism appeared, the Roman Catholic Church promulgated the *Syllabus of Errors*

(1864), in which Pope Pius IX condemned most aspects of modernity, inaugurating an antimodernist campaign on a platform of ecclesial rather than scriptural "inerrancy." (The doctrine of papal infalliblity was defined by the First Vatican Council in 1870.) "Scriptural inerrancy" as a distinctive mark of fundamentalism is redundant when applied to Islam, given all Muslims' traditional—not, that is, anti-modern—belief about the Koran. And so on.[1]

Second, some Muslims, Christians, and Jews have objected to the term "fundamentalism" because it implies that their militant co-religionists are the true believers, the righteous defenders of the faith, whereas, they argue, the militants manipulate sacred texts and traditional teachings to serve political ends. Mainstream believers note the irony in the posturing of self-anointed defenders of the faith who have little respect for the integrity of its fundamentals. Fundamentalism, in other words, is best understood as a mode of thought and action, an identifiable configuration of ideology and organizational resources—not as an essence or constitutive trait of any or all of the host religious traditions. And even within the family of fundamentalisms reaching across time zones and religions, the differences between the movements are far greater than their similarities.

Third, to describe fundamentalists' views of the past as "tortured" is to run the outsiders risk of missing the full significance and function of history as they learn, teach, and re-enact it. Each of the subgroups has developed an enduring religious culture by discerning meaning and purpose amid the farrago of its own particular and in some sense incomparable historical experiences.

Yet one ventures to speak of a mentality shared by disparate militant religious movements of self-styled true believers who attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors. Islam in the latter half of the twentieth century produced a particularly formidable and radical expression of the fundamentalist mode, but other major religious traditions have also given birth to movements that can be fruitfully compared to the Islamist movements (what comparativists call Muslim fundamentalism), as well as to the original Christian cases.

A key to that mentality is found in the fundamentalists' appropriation of history. For them history is decidedly not just "one damn thing after another"; it is the arena in which the divine plan is enacted, in which souls gain or lose their salvation, in which God's elect—the *dramatis personae* in the passion play—take center stage. There they may perform in a passive, quiescent mode by building the religious enclave, converting, indoctrinating, and gathering in the true believers, and awaiting the coming of the messiah or renewer. The haredi, or ultra-Orthodox, Jews of Israel occupy this niche prominently, as do Christians of the United States and Europe who anticipate the "rapture," in which true believers are raised directly up to the heavens, followed by the

lg tidar (2012) Fundamentalism & Charismatic movements.

coming of the antichrist, the great cosmic battle of Armageddon, and the thousand-year rule of Christ. For much of their history, adherents of the Shiite branch of Islam adopted a similar quiescent mode, awaiting deliverance by the divinely guided leader, the Hidden Imam.[2]

Or, conceiving themselves to be active agents of the Almighty, fundamentalists organize for cultural power, political takeover, or military conquest. The "new Christian Right" of the 1980s derived energy from a fundamentalist core who had decided that the United States was becoming so godless that Bible-believing Christians could no longer wait privately for the return of Christ; the elect were required to "take back" the public schools, the Supreme Court, the Congress, and the presidency.[3] Islamic militants in Arab countries, adherents of the Sunni branch of Islam, seek to restore the caliphate, the religious-political office traditionally responsible for guaranteeing that the Islamic state followed and enforced Islamic law.[4] Shiite ayatollahs awoke from their political slumbers in the late 1970s to strive to transform Iran and Lebanon into Islamic republics that would eventually merge into an "all-encompassing Islamic state" embodying the *umma* or worldwide Islamic community.[5]

