

1-4-2007

# Varieties of Fundamentalism

Rebecca M. De Sousa

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/rs\\_hontheses](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/rs_hontheses)

---

## Recommended Citation

De Sousa, Rebecca M., "Varieties of Fundamentalism." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2007.  
[https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/rs\\_hontheses/5](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/rs_hontheses/5)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Religious Studies at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Religious Studies Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gsu.edu).

# VARIETIES OF FUNDAMENTALISM

by

REBECCA M. DE SOUSA

Under the Direction of Timothy M. Renick

## ABSTRACT

The term “Fundamentalism” used as a comparative category within the academic study of religion has become problematic. Fundamentalism, is not one comprehensive movement but is, in fact, a phenomenon which encompasses a variety of beliefs, practices, and expectations. This thesis will explore the diversity of several different and distinct fundamentalist movements. I will discuss the natures of four Christian movements that have been labeled “fundamentalist” – Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Reconstructionists, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson – on several key points, eschatology, political philosophy, as well as level of social involvement. I will then turn to fundamentalism as it is used as a category to describe a global phenomenon. I will discuss three different scholarly approaches by turning to the work of Bruce Lawrence, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Bruce Lincoln on the Islamic “fundamentalist” group al-

Qaeda. Finally I will argue that the category “fundamentalism” can be best understood in terms of a family resemblance.

INDEX WORDS: Fundamentalism, Religion, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Reconstructionists, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Osama Bin Laden, al-Qaeda, Family resemblance

VARIETIES OF FUNDAMENTALISM

by

REBECCA M. DE SOUSA

An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for Graduation with Undergraduate Research Honors  
in the College of Arts and Sciences  
Georgia State University

2006

VARIETIES OF FUNDAMENTALISM

by

REBECCA M. DE SOUSA

Honors Thesis Director: Timothy M. Renick  
Honors Program Director: Robert Sattelmeyer

Electronic Version Approved:

Honors Program  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Georgia State University  
December 2005

Copyright by  
Rebecca Margaret De Sousa  
2006

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Religious Studies Department. It has been a rewarding experience to learn from and work with such a challenging faculty.

I would like to express my gratitude to Kenny Smith and Dr. Timothy Renick. I am grateful for the encouragement, and guidance of Kenny Smith, for his prompting made this project possible. Likewise, I am grateful for Dr. Renick's direction, and for agreeing to work with me on this project during his own research semester.

Of course I would like to thank my family for their love and encouragement; Nathan for his uplifting cheer and support; and my boss, Mr. Carragher, for his patience and flexibility.

Lastly, I would like to thank Pat Robertson and the 700 Club for providing hours of television enjoyment and inspiration.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
CHAPTER	
1 Introduction .....	1
2 Jehovah's Witnesses .....	7
3 Christian Reconstructionists .....	29
4 Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson .....	40
4.1 Jerry Falwell .....	40
4.2 Pat Robertson .....	51
5 Comparisons of Four Christian Fundamentalist Movements .....	64
6 Global Fundamentalism .....	73
6.1 Osama bin Laden and the Rise of al-Qaeda .....	73
6.2 The Question of Global Fundamentalism .....	82
7 Conclusion .....	96
WORKS CITED .....	103



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Family Traits of Fundamentalism Present in Five Fundamentalist  
Movements ..... 98

## 1. Introduction

The term “Fundamentalism” used as a comparative category within the academic study of religion has become problematic. In trying to understand fundamentalism, the term has been defined, redefined, repositioned, and discarded only to be applied once again. The history of the term fundamentalism begins in the early twentieth century in America. *The Fundamentals*, a publication widely circulated between 1910-1915, written by a panel of conservative Protestant evangelicals at Princeton, ushered in the fundamentalist movement. The contributors to *The Fundamentals*, including James M. Gray, James Orr, and Benjamin B. Warfield, “viewed themselves as affirming genuine historical and biblical Christianity.”<sup>1</sup> They wrote in reaction to and against the popular liberal theology of the time and against Darwinism. In their defense of the true “historical and biblical Christianity” they formulated a list of five basic truths of Christianity they labeled the fundamentals. These five fundamentals are: i) the infallibility of Scripture, meaning that the Bible is the inerrant word of God: “God-breathed and thus possessing the quality of being free from error in all of its statements and affirmations;”<sup>2</sup> ii) the Deity of Christ, including the Virgin birth of Christ, meaning that Christ Himself is God, He claimed Himself to be God, He was looked upon as being God,<sup>3</sup> and He was conceived without sin; iii) the substitutionary atonement of

---

<sup>1</sup> Ed Dobson, Jerry Falwell, and Edward E. Hindson, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon : The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity*, 1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981), 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

Christ's death, meaning that Christ's suffering substitutes for the suffering deserved by humanity; iv) the literal bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead; and v) the literal return of Christ. Today, however, the term fundamentalism has departed from its original meaning and has been repositioned and redefined in a much broader context. In so doing, the term has now become problematic and at times confusing.

For example, George Marsden, professor of American religious history at the University of Notre Dame, defines fundamentalism as,

A subspecies of evangelicalism. The term originated in America in 1920 and refers to evangelicals who consider it a chief Christian duty to combat uncompromisingly "modernist" theology and certain secularizing cultural trends. Organized militancy is the feature that most clearly distinguishes fundamentalists from other evangelicals.... Soul winning and church growth are the fundamentalist's first concerns.... In addition, extreme militancy against theological liberalism has lead them to emphasize separation.... Fundamentalists have also drawn strict lines for personal separation from worldliness.... Most fundamentalists are militant dispensationalists, usually claiming that the signs of the times indicate that within a few years the dramatic events surrounding the return of Christ will bring the present era to a violent end.... Fundamentalists [have] emerged as a considerable force in American political life.<sup>4</sup>

Marsden additionally writes in an article, "Defining American Fundamentalism," that "a fundamentalist is an evangelical Protestant who is militantly opposed to modern liberal theologies."<sup>5</sup> A good example of this sort of fundamentalist would be Jerry Falwell and the rise of the Moral Majority in 1979.

Kenneth Wald, political scientist at the University of Florida, attempts to articulate the essential features that make a religious movement fundamentalist.

Fundamentalism points to a disposition 'characterized by a quest for certainty, exclusiveness, and unambiguous boundaries.' Driven by an uncompromising mentality, fundamentalists attempt to

---

<sup>4</sup> George M. Marsden, "Evangelical and Fundamental Christianity," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1993).

<sup>5</sup> George M. Marsden, "Defining American Fundamentalism," in *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon : A View from within; a Response from Without*, ed. Norman J. Cohen, *Starkoff Institute Studies in Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1990), 22.

‘chart a morally black and white path out of the gray zones of intimidating cultural and religious complexity.’ When they draw boundaries between true believers and those outside the charmed circles, fundamentalists treat the latter as ‘the Other,’ a dangerous and threatening enemy. This disposition or set of traits is not limited to any single religious tradition but can be found in some degree among virtually every major religious community.<sup>6</sup>

Pat Robertson for example, could be characterized by Wald’s definition.

Well-known historian Karen Armstrong, in *A Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism*, understands fundamentalism as being a single monolithic movement. She defines fundamentalism as a reactionary movement – a reaction against modernity, a reaction against globalization, and a reaction against Enlightenment ideals such as Darwinism and reliance upon empirical science. Additionally, she states that all fundamentalisms share three basic elements: fear, rejection of modernity, and some sort of conspiratorial beliefs. Fundamentalists “have all been motivated by common fears, anxieties, and desires that seem to be a not unusual response to some of the peculiar difficulties of life in the modern secular world.”<sup>7</sup> They reject modernity, experiencing it as an emptiness, a void that renders life meaningless. However, it is interesting to note this connection to modernity. As Armstrong points out, although fundamentalists “celebrate the achievements of modern society,”<sup>8</sup> they also “experience modernity as an assault that threaten[s] their most sacred values and seemed to put their very existence in jeopardy.”<sup>9</sup> Lastly, fundamentalists “project their fears onto imaginary enemies and dream of universal conspiracy.”<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, Armstrong would characterize Christian Reconstructionists as a fundamentalist movement.

---

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 4th ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 297.

<sup>7</sup> Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, 1st Ballantine Books ed. (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001), xiii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

Some scholars argue for a very narrow definition of the term fundamentalism, placing it in its original context to describe only those American Protestants who subscribe to the five fundamentals of Christianity. For example, Joel Carpenter in *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* argues that the term fundamentalism should be defined narrowly. He states, “generic usage belittles their great diversity and unique identity,” and that it obscures the meaning rather than illumines.<sup>11</sup>

Fundamentalism, however, is not one comprehensive movement but is, in fact, a phenomenon which encompasses a variety of beliefs, practices, and expectations, all worthy of individual attention. It is a diverse amalgam of many individual and quite distinct movements. This thesis will explore the diversity of several different and distinct fundamentalist movements.

In the next three chapters I will discuss the natures of four Christian movements that have been labeled “fundamentalist” on a number of key points: their eschatological views, political philosophy, as well as their levels of political and social involvement. In Chapter 2, I will discuss the Jehovah’s Witness movement by focusing on Charles Taze Russell, the movement’s founder, and Joseph Rutherford, a prominent Witness who further developed Witness theology. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the Christian Reconstructionists, mainly through Rev. Rousas John Rushdoony, the movement’s founder. In Chapter 4, I will turn to two well-known Christian evangelical ministers who are commonly labeled fundamentalist, Jerry L. Falwell and Marion Gordon “Pat” Robertson. In Chapter 5, I will more thoroughly compare these movements’

---

<sup>11</sup> Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again : The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.

eschatological views and will show that different Christian fundamentalists, counter to common assumptions, see the future of the human world differently. Political orientation is even more diverse. I will show this political diversity through a comparison of these thinkers' positions on church/state affairs, such as the First Amendment's establishment clause. These comparisons will shed light into the diversity of the many Christian fundamentalist movements.

In Chapter 6, I will turn to fundamentalism as it is used as a comparative category within the academic study of religion. While some scholars argue for a very narrow definition of the term fundamentalism and apply it only to American Christianity, and despite the term's origins as an American Protestant term, fundamentalism has been used to describe a global phenomenon. I will discuss three different scholarly approaches dealing with this global phenomenon by turning to the work of Bruce Lawrence, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Bruce Lincoln on the Islamic "fundamentalist" group al-Qaeda.

Bruce Lawrence undertook one of the first comparative studies of fundamentalism across cultures. Lawrence recognizes that fundamentalists are "above all religiously motivated individuals, drawn together into ideological structured groups, for the purpose of promoting a vision of divine restoration."<sup>12</sup> The main characteristics of all fundamentalisms, according to Lawrence, are anti-modernism and the centrality of scripture.

Mark Juergensmeyer disagrees with Lawrence's view of fundamentalism. He proposes that the term should not be used at all. Juergensmeyer believes the term is pejorative, is an imprecise category for making comparisons across cultures, and does not

---

<sup>12</sup> Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God : The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 1.

carry any political meaning.<sup>13</sup> “To call someone a fundamentalist suggests that he or she is motivated solely by religious beliefs rather than by broad concerns about the nature of society and the world.”<sup>14</sup> Juergensmeyer instead prefers to label these groups as religious nationalists.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, Bruce Lincoln, in *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion After September 11*, opts to discard the term fundamentalism. Lincoln prefers using “maximalist, rather than ‘fundamentalist,’ a term that has inflammatory connotations and fails to capture what is really crucial: that is the conviction that religion ought to permeate all aspects of social, indeed of human existence.”<sup>16</sup>

Despite the definitional conflicts of the term fundamentalism, as well as its redefinitions and repositioning, the term appears to be here to stay. In an attempt to salvage the term from its pejorative connotations and conflicting usages, I will argue that the category “fundamentalism” can be best understood in terms of a family resemblance. I will draw upon some conclusions previously made from the corpus of work done by Martin Marty and Scott Appleby in *The Fundamentalism Project* and argue that the family resemblance approach is the best approach in understanding fundamentalism. While the work of Juergensmeyer and Lincoln are useful in unearthing the problems with the term, it is likely that the term will not disappear despite their best efforts. I will suggest that their replacement terms for fundamentalism are perhaps more useful as traits within a family resemblance theory of fundamentalism.

---

<sup>13</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? : Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State, Comparative Studies in Religion and Society* ; 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 - 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors : Thinking About Religion after September 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 5.

## 2. Jehovah's Witnesses

In this chapter I will discuss one Christian movement that has been labeled fundamentalist – the Jehovah's Witnesses. First I will discuss the emergence and current status of this movement by focusing on the teachings of two prominent Jehovah's Witnesses, Charles Taze Russell and Joseph Rutherford. I will explain the Jehovah's Witnesses eschatology, political philosophy, level of social and political involvement, as well as its position on the First Amendment's Establishment clause. Lastly, I will discuss what characterizes the Jehovah's Witness movement as fundamentalist.

### Jehovah's Witnesses – Russell and the Early Movement

Jehovah's Witnesses trace their beginnings to Charles Taze Russell. Russell was born February 16, 1852 in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania to Scottish-Irish parents. Russell was primarily educated in public schools, however he did receive private tutoring. At the age of fourteen he became his father's business partner-in-training, and by sixteen, he was a full-fledged partner in a major clothing store business.<sup>17</sup> As M. James Penton, retired professor of religious studies and history at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, notes, "By the late 1870s or the early years of the following decade he had amassed a sizeable fortune."<sup>18</sup>

His religious background was mixed. He was born to Presbyterian parents and as a young boy he was a devout Calvinist. As Penton mentions, Russell, as a teenager, "would sometimes write dire warnings of hellfire in conspicuous public places to encourage working men to mend their wicked ways."<sup>19</sup> Russell later abandoned his harsh

---

<sup>17</sup> M. James Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed : The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 2nd ed. (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 14.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



Calvinist beliefs and joined a local Congregationalist Church. Shortly thereafter, he became disillusioned with Christianity for a short time, succumbing to the “rationalistic spirit of his age.”<sup>20</sup> However, Russell never fully abandoned God. As Penton points out, Russell “continued to pray to God and pursued his search for truth.”<sup>21</sup>

Russell eventually found comfort with the Second Adventists. The Second Adventists grew out of the bigger millennial movement of the mid 1800s. Edwin Gaustad, professor emeritus of History and Religious Studies at the University of California, Riverside, and Leigh Schmidt, professor of Religious Studies at Princeton University, in *The Religious History of America*, say the millennial movement was concerned with,

God’s plan for the future or revelation in the past. Millennialism wrestled with the book of Revelation (and other prophecies) in order to determine just when Christ would come again to usher in the thousand years of peace and virtue, when the devil would be chained and the earth cleansed of all unrighteousness.<sup>22</sup>

The millennial movement can trace its beginnings to William Miller who, after reading Daniel 8:14, proclaimed that Christ would return to earth between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. Miller recalculated the date for Christ’s second-coming and finally focused on October 22, 1844. To Miller’s dismay, this date has now been etched in history as the Great Disappointment. Following this failed prophecy, thousands of Millerites or Second Adventists, as the followers of Miller had come to be known, left the movement. However, many remained convinced that Miller’s expectations were correct, but only his dating needed to be recalculated.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh Eric Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, Rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 152.

Russell, after attending a religious meeting led by Jonas Wendell, an Adventist minister in Allegheny, Pennsylvania sometime in 1869, began to show interest in Adventist teaching. Through Wendell, Russell was first introduced to Adventist beliefs and teachings and ultimately accepted these as truths. Russell enthusiastically shared many of the Adventists' end-times beliefs. One Adventist belief that Russell shared was the belief that mankind currently lives in the end of days and mankind is anxiously awaiting Armageddon (the great battle between God and Satan) to occur at any moment. At this time, destruction to all except the faithful believers – all Adventists – will inevitably occur. However enthusiastic were his shared beliefs with the Adventists, according to Russell, he never became a Second Adventist.<sup>23</sup> Russell avidly began studying the Scriptures and Adventist doctrine and instead opted to form a small Bible study group, which would later develop into the Jehovah's Witness movement. Russell ultimately split with the Adventist Church sometime in the early 1870s over a disagreement regarding the chronology and date-setting of the second-coming, Russell believing Jesus invisibly returned in 1874, not 1873. This point will be covered in more detail in the following section.

As Russell developed his own theology through his own studying of the Scriptures, he came in contact with several ideas of prominent religious leaders. The two who were the most influential upon Russell were George Stetson and George Storrs. Both were individuals fully familiar and versed in the Adventist movement. George Stetson was an Advent Christian minister who offered spiritual assistance to Russell and assisted Russell in formulating his own doctrines. George Storrs was a cofounder of the Life and Advent Union and the foremost advocate for conditionalism. Penton defines

---

<sup>23</sup> Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed : The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 14.

conditionalism as “the idea that man does not have an immortal soul but, rather, gains everlasting life on the condition that he receive such a gift from God through Christ.”<sup>24</sup>

Storrs additionally believed that “the dead are unconscious or asleep until the resurrection.”<sup>25</sup> As Penton indicates, Storrs eventually left the Life and Advent Union upon adopting the view that everlasting life is bestowed only through knowledge of Christ. He formerly believed this could come about regardless of prior knowledge of Christ.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, Russell was influenced by the work of Joseph A. Seiss, a Lutheran Pastor, and Benjamin Wilson’s translation of a revision of the New Testament. Russell formulated his ideas in a pamphlet, “The Object and Manner of Our Lord’s Return,” which he published sometime in the mid 1870s and had about 50,000 copies printed. In this pamphlet, Russell advanced his ideas that Christ’s second-coming would be an invisible return. Based on the revised translation of the Greek word “parousia”, which according to Russell is translated better as “presence” than as “coming,” Russell concluded, “parousia means not a visible physical coming, but an invisible presence.”<sup>27</sup> Russell believed that “in the last days immediately before [Christ’s] revelation in wrath at the battle of Armageddon, Christ would be invisibly present.”<sup>28</sup> This belief is contrary to the popular Christian belief that Christ’s return will be physical.

Shortly after publishing “The Object and Manner of Our Lord’s Return” in January 1876, Russell befriended a prominent Adventist by the name of Nelson H. Barbour, who was the publisher of the magazine, *Herald of the Morning*. Barbour, like

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Jerry Bergman, “The Adventist Movement and Jehovah’s Witness Branch of Protestantism,” in *America’s Alternative Religions*, ed. Timothy Miller, *Suny Series in Religious Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 36.

<sup>28</sup> Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed : The Story of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 17.