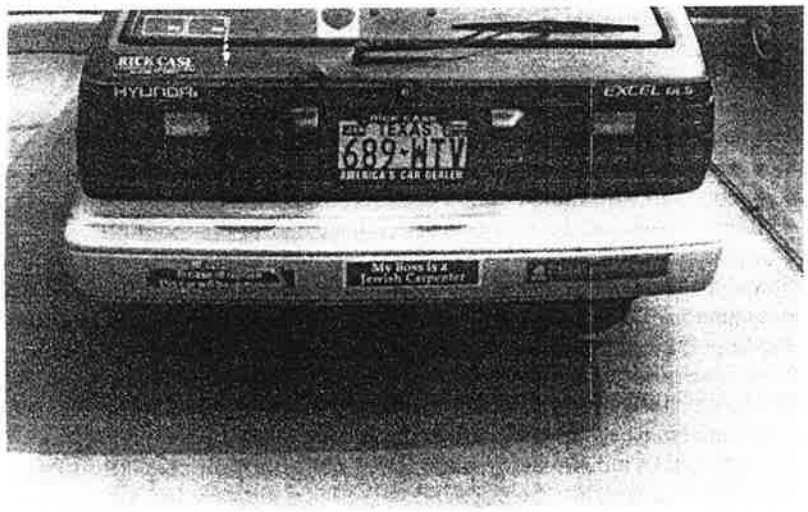
History has a double edge for many militant antisecular groups. On the one hand, the past is filled with horrible suffering for the believers and apparent victories for the apostates—those who have fallen away from the true faith and succumbed to materialism, the corruptions arising from sexual license and lust for money, and the other spiritually enervating seductions of modernity. The enemy seems to control the centers of power. And yet, to the eyes of the true believer, even now God is bringing this dour history to an unexpected, dramatic, and rewarding culmination. The Jews of Gush Emunim, the Bloc of the Faithful in Israel, combine in their small movement a remarkable balance of the extremes of euphoria and expectation, on the one hand, and disgust with, or despair at, mundane realities, on the other, that are found less expertly blended in many other movements. The establishment of the state of Israel, in Gush historiography, is clearly a sign and instrument of the arrival of the messianic age, as are Israel's military victories over the surrounding Arab populations. Gush Emunim itself is the chosen agent of the divine plan to restore "the whole land of Israel" to its biblical proportions. By aggressively establishing settlements in the occupied territories, the Bloc of the Faithful is coaxing the secular Zionist government to defend the Jewish presence and thus to restore the Jews to their rightful place as sovereigns over the Holy Land. But the confident and often ecstatic behavior of the Gush coexists with bouts of severe depression when what they call other "facts in the field" occur—such as the 1982 bulldozing of the Yamit settlement on the Sinai by the Israeli government in compliance with the Camp David accords or the defection of the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, who negotiated the Oslo accords with Yasir Arafat in the early 1990s and presumed to trade "Jewish" land for peace.[6]

Both the near euphoria and the despair are rooted in a supernaturalist reading of history. Professional secular historians typically are reluctant to identify or even search for a transcendent meaning to the narratives they manage to piece together: ordinary time, with all its humbling ambiguities, is their métier. Fundamentalists seem less bothered by the multivalent and often contradictory testimonies culled from archives and archaeological digs or encountered within their own sacred scriptures and religious traditions.

Seldom, in fact, is the true believer confounded by the multiple motives of historical actors, random occurrences, and unintended consequences—in a providential universe there are no random occurrences and unintended consequences. Details that reinforce the received world view receive dutiful attention. Like all historians, fundamentalists select from the jumble of facts and events, prioritizing and weighing some few more heavily than all the rest; no attempt at narrative can avoid the sifting process. But fundamentalists often reach beyond the personal inclinations and biases that influence any historian to an external source such as Scripture that provides an inerrant, that is, a trustworthy, foundation for hermeneutics. Indeed, the proprietors of the cottage industry in Christian apocalypticism, including megaselling authors such as Tim LaHaye (author of the wildly popular *Left Behind* series) and Hal Lindsey (of *The Late Great Planet Earth*), endorse—and profit from—the fundamentalist assertion that reading history through the lens of biblical prophecy is a more "objective" method than reading with ones own subjectivity as guide.[7]

Apocalypticism is a defining feature of fundamentalisms. The expectation of a dramatic reversal of history at the hands of God or a messiah, in which the faithful or holy remnant are vindicated and their enemies brutally punished, is not confined to fundamentalists—it is a deep strain within the premodern (and thus prefundamentalist) history of all three major monotheisms. But apocalyptic or millenarian fervor takes on a decidedly therapeutic role in the lives and imagination of the modern antimodernists. The anticipated reversal of ordinary history is a source of great comfort for millions of believers living amid squalor, relative deprivation, or moral decadence. The fundamentalists' present suffering is but a prelude to a profoundly satisfying reward for their perseverance, whether they live in the putrid refugee camps of Gaza or southern Lebanon or the relative affluence but spiritual sterility of the Dallas suburbs.