Russell, believed in the invisible return of Christ which he believed began in 1874. Russell then decided to financially support Barbour's magazine as well as fund their coauthored book, *The Three Worlds and the Plan of Redemption*, in 1877. As Jerry Bergman, a psychologist and former Jehovah's Witness who has spent years studying the Jehovah's Witnesses, points out, Russell's and Barbour's relationship appeared tenuous – Barbour denying Russell's contributions to their coauthored book, and claiming that all Russell knew he himself had taught him.<sup>29</sup> Russell, along with other Adventists and Bible students, ultimately split from Barbour in late 1878 over doctrinal disagreements and end-time prophecy.<sup>30</sup> Barbour, having incorrectly predicted the spring of 1878, as the day the faithful would ascend to heaven, shortly thereafter went his separate way. Russell, without the approval of Barbour, attempted to explain this failed prophecy by stating that those faithful followers who died from 1878 on would immediately go to heaven. Another major point of disagreement between Russell and Barbour was that of the atonement – that Jesus was the ransom for Adam's sins. Following this schism, Russell subsequently began his own Bible study group in which he continued to formulate his own understanding of the second-coming.<sup>31</sup> Russell and his followers began publishing their own journal in 1879, *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*. This is effectively the beginning of Russell's movement, a mail-order publishing company. Since this time, "the printed page has played an important part in the movement ever since. According to Russell, the Watchtower Society itself was

---

<sup>29</sup> Jerry Bergman, *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography, Bibliographies and Indexes in Religious Studies, No. 48* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 4.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Bergman points out that Russell, in addition to relying heavily upon Adventist theology, also borrowed ideas from the Universalists, Unitarians, Plymouth Bretheren, and the Mennonites. Ibid., 5.

originally “nothing more than a publishing house.”<sup>32</sup> Like the schism in 1878, which culminated in the split between Russell and Barbour, Russell was to see many more divisions. Despite these schisms which lead to many of Russell’s followers leaving, Russell remained successful with a sizeable and faithful following. Bergman offers the following explanation for Russell’s success:

The primary advantage Russell had was the money to widely propagate his message before the public. Yet, the Seventh-day Adventist part of the movement was more successful in gaining converts, partially because of Russell’s inability to get along with people. Russell himself became one of the most prominent Adventists in part because he was one of the few men who had both the money (over three-quarters of a million dollars) and the drive and determination needed to propagate Adventist ideas. His success helps explain why this movement became permanently entrenched in the American religious scene.<sup>33</sup>

### **Russell’s Theology**

Russell developed his theology partly borrowing from others’ ideas and partly from his individual deep study of the Scripture. A few key tenets were that 144,000 faithful followers would go to heaven, the rejection of hell, the rejection of the Trinity and reversible salvation. Through rereading Revelations 7:4, which states, “And I heard the number of those who were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel,” (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures) Russell believed this to mean that only 144,000 faithful followers would go to heaven. Russell rejected the idea of hell, instead Russell believed that following Armageddon, the unfaithful, those who have “fallen away,” and those succumbing to Satan’s temptation would be destroyed, and simply cease to exist. According to Russell, salvation was reversible, or conditional, i.e. “based only upon the continual obedience of the

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 5.

individual.”<sup>34</sup> Related to this idea of reversible salvation is the concept of everlasting life, as opposed to the immortality of the soul. “In other words, everlasting life means that one could live forever, but this is not guaranteed, whereas immortality means that one cannot die.”<sup>35</sup> Another commonly accepted Christian belief that Russell rejected was the doctrine of the Trinity. Instead, Russell stressed the “oneness of Jehovah who is in no sense the first person of the Trinity.”<sup>36</sup>

Russell died October 31, 1916, leaving the Watchtower Society in turmoil, which resulted in the formation of many splinter groups -- some groups following the newly elected president of the Watchtower Society, Joseph Rutherford, while others left continuing to preach Russell’s teachings, seeing Russell as “God’s only spokesman on earth today.” Russell at first refused to think of his Bible study group and the Watchtower Society as a new denomination, and in fact, did not want to start a new denomination.<sup>37</sup> As Penton points out, Russell “rejected any denominational name, saying the he and his brethren in faith would prefer to be known as members of the ‘Church of Christ’ had that name not already been taken by another group.”<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, “Russell and his fellow believers were set apart.”<sup>39</sup> Some scholars have claimed that the Jehovah’s Witnesses, as they look today, would probably be unrecognizable by Russell and would “consider the modern Jehovah’s Witnesses to be an offshoot of the original movement which Russell started.”<sup>40</sup> In fact, this is what Joseph Rutherford, the successor of Russell to the Watchtower Society, had intended. However,

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed : The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 185.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Bergman, *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography*, 6.

It would be another 15 years before the name Jehovah's Witnesses was to be used. As Bergman says, Rutherford selected this name "to separate [his movement] from ... those who still held to most of Russell's teachings."<sup>41</sup>

### **Joseph Rutherford and the modern Jehovah's Witness Movement**

Following Russell's death in 1916, Joseph Rutherford became the second president of the Watchtower. Rutherford is perhaps the best known of the Watchtower Society's presidents, as well as the most controversial figure in Watchtower history.

Joseph Rutherford was born on November 8, 1869, in Missouri to Baptist parents. At the age of twenty Rutherford began tutoring under a local judge and two years later was admitted to the State Bar of Missouri. Rutherford earned the nickname "Judge," although he was neither elected nor appointed to such a position. This nickname was later used by his followers later used as well.

Rutherford was first introduced to Watchtower teachings in 1894 when a few female Witness colporteurs (book peddlers as they were known) visited his law office. Rutherford purchased three Watchtower books at that time. Although Rutherford did not read the books until a few years later and it took him twelve years to officially join the movement. In 1906, he joined and concurrently published his first book, *Man's Salvation from a Lawyer's Viewpoint*. In January of 1917 Rutherford was elected president of the Watchtower Society.

During his tenure as President, Rutherford commanded absolute power over the Watchtower Society. His manner towards other members was at times overbearing. Whereas his predecessor, Russell, "had usually been gentle and friendly with fellow religionists, Rutherford was often rude and brusque; his temperament was moody and his

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 13.

manner withdrawn.”<sup>42</sup> The Board of Directors of the Watchtower merely acted as a rubber stamp for Rutherford.<sup>43</sup> In a sense, Rutherford was the Watchtower. Under Rutherford, the governing structure of the Witnesses became more centralized, whereas under Russell, the organizational structure gave much autonomy to individual Bible study groups and congregations. In a statement made in June 1938, Rutherford declared, “that Jehovah had assumed direct control of the Watchtower Society.”<sup>44</sup> This declaration stemmed from the belief that in 1918 “Christ entered the symbolic Temple by adopting the Watchtower and Tract Society as His agent on earth.”<sup>45</sup> This was also reiterated in a Watchtower publication, when the Society stated that it was “the only organization on earth that understands the ‘deeper things of God!’”<sup>46</sup> Rutherford called his new system “Theocratic Organization,” however, “his many dissenters called it a ruthless takeover and the establishment of a dictatorship. Large numbers of prominent brethren left over this issue.”<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless Rutherford insisted on absolute control and obedience to the Watchtower. He wrote,

The ideological justification for theocratic reorganization was constructed on the major premise that since Jesus Christ was actually working at the head of the Society through the medium of its earthly leader, it would thenceforth be blasphemous to disagree with their directives. Deviation from the Society’s codes and programmes would thenceforth entail ‘everlasting death’ because loyalty to the theocratic Society had become a test of a person’s spiritual merit and fitness to survive Armageddon.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> James A. Beckford, *The Trumpet of Prophecy : A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses* (New York: Wiley, 1975), 23.

<sup>43</sup> Bergman, *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Beckford, *The Trumpet of Prophecy : A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 38.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>46</sup> Bergman, *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography*, 11.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>48</sup> Beckford, *The Trumpet of Prophecy : A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 38-39.



Rutherford wrote nearly everything the Watchtower published during his tenure as president. “Rutherford’s writings were seen by his adherents as almost inspired...God was writing through [him] and he was definitely inspired by God to do what he did.”<sup>49</sup>

## **Rutherford and Current Witness Doctrine**

### **Eschatology**

From the outset of his presidency, Rutherford was intent on making many changes in Witness doctrine and theology to distinguish and separate his movement from Russell’s movement.

One change Rutherford instituted was to the basic eschatology of the Jehovah’s Witness movement. Russell first predicted the end of days to occur in 1874, through a historical reading of the Bible and using the year-day system for dating Biblical prophecies.<sup>50</sup> When 1874 passed without consequence, Russell revised his teachings. When that date came and went without major significance, 1878 was likewise predicted. Russell then reformulated his teachings to mark 1874 as the beginning of Christ’s invisible return (parousia) and the beginning of the Harvest. Russell believed this would take 40 years to complete. The resurrection of the 144,000 faithful, receiving a heavenly reward, would occur in 1878, and by 1914 Christ’s return would be finalized.

However, Rutherford amended most of the above eschatological chronology as set forth by Russell. Rutherford’s chronology, with the addition or exception of some details, is the current most commonly accepted chronology of prophetic dates used by Jehovah’s Witnesses. According to Rutherford, 1874 marked the beginning of Christ’s

---

<sup>49</sup> Bergman, *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography*, 8.

<sup>50</sup> The year-day system refers to the idea that when the Bible mentions a prophetic date and assigns it a value as a day, this should be interpreted as one 360-day year, as is mentioned in Numbers 14:33-34 and Ezekial 4:1-8. See Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed : The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 341.

invisible return (parousia) and the beginning of the Harvest. Rutherford also believed this would take 40 years to complete, and 1914 would mark the end of gentile times when, "Satan will be released again for a short period at the end of the millennium in order to present a final test of the loyalty of those who will have already enjoyed paradisiacal existence."<sup>51</sup> 1918 marked a crucial year for Rutherford and all Jehovah's Witnesses; the Watchtower was adopted as Christ's agent on earth. Additionally, Rutherford believed this to be the year of the resurrection of the 144,000 faithful. However, current Witness belief states that the resurrection of the faithful occurred in 1878, the date Russell had calculated.<sup>52</sup> One major prophetic date set by Rutherford was 1975 to mark Armageddon. However, when this prophecy failed many left the movement; Jehovah's Witnesses have for the most part shied away from specific date predictions, although Armageddon was predicted to occur in the year 2000.

In addition to solidifying the prophetic chronology of events, Rutherford also changed Jehovah's Witness belief of salvation. Russell preached that only 144,000 will be the "chosen ones" to live with God forever in heaven following Armageddon. The remaining righteous and those faithful and loyal to the Watchtower will live on earth forever and the wicked, which include the nonbelievers and those not loyal to the Watchtower, will be destroyed.<sup>53</sup> These "chosen ones," are however only those faithful and loyal to the Watchtower. However as Bergman mentions, without further explanation, there are some Jews and Gentiles included in this number.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps this is the case so as to include Moses, Abraham and Joseph and other key figures, prior to the

---

<sup>51</sup> Beckford, *The Trumpet of Prophecy : A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 110.

<sup>52</sup> Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed : The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 201.

<sup>53</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in hell, therefore, the wicked and damned will be annihilated (they will cease to exist as if they never existed).

<sup>54</sup> Bergman, "The Adventist Movement and Jehovah's Witness Branch of Protestantism," 37.

institution of the Watchtower. In 1932 however, the number of Jehovah's Witnesses had already exceeded 144,000. Rutherford in response created a second class of believers, called the "great crowd," who instead of living in heaven would receive an "earthly reward"<sup>55</sup> and live on the restored paradisiacal earth.

Salvation for Jehovah's Witnesses is different than it is for many Calvinist Christians. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that salvation is reversible and can be taken away by failure to exercise adherence to both Jehovah's requirements and the Watchtower Society's obligations. Jehovah's Witnesses believe salvation comes from one's acceptance of Jesus as Lord in addition to strict obedience to the Watchtower Society, as the "Watchtower Society is God's organization, and it is only through it that salvation can be achieved."<sup>56</sup>

Another doctrinal change Rutherford made was to suggest a literal reading of Revelations 12 which discusses the war between Michael and the dragon. In 1926 Rutherford interpreted the dragon as the League of Nations. This became an important change when coupled with the belief that in 1918 Christ adopted the Watchtower as His earthly agent and that Jehovah is working at the head of the Society, because this forms the foundation of a major political and social belief, i.e. that believers should only pay allegiance to Jehovah through the workings of the Watchtower Society.

### **Scripture**

The Jehovah's Witnesses use several key texts. Their scripture is the Holy Bible, the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. Jehovah's Witnesses also rely on Watchtower publications and books. Russell originally conceived of his movement as a

---

<sup>55</sup> Bergman, *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography*, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Bergman, "The Adventist Movement and Jehovah's Witness Branch of Protestantism," 37.

publishing company. In that spirit, the Watchtower Society publishes two magazines, *Awake!* and *Watchtower*. There is conflicting scholarship on the importance of scripture relative to Watchtower teachings. As Bergman points out, “scriptures are read primarily as ‘proof texts’ to support the Society’s teachings,”<sup>57</sup> and most weekly meetings and talks are centered on Watchtower publications.

### **Social Interaction**

Stemming from Jehovah’s Witnesses’ premillennial assumptions are the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ views regarding earthly social and political involvement. Jehovah’s Witnesses believe they should remain separate from the rest of society. For example, school children are discouraged from participating in athletics, dances, school clubs and school plays, because they “might place [children] in environments with ‘unwholesome associations.’”<sup>58</sup> However, there is a tension here.

On the one hand, Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe in intermingling in society and in fact go to great lengths to remain separate from society. Jehovah’s Witnesses are prohibited from talking to “disfellowshipped” members and ex-members. A member is disfellowshipped for violating Watchtower teachings. Once disfellowshipped, one is expelled from all Watchtower services and events. Additional restrictions are placed on disfellowshipped members, such as the prohibition “to have any association with his or her relatives, friends, or family who are still Witnesses... although limited contact can be made strictly for business dealings, or if a person’s spouse is disfellowshipped,

---

<sup>57</sup> Bergman, *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography*, 18.

<sup>58</sup> Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed : The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 275.

involvement in nonreligious conversations on nonreligious matters relating to the marriage is allowed.”<sup>59</sup>

Jehovah’s Witnesses discourage their members from higher education. This is done to protect their young adults from engaging with and learning “the generally secular philosophy which prevails at most colleges and universities.”<sup>60</sup> Additionally, higher education “constitutes improper involvement with the world and [is] unnecessary, since the time is so short before Armageddon.”<sup>61</sup>

Witnesses strive to be self sufficient so as to limit societal involvement. The Watchtower purchased its own printing press in 1909. Previously, the printing had been outsourced; however, in 1909 printing presses were purchased in attempt to bring together all publications and further limit social involvement. Watchtower operations continually grew to include the making of their own metal printing plate, and purchasing additional property for a factory and as well as apartment complexes nearby to house the factory workers. Additionally, the Watchtower purchased a farm in Wallkill, New York in the 1970s, which produces most of the food for the publishing and printing houses.

On the other hand, and in contradiction to their non-involvement in society and politics, there is the element of proselytizing, mandatory teaching and dissemination of brochures, as well as extending invitations to others to worship. Rutherford taught that each individual must be an active minister,<sup>62</sup> a missionary, and required all Witnesses to go door-to-door, a practice which has survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Watchtower Society started a school, the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead, in 1943 to train

---

<sup>59</sup> Bergman, "The Adventist Movement and Jehovah's Witness Branch of Protestantism," 38.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Bergman, *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography*, 8.

Jehovah's Witnesses to be missionaries. Bergman points out that "few religious organizations have been more preoccupied with the production and dissemination of religious literature than the Watchtower."<sup>63</sup> Bergman also notes that "the Witnesses have not shied away from using the newest technology,"<sup>64</sup> however, "they have so far avoided the use of television, even though this medium is extremely effective."<sup>65</sup>

In addition to denouncing society, Witnesses also denounce other faiths and choose to separate and to distinguish themselves from other religions. These tendencies can be seen as early as Russell. However, as Penton points out,

It should be noted that Pastor Russell came only gradually to develop a negative attitude towards the churches, their pastors, and priests. His early works show that he often associated with clergymen of various denominations and borrowed from their teachings.... Yet as time went by he became more and more critical of most religions which he, in the tradition of George Storrs and many early Adventists, regarded as Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots.<sup>66</sup>

However, with the increased persecution of the Witnesses at the hands of the government and other religions, their attitudes towards other religions grew bitter. Witnesses became more exclusive and began to believe that their path was the only path to God and that they were God's chosen people. Penton also states,

For some years the Watch Tower Society became so negative to all other faiths that it refused to classify Jehovah's Witnesses as a religion. In the late 1930s large parades were staged throughout the English-speaking world in which Witnesses carried placards bearing slogans such as 'Religion is a Snare and a Racket' and 'Serve God and Christ the King'.<sup>67</sup>

Although Witnesses today may consider themselves a religion, they still remain hostile to other religions and adamantly refuse to engage in intra- and inter-faith dialogue.

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>66</sup> Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 127.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 129.

## Political Interaction

Witnesses are also detached from society politically. This requires a two-fold explanation. First, Witnesses believe that Christ's return is imminent and that God will rectify everything. Regardless of the increased "pangs of distress," such as war and violence, Witnesses remain outside of politics and government affairs. However, Jehovah's Witnesses add additional caveats. They believe that human beings cannot rule themselves, that only God can. "History has proved that humans do not have the capacity to rule successfully without their Creator."<sup>68</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses most often use James 4:4 for further explanation, "Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God" (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures). Additionally, they see Satan as the current ruler of the political system as indicated by Paul in his letters to the Corinthians and Ephesians. Through nationalism, Satan leads all nations and people astray. God's Kingdom is the only government to which one owes allegiance.<sup>69</sup> All other systems are distractions devised by Satan. This later came to justify their refusal to salute the national flag or recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Another scriptural reference the Witnesses invoke is Romans 13:1-2, which states,

Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities, for there is no authority except by God; the existing authorities stand placed in their relative positions by God. Therefore he who opposes the authority has taken a stand against the arrangement of God; those who have take a stand against it will receive judgment to themselves. (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures).

Interestingly, Romans 13 is also used to support the authority of the Watchtower Society and also to invoke obedience to the Watchtower Society.

---

<sup>68</sup> *The Key to a Happy World* (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania 2001 [cited March 3 2005]); available from [http://www.watchtower.org/library/w/2001/10/15/article\\_02.htm](http://www.watchtower.org/library/w/2001/10/15/article_02.htm).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* ([cited]).