Thus, the Gulf War of 1990 provoked in the Christian fundamentalists of Dallas and elsewhere a mixture of dread and rapturous joy. To these dispensationalists—who believe God has divided history into several "dispensations," or eras, the last of which, the apocalyptic end times, is imminent—the reports of Saddam Hussein lobbing Scud missiles at Israel seemed to augur the outbreak of Armageddon. The Bible predicts, the dispensationalists believe, that the great and unimaginably bloody final battle between the forces of Christ and antichrist will occur at Megiddo, a hill in Israel not far from



A bumper sticker in Texas, in the heart of the Bible belt, reads: "In case of rapture this car will be unmanned." It reduces to a popular slogan the premillennialist idea that true believers will be rescued from the punishment and chaos awaiting the masses of sinners at the end of time. *Photograph by Micah Marty. Courtesy R. Scott Appleby.*

where the missiles were falling. True believers found reason to celebrate the approach of the end times in their conviction that they would be taken directly to heaven to escape the chastisement and conflagration awaiting the mass of sinful humanity. In *The New World Order*—a 1991 book that borrowed its title, with intended irony, from President George Bush—the Pentecostal preacher and erstwhile presidential candidate Pat Robertson detailed the chaos to come for those left behind. Exploiting the military victory over Iraq, Bush, Robertson claimed, was leading a well-organized, well-financed, multigenerational "cabal" in a "conspiracy" to create a one-world socialist state, centered in the United Nations and eventually to be governed by the antichrist of biblical prophecy. To demonstrate this thesis, Robertson took the history of the twentieth century as his text, pointing to events as disparate as loans made to Bolshevik Russia in 1917, the creation of the European Common Market and its plans for a Europe-wide currency, the euro, and the recent scandal involving the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) to "prove" that the satanic conspiracy had been building for generations.[8]

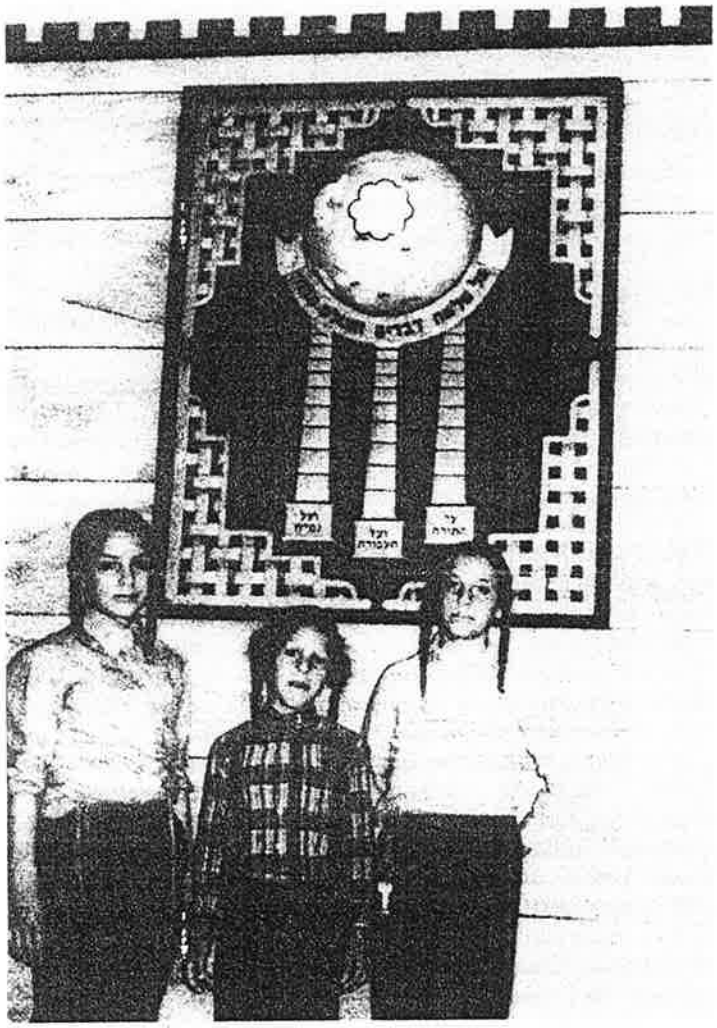
Those self-styled true believers whom we are calling fundamentalists hardly fall into lockstep, however, in their methods of relating temporality to eternity. Sensibilities differ. Some attempt entirely to shut out developments

occurring apart from, or subsequent to, sacred time. Ultra-Orthodox rebbes living in contemporary Israel, ensconced in their enclave of Mea Shearim, look longingly at maps of areas of Jewish settlement in eastern Europe marking villages, regions, and place names that have not existed for more than a century. Others shut out every bit of data but what the sacred text provides. The sociologist Samuel C. Heilman reports that sixth-grade boys in a Lithuanian yeshiva in Jerusalem immediately prior to the Gulf War were unable to sketch the outline of a map of Israel or to tell him the names of the surrounding countries. One youngster, asked what bordered on Israel, confidently answered that Israel was surrounded by *chutz la'aretz*, the Hebrew expression that most Israelis use to refer to the rest of the world. "In this boys mind the world was neatly divided," Heilman writes. "Just as there were goyim and Jews, so similarly there was Israel and *chutz la'aretz*." None of the boys could identify Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. None had ever heard of Saudi Arabia.[9]