One seeming paradox stemming from their adamant stand against political involvement and the intermingling of politics and religion is that the Jehovah's Witnesses have done more to protect religious liberty than any other group.<sup>70</sup> Gaustad and Schmidt have said,

No group in America's history has done more to enlarge the understanding of what free exercise really means than the Jehovah's Witnesses, who time and again have pressed their claims all the way through the legal system.<sup>71</sup>

Shawn Francis Peters in *Judging Jehovah's Witness: Religious Persecution and the Dawn of the Rights Revolution*, further elaborates. He notes,

[T]he Jehovah's Witnesses themselves, of course, provide some of the greatest and perhaps most disturbing ironies. By and large, freedoms of expression and conscience were not hallmarks of the Witnesses' own faith, which could be painfully repressive. Although they championed religious liberty and free expression when they campaigned in the courts in the early and mid-1940s, the Witnesses practiced a rigid faith that left virtually no room for ideological flexibility or dissent.<sup>72</sup>

Of the 45 or so cases before the Supreme Court, 36 have been decided in favor of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The tension between the Jehovah's Witnesses and the legal system can be traced to Rutherford when he was arrested in 1917. This appears to be the first major battle, *Rutherford v. United States*, (1919). This case dealt with the Jehovah's Witnesses belief in requesting conscientious objector status in lieu of military service. The charges were eventually dropped when World War I ended and the government lost interest in pursuing the matter further. An interesting comment Rutherford made during the trial was, "My individual inclination is to go into war, because that has been my ambition from youth was to lead an army."<sup>73</sup> Although not leading the military, he certainly did command his followers. The issue of the legality of the conscientious

---

<sup>70</sup> Bergman, "The Adventist Movement and Jehovah's Witness Branch of Protestantism," 42.

<sup>71</sup> Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 350.

<sup>72</sup> Shawn Francis Peters, *Judging Jehovah's Witnesses : Religious Persecution and the Dawn of the Rights Revolution* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 17.

<sup>73</sup> Bergman, *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography*, 7.



objector status of Witnesses has eventually been settled by the courts in favor of the Witnesses.

Jehovah's Witnesses' court cases most notably center on their refusal to salute the American Flag. Witnesses believe saluting the flag, and other forms of recognition of governmental authority, to be idolatry. In 1940, Rutherford explained Witness refusal to salute the flag in a Massachusetts case involving a third grader who was expelled from school for not saluting the flag. Rutherford said in *Minnersville School District v. Gobitis* (1940),

The distinctive doctrine of the flag-saluting cult is the deification of the flag. It not only advocates the offering of respect, service, honor, reverence and devotion to the flag, but attempts to coerce worship to its god. Jehovah's Witnesses conscientiously object and refuse to salute the flag and pledge allegiance to it.<sup>74</sup>

Rutherford and the Witnesses ground their argument in Exodus 20:4-5 which states,

You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth underneath or that is in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them nor be induced to serve them, because I Jehovah your God am a God exacting exclusive devotion. (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures)

In 1940, the Supreme Court, in an eight to one decision, held that the school district's requirement that students join in the Pledge of Allegiance and its enforcement of that rule was constitutional. Justice Frankfurter wrote the opinion of the Court. He said,

[T]he ultimate foundation of a free society is the binding tie of cohesive sentiment.... The flag is the symbol of our national unity, transcending all internal difference.... To stigmatize legislative judgment in providing for this universal gesture of respect for the symbol of our national life...would amount to no less the pronouncement of pedagogical and psychological dogma in a field where courts possess...no controlling competence.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Peters, *Judging Jehovah's Witnesses : Religious Persecution and the Dawn of the Rights Revolution*, 27.

<sup>75</sup> Lee Epstein and Thomas G. Walker, *Constitutional Law for a Changing America. Rights, Liberties, and Justice*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2001), 110-11. Quoting Justice Frankfurter's opinion.

Frankfurter went on to say that the flag maintains “that unifying sentiment without which there can ultimately be no liberties, civil or religious.”<sup>76</sup>

The consequences of this ruling were extraordinary. In the weeks and months that followed, Witnesses faced much persecution. Some were beaten and kidnapped, and even castrated. Penton also points out another extraordinary result of the *Gobitis* ruling, namely “that while much persecution was being heaped upon [the Witnesses] by religious opponents, they had their Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish defenders as well.”<sup>77</sup>

Clergymen submitted a statement to the ACLU to be included in their pamphlet, *The Persecution of the Jehovah’s Witnesses*. Their statement read,

The undersigned believe that the issues raised by the attacks on Jehovah’s Witnesses constitute a challenge to American democracy and religious tolerance. Nothing in the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses justifies the charges of a lack of patriotism leveled against them. Their refusal on religious grounds to salute the flag rests upon a Biblical injunction which they accept literally. In the conflict between loyalty to God and loyalty to the State, Jehovah’s Witnesses stand on the tradition of putting loyalty to God first.<sup>78</sup>

It took three years for the Court to reexamine its ruling in *Gobitis*. In *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943), the Court reversed the ruling in *Gobitis*. In *Barnette*, the Court, in an eight to one vote, upheld the Witnesses’ right to refuse to salute the flag. Justice Jackson wrote the opinion for the Court stating,

If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion, or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 352. Quoting Justice Frankfurter's opinion.

<sup>77</sup> Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed : The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 136.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>79</sup> *West Virginia State Board of Education V. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 642 (1943).

Justice Jackson additionally stated,

The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities and officials and to establish them as legal principles to be applied by the courts.<sup>80</sup>

Lastly, what is interesting about *Barnette* is that the case was decided upon free speech issues, not freedom of religion. The Court ruled that one has a right free from government interference and coercion to express one's views. This also includes one's right not to speak, verbally or by symbolic acts.

In fact, many Jehovah's Witnesses' court cases involve free speech issues and not free exercise of religion. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses' court cases challenging their door-to-door proselytizing methods, have mainly been defended in terms of their right to free speech.

### **Jehovah's Witnesses as Fundamentalists?**

Many may not consider Jehovah's Witnesses as fundamentalists. Most Jehovah's Witnesses do not self identify as fundamentalists. For instance, the Jehovah's Witnesses' Office of Public Information's website makes clear,

While we have strong religious convictions, we are not fundamentalists in the sense that the term has come to be used. We do not believe that every passage in the Bible is to be interpreted literally. We do not pressure political leaders to promote a certain point of view, nor do we resort to demonstrations and violence against those who disagree with us. The Bible teaches Christians to be kind, good, mild, and reasonable—qualities that do not allow for the kind of fanaticism that is sometimes associated with fundamentalism.<sup>81</sup>

However, not self-identifying as fundamentalists does not invalidate the claim that Jehovah's Witness can indeed be characterized as fundamentalist. Perhaps they reject such terminology because it is pejorative and often used to describe the undesirable

---

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 638.

<sup>81</sup> *Beliefs - Frequently Asked Questions: Are You Fundamentalists?* (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2003 [cited December 14 2005]); available from <http://www.jw-media.org/beliefs/beliefsfaq.htm>.

characteristics of a movement, such as militant behavior or being politically charged.

While Jehovah's Witnesses do not exhibit militant or politically charged behavior, they do exhibit a number of other characteristics of fundamentalists, such as a literalist interpretation of Scripture, rejection of other traditions, separatist tendencies, and firm authoritarianism within the group. As we shall see later, it is not necessary that a fundamentalist movement exhibit all characteristics of fundamentalism.

Another objection to labeling Jehovah's Witnesses as fundamentalist comes from Joel Elliot, religious studies scholar from the University of North Carolina. In the following passage from his essay on the Jehovah's Witnesses in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, Elliot distinguishes Jehovah's Witnesses from fundamentalists,

The Society's Governing Body, representatives of the 144,000 "anointed" ones ... provides exclusive and comprehensive guidance to Jehovah's contemporary organization. Authority and leadership within the Watchtower Society is a type of anonymous, institutionalized charisma. Only the privileged "anointed class" of the 144,000 has access to this charismatic power. In practice, only a handful of elderly men at the Society's headquarters in Brooklyn serve as God's "channel of communication." That group, called the Governing Body... only they can discern the "true meaning" of the biblical text... While the Bible itself is necessarily perfect, its meaning is not always clear without this privileged organizational guidance (here he means the elders at the Watchtower). Therefore, what the Bible really "means" is available only to this special class, and even then Jehovah is only gradually enlightening his faithful as the End draws closer. It is this distinction that clearly sets off Jehovah's Witnesses from other fundamentalist groups.<sup>82</sup>

While this helpful in understanding the authority structure of the Witnesses, I believe there are other fundamentalist groups that claim to also be the privileged group that has the real and "true meaning" of the Bible, such as the Christian Reconstructionists as we shall see later. Therefore, in this respect, Jehovah's Witnesses are no different than other fundamentalist groups.

---

<sup>82</sup> Joel Elliot, "Jehovah's Witnesses," in *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism*, ed. Brenda E. Brasher (New York: Routledge, 2001), 244.

While the Jehovah's Witnesses may be characterized as fundamentalist, they stand apart from some fundamentalist groups as well. Some commonly assumed essential elements of fundamentalism are said to be political conservatism, militant tendencies, and some sort of premillennial expectations. While the Jehovah's Witness eschatology is premillennial, they cannot be said to be politically conservative or militant. In the next chapter we will explore another fundamentalist Christian movement, the Christian Reconstructionists, who, unlike Jehovah's Witnesses are politically conservative.

### 3. Christian Reconstructionists

#### Christian Reconstructionism and Rousas John Rushdoony

Another form of Christianity often said to be fundamentalist is the Christian Reconstruction movement. As we shall see, this group is quite different from the Jehovah's Witnesses. Christian Reconstructionism is difficult to study as a uniform religious organization. Reconstructionism is best understood as an intellectual movement which began around 1973, an ideology which cuts across denominational lines and which many subscribe to. Additionally, to say that Reconstructionism is a coherent, monolithic movement, is a misnomer; there are differing beliefs among Reconstructionists. Consequently, gathering statistics on the group is difficult; the current membership is unknown. A conservative estimate of membership is between 20,000 and 40,000, however, the actual number may be slightly higher.<sup>83</sup> One Reconstructionist, Rev. Joseph Morecraft, is anxiously awaiting a "massive acceleration" in the Christian Reconstructionist movement within the next 25 years or so. He attributes this acceleration to the sheer number of children presently enrolled in Christian schools throughout the country.<sup>84</sup>

The grandfather of the Christian Reconstructionist movement is Rev. Rousas John Rushdoony. Rushdoony was born April 25, 1916, in New York, weeks later moving to Kingsburg, California. His parents were Armenian immigrants who had escaped the Turkish sponsored genocide against the Armenians during World War I and came to America. Rushdoony's father became a pastor at a local Presbyterian church.

---

<sup>83</sup> Anson D. Shupe, "Christian Reconstuctionism and the Angry Rhetoric of Neo-Postmillennialism," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem : Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 198.

<sup>84</sup> PBS, *God and Politics. On Earth as It Is in Heaven* (United States: PBS, 1987).

Rushdoony attended two junior colleges in Santa Monica and San Francisco, California, and eventually attended the University of California at Berkeley. He later laments, after developing his conservative views, that his university years spent at Berkeley, an extremely liberal institution according to Rushdoony, were the ugliest years of his life.<sup>85</sup> In 1938, he received his bachelor's degree in education, and two years later a master's in English literature. In 1944 he graduated from Seminary and was ordained. His first position as a pastor was at an Indian reservation in Nevada for 8 ½ years.

### **Rushdoony and the beginnings of the Movement**

Reconstructionists most often associate with Presbyterian and Calvinist traditions. Reformed Churches also serve as a pool of resources for Reconstructionism. The main tenets of Reconstructionism are presuppositionalism, postmillennialism and dominion theology. The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646 is also widely subscribed to among many Reconstructionists.

The Westminster Confession of Faith is an exposition of reformed theology and Calvinist orthodoxy, which served as unifier of the Churches of England and Scotland. The Confession was subsequently adopted by most Presbyterian Churches worldwide. However, many of the clauses in the Confession were later revised or rejected. These revisions however, were met with resistance in many Reconstructionist churches. One main point of departure for the Reconstructionists and mainstream Presbyterians rests in the view of theonomy, the former stating the Confession upholds theonomy, while the latter dismisses this claim. Theonomy will be discussed more fully below.

---

<sup>85</sup> Rousas Mark Rushdoony, *From the President's Desk: Rousas John Rushdoony, April 25, 1916 — February 8, 2001: Funeral Eulogy by His Son, Rev. Mark Rousas Rushdoony* (The Chalcedon Foundation, 2001 [cited February 16 2006]); available from <http://web.archive.org/web/20021230021116/www.chalcedon.edu/report/2001apr/rushdoonym1.shtml>.

Rushdoony's theology and the beginnings of Christian Reconstructionism began when Rushdoony read Cornelius Van Til's, *The New Modernism*, in 1946, which carefully laid out his theory on presuppositionalism. Presuppositionalism represents the idea that one does not have to prove faith or the existence of God, i.e. there are a set of concepts which must be assumed. One presupposes, not proves, the Word of the Bible is absolutely true. Therefore, Christian Reconstructionists reject any notions of natural law, which holds that moral law is known to us through reason. Christian Reconstructionists believe that God's law is found only in the Bible. Another prominent member of the movement, Rev. Andrew Sandlin, writes, "the Christian Reconstructionist begins and ends with the Bible."<sup>86</sup>

Rushdoony's eschatology became more settled and defined in the 1950s. After reading several books on the various forms of millennialism – premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism, Rushdoony eventually settled on post-millennialism as the correct eschatological view and interpretation of the end-times.

Rushdoony was horrified at premillennialism, the belief in the imminent return of Christ and His subsequent establishment of an earthly kingdom. In his essay, "God's Plan for Victory," Rushdoony states, "premillennialism existed as a heresy in the church. In every era, it had a strong tendency towards an evolutionary view of God and religion, thereby betraying its non-Biblical origins."<sup>87</sup> As to those who subscribe to premillennialism, Rushdoony says:

Not only have evangelicals who are prone to dispensationalism and/or premillennialism been too prone to accommodations with evolution, but also to leftist political ideologies. Having denied

---

<sup>86</sup> Andrew Sandlin, *The Creed of Christian Reconstructionism* ([cited March 21 2005]); available from <http://www.dabney.com/charles/Sandlin-CR.html>.

<sup>87</sup> Rousas John Rushdoony, *God's Plan for Victory : The Meaning of Post Millennialism*, 2nd ed., *Chalcedon Monograph Series ; No. 1* (San Jose, CA: Chalcedon Foundation, 1997), 3.



God's law, they have no settled and fixed word by which to judge all things. Good intentions carry weight with people who lack a law of foundation, and the world of socialism, like hell, is paved with "good" intentions.<sup>88</sup>

Reconstructionists spend a great deal of time targeting premillennial Christians, such as Tim LaHaye and even Jerry Falwell. "Premillennialists (particularly dispensationalists) are regularly castigated for being fatalistic pessimists and defeatists who believe in an "eschatology of shipwreck" and display "theological schizophrenia".<sup>89</sup> As Baron and Shupe note, some Reconstructionists have "charged that a preoccupation with an end-times scenario is cultish when it leads the church to establish timetables that assure us as to the timing of the Lord's return and when it turns the church into a retreatist institution."<sup>90</sup> From this description, the Christian Reconstructionists appear to be the exact opposite of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Rushdoony also rejects amillennialism. Rushdoony distinguishes what amillennialism is in theory as opposed to what it is in reality. He states, "In theory, the amillennial position holds that there is a parallel development of good and evil, of God's Kingdom and Satan's Kingdom."<sup>91</sup> He then notes how amillennialism functions in reality, "In reality, amillennialism holds that the major area of growth and power is in Satan's Kingdom, because the world is seen as progressively falling away to Satan."<sup>92</sup> Amillennialism, according to Rushdoony, at best can serve as a guideline for individual ethical dilemmas, not for nations. Amillennialists, according to Rushdoony, have "retreating and crabbed outlooks."

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>89</sup> Shupe, "Christian Reconstructionism and the Angry Rhetoric of Neo-Postmillennialism," 199.

<sup>90</sup> Bruce Barron and Anson D. Shupe, "Reasons for the Growing Popularity of Christian Reconstructionism: Determination to Attain Dominion," in *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective: Revival of Religious Fundamentalism in East and West*, ed. Bronislaw Misztal and Anson D. Shupe (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992), 88.

<sup>91</sup> Rushdoony, *God's Plan for Victory: The Meaning of Post Millennialism*, 5.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Rushdoony further rejects premillennialism and amillennialism as they are limited to the task of soul-saving. “Matters of law respecting crime, the use of the land, money, weights, property, diet, civil government, and all things else are set aside to concentrate on soul-saving only.”<sup>93</sup> In conjunction with this argument is the claim that both premillennialism and amillennialism are antinomian, that is they:

by-pass the law entirely, or reduce it to merely personal morality. They fail to see the relevance of God’s law as the way of sanctification and as the law of men and nations. They do not recognize God’s law as God’s plan for dominion, for godly authority and rule in every area of life.<sup>94</sup>

Reconstructionists, on the other hand, are postmillennialists, that is they believe that things are currently falling apart and that society is in a dark age – the current order of things being unfit for Christ’s return. However, contrary to premillennialists, they believe that Christ will return once a Christian establishment has been formed, which will only come about through their involvement. According to the tenets of postmillennialism,

There shall be victory over Satan, and ... all the families of the earth shall be blest. People out of every tongue, tribe, and nation shall be converted, and the word of God shall prevail and rule in every part of the earth. There is therefore a necessity for action, and an assurance of victory.<sup>95</sup>

Reconstructionists see themselves as inheritors of God’s mandate, instruments of God’s will to bring in the Kingdom of God.<sup>96</sup> This is found in Jesus’ commissioning of his disciples – the ordering of his disciples to carry out God’s marching orders to advance God’s earthly kingdom prior to the second-coming.<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>96</sup> The Chalcedon Foundation, *What Chalcedon Believes* (The Chalcedon Foundation, 2005 [cited February 28 2005]); available from <http://www.chalcedon.edu/credo.php>.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.([cited]).

### **Theonomy: Dominion Theology**

Christian Reconstructionists are concerned with the current state of affairs, as are the Jehovah's Witnesses. As Rushdoony points out, "things are falling apart. We are in a dark age."<sup>98</sup> However, the Reconstructionists' solution is not to retreat. Rushdoony instead insists upon reordering society biblically in preparation for the second-coming.

Rushdoony, in "God's Plan for Victory," cites nine areas – families, the church, Christian schools, Christian political action, Christian professional organizations, callings and professions from the perspective of Biblical law, the sciences, tithing, and prayer – in which further action is necessary on the part of all Christians.