By contrast, members of Gush Emunim are a reliable source for the latest news of Middle East politics; they follow unfolding events closely, using them to buttress their distinctive reading of modern (messianic) history. The radical Jewish settlers are not waiting anxiously for the messiah like their haredi counterparts; they are instead proclaiming a messianic era and forcing Israel's hand by creating new settlements in the occupied territories of "Judea" and "Samaria." History is our currency, said Daniella Weiss, a Gush publicist.[10]

Their different settings, beliefs, and goals notwithstanding, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic fundamentalists interpret the history of the modern period, especially the twentieth century, in remarkably similar ways. It has been a period of dramatic and gut-wrenching decline—they typically use such words as "erosion," "alienation," "isolation," and "exile" to characterize the weakened state of traditional religious observance, family life, parental authority, and patriarchal privilege. In their constructions of history, the atheistic or agnostic modern state is the recurring culprit, whether it be a United States Supreme Court that legalized abortion, an Israeli prime minister who attempted to trade land for peace with the Palestinians, or a Saudi monarchy that entered into military and business alliances with the Western infidels. "*The bottom line*," concluded the influential Christian thinker Francis A. Schaeffer, who could have been speaking for the disgruntled Jews of Israel or the Muslims of Egypt, "is that at a certain point there is not only the right, but the duty, to disobey the state."[11]

The treachery of supposedly orthodox co-religionists is another defining mark of fundamentalist history. Christian ideologues such as Schaeffer and Tim LaHaye point to the Christian foundations of the American republic and lament their erosion at the hands of secularized Christians. Jewish extremists see the peace movement in Israel as expressive of the fragmentation of Orthodox Judaism and the confusion wrought by that crisis. And Muslim



Yeshiva students in Israel standing under a redrawn globe, with Israel occupying the area outlined in black. From the Talmud, the Hebrew reads: On three pillars does the world stand: on Torah, on mitzvah, and on kindnesses. *Photograph by Samuel C. Heilman.*

extremists, whose reading of history—and plans to alter its course—have captured our attention in dramatic fashion since September 11, 2001, have their own distinctive litany of traitors and of heroes.

Redeeming the history of humiliation

On Sunday, October 7, 2001, the Al-Jazeera television network, based in Qatar, broadcast a videotaped statement by Osama bin Laden commenting on the events of September 11. "America has been filled with horror from north to south and east to west, and thanks be to God," bin Laden exulted. "What America is tasting now is only a copy of what we have tasted," he continued. "Our Islamic nation has been tasting the same for more [than] eighty years, of humiliation and disgrace, its sons killed and their blood spilled, its sanctities desecrated."[12]

The period of Muslim "humiliation," that is, began with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I and the subsequent abolishment of the caliphate, in 1924, by the new secular republic of Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The caliphate had been recognized by the vast majority of Muslims as the office of the successors of the Prophet Muhammad. Over the centuries, the role of the caliph varied. Under the Umayyad dynasty, established by the caliph Muawiyah I in 661, the caliphate commanded absolute religious and political power. Under the Abbasids (750–1258), its temporal role was usurped by military commanders (the sultans or emirs). In the eighteenth century the Turkish sultans of the Ottoman Empire presented themselves as caliphs—that is, as the paramount spiritual leaders and defenders of Islam. If the caliph did not wield direct political power for much of this history, his supreme spiritual authority was intended to ensure that Muslim states were governed in accordance with the Islamic law, or shari'a.[13]