Reconstructionists do not believe, as do Jehovah's Witnesses, in separating themselves from society. The Reconstructionists' mandate prompts them to be involved in the community, through church involvement, establishing schools, and partaking in government offices. Instead of withdrawing from society, they believe Christians should become politically active to assist God in putting America on the right path in preparation for the second-coming. According to Gary DeMar, a prominent Reconstructionist, and President of American Vision, a publisher of Reconstructionist literature and resource for Reconstructionists, political activism is necessary and required of all Reconstructionists and Christians. He explains,

Christianity should be involved in politics even if it is dirty. Who else has the means to clean up politics (or any other area of human activities)? If Christians do not, who will? Christians have stayed out of politics, making its corruption even more pronounced. The answer is not to consign politics to even more corruption by ignoring its potential as an area for redemption and restoration.<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> PBS, *God and Politics. On Earth as It Is in Heaven.*

<sup>99</sup> Barron and Shupe, "Reasons for the Growing Popularity of Christian Reconstructionism: Determination to Attain Dominion," 93.

Reconstructionists' postmillennial views are closely linked with their dominion theology, or theonomy. Dominion theology, "demand and command," is the Christian Reconstructionist's way of subduing the world and advancing God's mandate and imposing Jesus' rule on earth before the second-coming.<sup>100</sup> Reconstructionists read many verses in the Bible to support their dominion theology. For example, Genesis 1:26-28 states:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (King James Version)

Christian Reconstructionists are committed to and have assumed the responsibility of advancing and maintaining God's established order and dominion over all nations.

However, this dominion they envisage is gained through revolution, social rebellion, military conquests or political victories; "God himself will bring the modern state down in a terrible catastrophe. Christians will simply reap the victory that God will effect."<sup>101</sup>

Accordingly, once Christians gain ground, they will resist any efforts which seek to rid them of their achievements. Dominion theology implies political involvement. Unlike Jehovah's Witnesses, Reconstructionists believe in fervent political activism.

The Reconstructionists intend to reorder society with the Bible as their blueprint – not the Constitution or any other secular instrument. Accordingly, Rushdoony states that the Constitution can only give procedural law, and overall is valuable in this respect.

---

<sup>100</sup> Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, 362.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

However, “the Constitution cannot save this country.”<sup>102</sup> Rushdoony believes that only through the literal interpretation of the Bible can Christians save the country. However, there are varying opinions among the Reconstructions regarding the Constitution. While some Reconstructionists, like Rushdoony, do not believe the Constitution can save this county, there are others who seem to be preoccupied in defending the Constitution. There have been many articles and books authored by Reconstructionists which defend the Constitution and espouse their Reconstructionist views of America’s Christian heritage. DeMar recently wrote an article in *Biblical Worldview Magazine* entitled, “Using *The Simpsons* to Teach the Five Freedoms of the First Amendment.”<sup>103</sup> In his article, DeMar uses the main characters of the hit television cartoon, *The Simpsons*, to explain the first Amendment to the Constitution. He says, “These five constitutional freedoms are the foundation of our nation. They are what separate us from every other nation in the world. If we have to use *The Simpsons* to teach them, then let’s do it.”<sup>104</sup> This article is just one example of the differing beliefs among the Reconstructionists.

Reconstructionists believe it is the moral obligation of every Christian to recapture every institution and aspect of American culture and society (law, economics, education, media, medicine, to name a few) for Jesus Christ. A glimpse of the reordered society would be a greatly reduced government. Rushdoony believes government has only two main functions – defense and justice. Perhaps a third function, if necessary, would be a minimal state department, but this aspect is still debatable. The justice system would be restructured so that church elders sit on all of the Courts, except for a few civil

---

<sup>102</sup> PBS, *God and Politics. On Earth as It Is in Heaven.*

<sup>103</sup> Gary DeMar, "Using the Simpsons to Teach the Five Freedoms of the First Amendment," *Biblical Worldview Magazine*, May 2006, 4.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

courts. The economy would go back to the gold standard, because God stipulates money by measures. Furthermore, society would be debt free. As Rushdoony states, “the borrower is a slave to the lender.”<sup>105</sup> The only acceptable loan would be no more than six years.

Perhaps the Reconstructionists’ most controversial views surround their beliefs behind capital punishment. The Reconstructionists believe this is what God requires. There is no other choice but to obey God’s laws, and to do so literally. First and foremost, blasphemy would be punishable by death. Leviticus 24:16 is often referenced: “And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death” (King James Version). Other offenses punishable by death include adultery and homosexuality, as both are what Rushdoony calls “treason to the family.” Rushdoony says juvenile delinquency, as in the case of the incorrigible son, is also worthy of a death sentence. He referenced Deuteronomy 21:18-21,

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear. (King James Version)

In an attempt not to sound tyrannical, Rushdoony, in an interview with Bill Moyers, was careful to say that while he may not personally agree with these stipulations, he does not feel he has a choice because it is what God requires.

---

<sup>105</sup> PBS, *God and Politics. On Earth as It Is in Heaven.*

Reconstructionists also believe that education should come under the dominion of God. Accordingly, they are ardent supporters of the Christian School Movement.

Reconstructionists, unlike many Christians, do not support prayer in the public schools.

They go a step further and denounce public education altogether. DeMar in his article, “Public Schools – Get Out Now!” writes, for instance,

Prayers at sporting events and around flag poles do not constitute a Christian education. The entire curriculum must be Christ-centered. Saying a prayer at the beginning of the school day does not sanctify the secularization of education that takes place for the next six hours. The prayer ritual only gives unjustified validity to what is inherently corrupt.<sup>106</sup>

Reconstructionists prefer Christian schools or even homeschooling. Barron and Shupe note the popularity of the Christian School Movement, and describe it as being “the fastest growing sector of private education in the United States... These schools now constitute the second largest segment of private education, behind only Roman Catholic schools.”<sup>107</sup> Rev. Joseph Morecraft an enthusiast of the Christian School Movement, believes that this movement will cause a massive acceleration of the Christian Reconstruction movement.<sup>108</sup> As Barron and Shupe note,

[T]he process of developing their own schools and curricula forced Christians to begin thinking in a Christian manner about many more topics besides education of children. In this sense, education is far more than just a single issue.... Christian schools, especially if formed in self-conscious resistance to state-sponsored humanism, will tend to seek distinctively Christian approaches to all areas of study, from literature to history to government and science. Reconstructionists, of course, specialize in providing the intellectual tools and arguments for just such an enterprise, overlapping the issues arising out of their biblical literalism with other conservative Christian preoccupations.<sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Gary DeMar, *Public Schools — Get out Now!* (American Vision, 2006 [cited March 7 2006]).

<sup>107</sup> Barron and Shupe, "Reasons for the Growing Popularity of Christian Reconstructionism: Determination to Attain Dominion," 91-92.

<sup>108</sup> PBS, *God and Politics. On Earth as It Is in Heaven.*

<sup>109</sup> Barron and Shupe, "Reasons for the Growing Popularity of Christian Reconstructionism: Determination to Attain Dominion," 92.

Reconstructionists, unlike the Jehovah's Witnesses, emphasize the importance of education. Education beyond primary and secondary education is important and even recommended. Many Reconstructionists hold prestigious teaching positions at many Christian universities. Additionally, several small Reformed theological seminaries and colleges have been founded by prominent Reconstructionists in recent years. For example, Greg L. Bahnsen founded Southern California Center for Christian Studies in 1990 and Bahnsen Theological Seminary 1997, and co-founded Christ College in Lynchburg, Virginia in 1987.

### **Christian Reconstructionists and Fundamentalism**

In conclusion, Rushdoony says: "God has a plan for the conquest of all things by His covenant people. That plan is His law. It leaves no area of life and activity untouched, and it predestines victory. To deny the law is to deny God and His plan for victory."<sup>110</sup>

Christian Reconstructionists, according to some, may be the perfect fundamentalist movement; they are politically active and at times appear militant in their ideology. However, many definitions include some sort of premillennial expectations as an essential characteristic of a fundamentalist group. Christian Reconstructionists reject premillennialism as an acceptable belief and go to great lengths to deny its claims. In the next chapter I will discuss two prominent Christian evangelicals, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, who are also commonly thought of as fundamentalists. I will show how their brand of fundamentalism differs from the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Christian Reconstructionists.

---

<sup>110</sup> Rushdoony, *God's Plan for Victory: The Meaning of Post Millennialism*, 28.



#### 4. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson

This chapter discusses two prominent Christian evangelicals commonly referred to as fundamentalists. The ministries of Jerry L. Falwell and Marion Gordon Pat Robertson, oftentimes thought to be similar, are commonly referred to as the Christian Right. In the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, Matthew C. Moen writes that the term “Christian Right”,

was first used in the late 1970s to describe the surge in political activity among Protestant fundamentalists and evangelicals. Its usage has since been flexible, sometimes referring to the broad community of religious conservatives and other times referring to a small subset of institutionalized organizations pursuing cultural and economic conservatism.<sup>111</sup>

Moen continues by stating that, “The Christian Right was embodied by the Rev. Jerry Falwell and his organization, the Moral Majority, in the early 1980s; more recently, Pat Robertson and his Christian Coalition have assumed that status.”<sup>112</sup>

In fact, Falwell and Robertson are quite different from each other, as well as from other fundamentalists such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Christian Reconstructionists.