The abolishment of the caliphate, according to the reading of history favored by bin Laden and perhaps hundreds of thousands of like-minded Islamic fundamentalists, triggered the precipitous decline of Islam as a civilization-shaping force in the Arab world and beyond. Thus, the origins of Islamism (Muslim fundamentalism) are connected with the loss of a transnational and sacralized Muslim political unit. Sunni and Shiite Muslims have different historical experiences of religiously sanctioned politics; accordingly, their reactions to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the end of the caliphate have differed. Until the ascendancy of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1978, Shiite Muslims, who are concentrated in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon, had suffered the loss of divinely guided political leadership since the occultation, or disappearance into hiding, of the Twelfth Imam, in 931 C.E. By contrast, for Sunni Muslims, approximately 90 percent of the Muslim world, the loss of the caliphate after World War I was devastating in light of the hitherto continuous historic presence of the caliph, the guardian of Islamic law and the Islamic

state. Sunni fundamentalist leaders thereafter emerged in nations such as Egypt and India, where contact with Western political structures provided them with a model awkwardly to imitate (as in the "theo-democracy" of Maulana Sayyid Abdul Ala Maududi, discussed below) as they struggled after 1924 to provide a viable alternative to the caliphate.

In 1928, four years after the abolishment of the caliphate, the Egyptian schoolteacher Hasan al-Banna founded the first Islamic fundamentalist movement in the Sunni world, the Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun). Al-Banna was appalled by "the wave of atheism and lewdness [that] engulfed Egypt" following World War I. The victorious Europeans had "imported their half-naked women into these regions, together with their liquors, their theatres, their dance halls, their amusements, their stories, their newspapers, their novels, their whims, their silly games, and their vices." Suddenly the very heart of the Islamic world was penetrated by European "schools and scientific and cultural institutes" that "cast doubt and heresy into the souls of its sons and taught them how to demean themselves, disparage their religion and their fatherland, divest themselves of their traditions and beliefs, and to regard as sacred anything Western."[14] Most distressing to al-Banna and his followers was what they saw as the rapid moral decline of the religious establishment, including the leading sheikhs, or religious scholars, at Al-Azhar, the grand mosque and center of Islamic learning in Cairo. The clerical leaders had become compromised and corrupted by their alliance with the indigenous ruling elites who had succeeded the European colonial masters.

Even as the Ikhwan was gaining momentum in Egypt, in India Maududi was launching the prodigious career as a journalist, editor, and writer that made him the chief ideologue of Islamic fundamentalism. Modern Muslim discourse on the social, political, and economic teachings of Islam owes an enormous debt to Maududi, who coined and systematically defined terms such as "Islamic politics," "Islamic ideology," "the economic system of Islam," and "the Islamic constitution." More systematically than any other author, Maududi recast Islam as an ideological alternative to both Western liberalism and Soviet Marxism. Envisioning Islam as a comprehensive political system as well as a way of life, Maududi advocated *iqamat-i-deen* (the establishment of religion)—the total subordination of civil society and the state to the authority of the shari'a. Islamic law and Islamic governance should extend, Maududi taught, "from the mosque to the parliament, from the home to the school and economy; from art, architecture and science to law, state and international relations."[15]

In August 1941 Maududi founded the Jamaat-i-Islami, which became the major Islamist movement of Pakistan, to give institutional shape to his religio-political ideas. But his influence extended far beyond Pakistan and South Asia. He was a major influence on Sayyid Qutb, the ideological founder of the school of Sunni extremism to which Osama bin Laden is heir.[16]

Despite the early virulent Islamic reactions to "Westoxication," as an Iranian intellectual described the cultural colonization of Islam, the "humiliation and disgrace" visited upon "the Islamic nation" only mounted, reaching their apex with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the first of several demoralizing military defeats at the hands of the Zionists.[17] The Arab and Muslim identities of that imagined, transnational nation clashed violently in the 1950s and 1960s following the ascent to power of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt. Nasser's vision of Pan-Arab unity buttressed by state socialism captured the imagination of the Arab Middle East. But his state-guided, state-dominated plan to build the public sector of the economy suffered from a balance of payments crisis, domestic entanglements (including an alleged plot by the Muslim Brotherhood), and the excessive bureaucratization and overmanagement often associated with central planning. At the same time, Nasser's political leadership of the Arab world suffered a mortal blow when Israel won the Six-Day War of 1967 and occupied the West Bank, Gaza, and the Sinai. Not least, Nasser also made the fateful choice to isolate and then outlaw the Muslim Brotherhood (which had become increasingly violent), arresting more than one thousand of its leaders and eventually executing six, including Qutb.[18]

While in prison, Qutb penned a treatise that his followers disseminated across the Sunni world. *Milestones* (1960, also known as *Signposts on the Road*) became the manifesto of Sunni extremism and the justification for terrorism.[19] In *Milestones* Qutb developed an interpretation of jihad, Islamic holy war, that would become the core doctrine of the Islamic Liberation Organization of Egypt and Jordan, the Jihad Organization and Takfir wal-Hijra of Egypt, and similar cells in Egypt, North Africa, Lebanon, Israel, Saudi Arabia, the West Bank, and the gulf states. Qutb's radical innovation was the application of the concept of *jahiliyya* (the pre-Islamic condition of ignorance of the guidance of God) to fellow Muslims, including Arab leaders such as Nasser, who had abandoned Islam, he charged, in favor of atheistic philosophies and ideologies. "Our whole environment, people's beliefs and ideas, habits and art, rules and laws is—Jahiliyyah, even to the extent that what we consider to be Islamic culture, Islamic sources, Islamic philosophy and Islamic thought, are also constructs of Jahiliyyah!" As a result, he charged, "the true Islamic values never enter our hearts . . . our minds are never illuminated by Islamic concepts, and no group of people arises among us who are of the calibre of the first generation of Islam."[20]

Maududi's concept of *iqamat-i-deen* echoes in Qutb's exhortations from prison to his fellow Muslim Brothers. Significantly for our purposes, Qutb justifies "the establishment of religion" by positing a golden age or primordial state of purity, resolve, and religious integrity, standards from which subsequent generations departed. People of the caliber of the Prophet and his companions do not arise because the vicissitudes of historical experience have eroded the social and institutional structures within which true belief

flourished. True believers of the past have too often let events—the normal course of history—determine the outcome of the perennial struggle between the righteous and the unbelievers. The remedy to historical erosion? "We must return to that pure source from which those people [the earliest followers of the Prophet Muhammad] derived their guidance—the source which is free from any mixing or pollution," Qutb wrote. "From [Islam] we must also derive our concepts of life, our principles of government, politics, economics and all other aspects of life."[21]

Qutb's dour reading of long stretches of the Muslim past informs the elements of fundamentalist ideology in *Milestones:* alarm over the perceived loss of religious integrity; refusal to compromise with outsiders; the sense of apocalyptic crisis; the envy and imitation of secular modernity juxtaposed to revulsion from its immoral excesses; and, finally, the desire to build a comprehensive religious alternative to secularism. For Qutb withdrawal from the existing, compromised Islamic society was a prelude to an offensive jihad against infidels and apostates around the world. The Islamic fundamentalist movement would use the weapons and tactics of the secular world against it.

> Since this movement comes into conflict with the Jahiliyyah which . . . has a practical system of life and a political and material authority behind it, the Islamic movement had to produce parallel resources. . . . This movement uses the methods of preaching and persuasion for reforming ideas and beliefs; and it uses physical power and Jihaad for abolishing the organisations and authorities of the jahili system.[22]

Jihad is not restricted to defense of the homeland, Qutb insists. Rather, it is a command to extend the borders of Islam to the ends of the earth:

> If we insist on calling Islamic Jihaad a defensive movement, then we must change the meaning of the word "defense" and mean by it "the defense of man" against all those elements which limit his freedom. These elements take the form of beliefs and concepts, as well as of political systems, based on economic, racial or class distinctions. . . . When we take this broad meaning of the word "defense," we understand the true character of Islam, and that it is a universal proclamation of the freedom of man from servitude to other men, the establishment of God and His Lordship throughout the world, the end of man's arrogance and selfishness, and the implementation of the rule of the Divine Sharia'ah in human affairs.[23]

Here Qutb broke with contemporary interpreters of Islamic law. Like fundamentalists in other religions, he invoked the doctrines of a sage who had

An Algerian woman, c. 1992, seems to agree with the graffiti behind her: An Islamic State Coming Soon! *Photograph by Micah Marty. Courtesy R. Scott Appleby.*

legitimated extremism, in this case Ibn Taymiyya (1268–1328), a scholar of Islamic law who had characterized Mongols as "false Muslims" and blessed those who fought them. Qutb also retrieved the practice of *ijtihad,* the use of independent reasoning when no clear text was available from the Koran or the hadith (sayings) of the Prophet. Finally, he gave an extremist interpretation of a traditional precept—jihad—justifying it by recourse to "exceptionalism," the argument that the onset of crisis (here *jahiliyyd*) requires extreme countermeasures.

In *Milestones* Qutb argued that the Prophet's prohibition against fighting was only "a temporary stage in a long journey" during the Meccan period, and he uses inflammatory language easily construed as legitimating lethal violence against Islam's numerous enemies. (It was so construed by Qutb's intellectual disciples, notably the Jihad group that assassinated President Anwar Sadat of Egypt in 1981.) Yet Qutb himself disavowed any intent to harm individuals, claiming that Islamists attack only institutions, and a sympathetic scholar described him as "essentially a philosopher who shunned violence."[24]

Be that as it may, Qutb's legacy includes the cadres of radical fundamentalist Muslims who created new forms of violent intolerance and religious

resistance to the powers that be. Elements of his ideology have inspired fundamentalist movements and terrorist cells that grew up outside his original sphere of influence, including the Taliban, the Harkat Mujahedeen of Pakistan, and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) of Algeria, which has waged a terrorist campaign against the "jahili" government of Algeria since 1992. Among the terrorist networks influenced by Qutb's notion of jihad are Al-Qaeda, which bin Laden founded in 1985. Bin Laden envisioned his operations as a step toward expelling the Western presence from Islamic lands, abolishing state boundaries, and creating a transnational Islamic society ruled by a restored caliphate.[25]

Thus we return to bin Laden and his distinctive view of Western and Islamic history over the past eighty years. Like al-Banna and Qutb, bin Laden charges that mainstream Muslim clerics have been co-opted by dictatorial and compromising rulers such as Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak or by the monarchy of Saudi Arabia, which committed the unforgivable sin of allowing U.S. troops to be stationed near the holy cities of Mecca and Medina ("its sanctities desecrated"). Delegitimated in many circles of the Islamic world, the state-supported religious scholars have yielded popular authority to the religiously unschooled but disgruntled laymen, many with educational backgrounds in engineering, applied science, or business. In the late nineties, for example, the engineer bin Laden began to refer to himself as "Sheikh" Osama Bin-Muhammad Bin-laden, as he did in the *fatwa* he issued on February 23, 1998, announcing his legal "ruling" that every Muslim now has the individual duty to "kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military."[26]

The justification for this tragic distortion of Islamic law and ethics? U.S. policy toward the Middle East and the broader Islamic world, the Islamists charge, has transparently served the narrow interests of an affluent and comfortable American public, which consumes a grossly disproportionate percentage of natural resources (oil-based products in particular) while the mass of humanity in the countries being exploited for their oil live below the poverty level. Muslim lives and livelihoods are routinely sacrificed to support luxurious American life-styles. The United States is a great hypocrite, espousing democracy and freedom in its rhetoric while providing critical financial and military support to Israel, the Zionist interloper in the Middle East, and to antidemocratic and repressive regimes such as those of Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia, where the voice of the Muslim people is silenced.

This narrative of humiliation and disgrace at the hands of the United States is all the more compelling to its aggrieved Muslim audiences because it conforms to the dispiriting pattern of ordinary history as narrated by the fundamentalists. The plot is familiar: the virtuous true believers are overwhelmed by a treacherous, invasive, and insidious enemy whose conquest of the abode of Islam is abetted by the successful seduction of fellow Muslims who have relaxed their vigilance. Only the extreme measures and

extraordinary heroism of radical religion can provide deliverance. Framing the struggles against external and internal colonization in this way fulfills the apocalyptic expectations of the most revolutionary of the fundamentalists. For they look for final deliverance, not to the world, but to God; not to quotidian political struggle against oppression and injustice, but to the self-sacrificing acts of true believers willing to risk everything to vanquish *jahiliyya* society once and for all.

Conclusion

While it may be perfectly reasonable to dismiss fundamentalist readings of history as transparent manipulations of events and data, as mere projections of religious fanaticism and millenarian enthusiasm, it is important to underscore the fundamentalists' devotion to the narratives they have constructed, and their attention to the details they have embedded in the narrative to reinforce its eschatalogical themes. More than the general public, activist fundamentalists are engrossed in the events of history and spend significant time and resources indoctrinating recruits and educating the devout in its moral and political lessons. Furthermore, the moral and political critiques that emerge from a historiography and historical method fundamentally different from that constructed and practiced by professional historians are hardly incoherent or even unpersuasive. Rather, they shed a revealing light on what many historians consider "the real stuff of history," namely, the experience of suffering, injustice, and alienation, mixed with and tempered by hope for deliverance, that characterizes the human condition.

Notes

1 The term *scriptural inerrancy* was coming into vogue in 1887 when William Hoyt, speaking at a conference on the "Inspired Word," declared that the Bible was in every detail "kept *inerrant*." See George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York, 1980), 56. Pope Pius IX, "'Syllabus' or Collection of Modern Errors," in Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma (Enchiridion Symbolorum)*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (St. Louis, 1957), 433–42. See also Roger Aubert, "The Church and Liberalism," in *The Church in a Secularised Society*, ed. Roger Aubert et al. (Ramsey, N.J., 1978), 34–43.

2 Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, "Activist Shi'ism in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon," in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago, 1991), 432–33. See also Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Ithaca, 1986).

3 Jerry Falwell, "An Agenda for the Eighties," in *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity*, ed. Jerry Falwell with Ed Dobson and Ed Hindson (Garden City, 1981), 205; Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (Chapel Hill, 1993), 1–22.

4 Hasan al-Banna, *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949)*, trans. Charles Wendell (Berkeley, 1978), 1–29; Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Anatomy of Egypt's

Militant Islamic Groups," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 12 (Dec. 1980), 423–53; Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), 39–47.

5 Imam Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. and annotated by Hamid Algar (Berkeley, 1981), 27–149. On Iran, see Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York, 1988); and Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York, 1985). On Lebanon, see Ayatollah Muhammed Hussein Fadl Allah, "Islam and Violence in Political Reality," *Middle East Insight*, 4 (nos. 4–5, 1986), 4–13. Fadlallah, Hezbollah's founder, envisioned a global and apocalyptic triumph of Islam. "The divine state of justice realized on part of this earth will not remain confined within its geographic borders," a disciple predicted. It "will lead to the appearance of the Mahdi, who will create the state of Islam on earth." Fadlallah assigned Hezbollah the role of purifying a province of Islam to create "the divine state of justice." To rid Lebanese Shiites of their immediate tormentors, the Maronites and the Israelis, Hezbollah's manifesto called for "a battle with vice at its very roots. And the first root of vice is America." See Martin Kramer, "Hizbullah: The Calculus of Jihad," in *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago, 1993), 545.

6 See Gideon Aran, "Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)," in *Fundamentalisms Observed* ed. Marty and Appleby, 265–344.

7 Hal Lindsey with C. C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, 1970); Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days* (Wheaton, 1995). On fundamentalist interpretations of Scripture, see Kathleen C. Boone. *The Bible Tells Them So: The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism* (Albany, 1989).

8 Pat Robertson, *The New World Order* (Dallas, 1991), 6; Lienesch, *Redeeming America*, 239. On the rapture and the end times, see Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875–1925* (New York, 1979), 5–26.

9 Samuel C. Heilman, *Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry* (Berkeley, 1992), 232–33.

10 Daniella Weiss is quoted in a film shown on PBS: *The Power and the Glory: The Land*, dir. Jane Treays (Jersey Productions, 1995).

11 Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, Ill., 1981), 93.

12 *New York Times*, Oct. 8, 2001, p. B7. The translation from the Arabic is by Reuters.

13 Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago, 1988), 32, 34, 43–51.

14 Al-Banna, *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*, trans. Wendell, 27–28.

15 Mumtaz Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat of South Asia," in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, ed. Marty and Appleby, 464. *An Introduction to the Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan* (Lahore, 1978), 5, quoted *ibid.*, 466.

16 Roy, *Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Volk, 35.

17 Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Gharbzadegi [Weststruckness]* (Euromania), trans. John Green and Ahmad Alizadeh (Lexington, Ky., 1982), 3.

18 John Waterbury, *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat: The Political Economy of Two Regimes* (Princeton, 1983), 100, 117; Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice since 1967* (Cambridge, Eng., 1981), 138–200.

19 Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, trans. International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (Stuttgart, 1978). The treatment of Sayyid Qutb is adapted from R. Scott

Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, 2000), 91–95.

20 Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, "Egypt," in *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism*, ed. Shireen T. Hunter (Bloomington, 1988), 30; Qutb, *Milestones*, trans. International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, 32.

21 Qutb, *Milestones*, trans. International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, 32–33.

22 *Ibid.*, 38, 117.

23 *Ibid.*, 111.

24 Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York, 1986), 30, 141; Sonbol, "Egypt," 31.

25 Al-Qaeda supported Muslim fighters in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Tajikistan, Somalia, Yemen, and Kosovo and trained members of terrorist organizations from such diverse countries as the Philippines, Algeria, and Eritrea. In February 1998 Osama bin Laden announced the creation of a new alliance of terrorist organizations and Islamic extremist movements, the International Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders, which included the Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and the Harkat Mujahedeen of Pakistan. John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America, and International Terrorism* (Sterling, 2000), 120, 219.

26 World Islamic Front, "Jihad against Jews and Crusaders," Feb. 23, 1998, *Federation of American Scientists* <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm> (June 11, 2002).