##### 4.1 Jerry Falwell

Jerry Falwell, in addition to popular culture labeling him a fundamentalist, self-identifies as a fundamentalist. In *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity*, of which Falwell is a co-editor, Falwell discusses his position on fundamentalism and what it means to be a fundamentalist. He maps out the history of fundamentalism from the 1920s to the present form of fundamentalism which he calls “resurgent fundamentalism”. Falwell states,

For years it was ignored, criticized, and relegated to the backwoods of Appalachia. But like a rushing mighty wind, it has moved across the tide of secularism in America and left its sweeping

---

<sup>111</sup> Matthew C. Moen, “Christian Right,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, ed. William H. Swatos and Peter Kivisto (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 1998), 83.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

imprint on virtually every level of society. The movement that was once despised and rejected has now resurged as the religious phenomenon of the 1980s.<sup>113</sup>

He goes on to say that fundamentalism is the religious phenomenon of the twentieth century, and it is here to stay.<sup>114</sup> According to Falwell,

Fundamentalists view themselves as the legitimate heirs of historical New Testament Christianity. They see themselves as the militant and faithful defenders of biblical orthodoxy. They oppose Liberalism, communism, and left-wing Evangelicalism. True Fundamentalists hold strongly to the same basic tenets that they were debating seventy-five years ago.<sup>115</sup>

It is interesting to note that Falwell sees himself as the defender and rightful heir to the biblical New Testament, while Christian Reconstructionists most often turn to the biblical Old Testament and ancient Jerusalem for the sources of their beliefs. Armed with faith and the New Testament, Falwell, a self-proclaimed fundamentalist, marches onward in defense of biblical orthodoxy.

### *Background and Biography*

Jerry L. Falwell was born August 11, 1933 in Lynchburg, Virginia to a predominantly Christian family. Falwell's mother was a devout Christian. Falwell remembers, "[r]eading the Bible, praying, going to church, giving a generous offering, working the Sunday School ... were as natural and habitual to my mother as sleeping, eating, or working."<sup>116</sup> His mother came from a very devout Baptist family. According to Falwell, the Beasleys were "Baptists from the beginning of time."<sup>117</sup> All sixteen Beasley children "had a well-marked New Testament. Each could pray out loud, quote long Bible passages, and sing at least a dozen hymns by heart."<sup>118</sup> Falwell's father's side

---

<sup>113</sup> Dobson, Falwell, and Hindson, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon : The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity*, 1.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Jerry Falwell, *Strength for the Journey : An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 12.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

of the family was more or less secular. His grandfather, Charles Falwell, had permanently turned his back on God upon his wife's death from cancer and the death of his favorite nephew four years later. Falwell remembers that his grandfather "refused to enter a church and relentlessly ridiculed anyone who did."<sup>119</sup> Falwell's father, Carey H. Falwell, was a successful entrepreneur and businessman, alcoholic, and bootlegger. However, most of all, Falwell remembers his father as enduring a lifelong spiritual crisis. Following the death of Falwell's older sister, Rosha, his father's spiritual crisis deepened and he too turned his back on God. Shortly after the death of his daughter, Falwell's father shot and killed his brother, Garland, following a long running battle between the two brothers. Falwell discusses how his father's spirit suffered a heavy toll due to the weight of his sins. In his autobiography, *Strength for the Journey*, Falwell explains how powerful sin is on one's spirit.

People who do not believe in sin are already well on their way to being its victim. The first and greatest self-deceit is the fantasy that any one of us is invulnerable to deception by the Enemy... I am convinced that life is the battlefield upon which God and Satan war for the control of each of us. And those who refuse to acknowledge that battle are in danger of losing the war and of bearing the consequences for all eternity.<sup>120</sup>

As Falwell recalls, luckily for his father, one does not bear the consequences of his sins for all eternity. Seventeen years following the death of his brother, and while his father lay ill in bed, his father's spirit was reborn.<sup>121</sup> His father had prayed and confessed his sins to God and had "discovered God's forgiveness, and it made a difference."<sup>122</sup>

Falwell led a protected childhood. For most of his adolescent years, Falwell was a prankster. Falwell once wrestled his teacher, pulled off his pants, and then locked him

---

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

in a storage closet. He then pinned his teachers' pants to the main bulletin board. Instead of the principal punishing him, he laughed. Another famous prank of Falwell's was breaking into his school cafeteria, stealing the color-coded meal tickets and handing them out to his football teammates. Instead of receiving jail time for the seriousness of the crime, as the school estimated the financial loss to be in the thousands, he was not allowed to deliver the valediction at graduation. Susan Harding, professor of Born-again Religion and Culture, writes in her book, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics*,

These stories...develop Jerry's dubious nature as a man who could humiliate, deceive, and steal, a law unto himself, a man who would supplant his rivals by any means. And yet, waters parted all around Falwell as he grew up. We come to understand that Jerry is someone special, not a perfect man, not a bad man, but a man not bound by ordinary constraints, a man somehow protected.<sup>123</sup>

Falwell attended Lynchburg College for two years from 1950 to 1952. There he was assigned six hours of Bible and theology study. However, at the time he was more interested in riding around with his neighborhood gang. Falwell recalls,

I breezed through my classes during those next two years at Lynchburg College, worked part-time as a sorter and tier at Lynchburg's Mead Corporation, paper mill, and spent every spare moment at the Pickeral Café with my chums from the Wall Gang. We ate hamburgers, drank Cokes, and listened to Tony Bennett on the jukebox.<sup>124</sup>

Nonetheless, the religious seed had been planted. Falwell vividly remembers his conversion, it was Sunday, January 20, 1952, he was eighteen 18 years old.

Some people have exciting conversion experiences like the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, complete with blinding lights and heavenly voices. For others, like myself, God came quietly into Mom's kitchen, where she had spent many years praying for me. And in that kitchen God answered her prayers and began to move me toward that moment that would change my life forever.<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell : Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 92.

<sup>124</sup> Falwell, *Strength for the Journey : An Autobiography*, 102.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

His day began in his mothers' kitchen. Later that day he joined his friends at a local café. He recalls feeling God's Spirit pursue him across Lynchburg that day.<sup>126</sup> At Falwell's suggestion and urging, he and two other friends attended a service at Park Avenue Baptist Church. Falwell remembers, "that quickly I accepted the mystery of God's salvation. In that simple act of confession and belief God forgave my sinfulness. I didn't doubt it then. I haven't doubted it to this day."<sup>127</sup>

Almost immediately following his conversion, in March, he felt the need for full-time ministry. He states, "I was part of an arm of Christian disciples commissioned by our Commander-in-Chief to evangelize the world."<sup>128</sup> At the urging of his pastor he finished his second year at Lynchburg College, then transferred to Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri. While attending Bible College he volunteered part-time at High Street Baptist Church Sunday School. He took off one year from Bible College to return to Park Avenue Baptist Church and fill in when the pastor and youth minister left.

Following graduation Falwell went to Kansas City to be the minister at Kansas City Baptist Church. Kansas City Baptist Church had plans for him to start a church in Macon. However, on a visit to see Macel Pate, his then girlfriend and future wife, at home in Lynchburg, he was dismayed to find serious division and discontent at Park Avenue Baptist Church. Falwell, at the urging of 35 members of Park Avenue Baptist, left Park Avenue Baptist and started his own church. On July 1, 1956, he delivered his first sermon at Thomas Road Baptist Church. In 1956 Thomas Road Baptist Church had

---

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 123.

35 members. Today, it is one of the largest churches in America with a current membership around 22,000.<sup>129</sup>

His ministry rapidly expanded in the years to come to include a television broadcast program, a university, a Christian elementary school, a home for alcoholics, a rehabilitation and training house for ex-prisoners, and a youth camp. Falwell wanted to reach everyone through his ministries. He did this through “Saturation Evangelism.” As Falwell explains,

We had developed a concept I called “Saturation Evangelism.” In sermons and training sessions I explained that “Thomas Road Baptist Church would preach the gospel to every available person at every available time by every available means.” Our theme verse was found in the New Testament Gospel writings of doctor Luke: “Go out into the highways and the hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”<sup>130</sup>

Just six months after starting Thomas Road Baptist Church he began the Old Time Gospel Hour. Falwell recalls,

Then, just as we began to dream of using television to evangelize the nation.... America’s television stations changed their minds about selling time to religious broadcasters. Or maybe we should say the prayers of the saints changed the minds of the media me. Through media and the mails, we had launched a nationwide campaign to mobilize prayer on behalf of television and its use in reviving and renewing the faith of the nation. We believe that God heard and answered those prayers.<sup>131</sup>

In just fifteen years, Old Time Gospel Hour “was beginning to saturate the nation from more than 300 stations reaching every state in the union.”<sup>132</sup> Unlike the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who mostly rely on the Watchtower publications and door-to-door proselytizing, Falwell saw television as a viable outlet for his outreach ministry.

Although the Jehovah’s Witnesses are perhaps more preoccupied than Falwell with

---

<sup>129</sup> Thomas Road Baptist Church, *Our History* (Thomas Road Baptist Church, 2006 [cited February 16 2006]); available from <http://home.trbc.org/index.cfm?PID=9059>.

<sup>130</sup> Falwell, *Strength for the Journey : An Autobiography*, 304.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

producing and disseminating their literature, the Jehovah's Witnesses have thus far avoided using television as part of their ministry.

In addition to opening an elementary school, in 1971 Falwell founded Lynchburg Baptist College initially with a few hundred eager college students.<sup>133</sup> Like the Reconstructionists, Falwell shares enthusiasm for higher education. Later that year Lynchburg Baptist College changed its name to Liberty University. Today, Liberty University has approximately 20,000 undergraduate, graduate, law, seminary and distance students enrolled.<sup>134</sup>

### *Theology*

Falwell was born and raised a Baptist, and his church and ministries are Baptist as well. However, following the conservative alignment of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1979, with the election of several conservative Southern Baptist leaders to administrative positions, Falwell sought to associate his church with the Southern Baptist Convention. Although Falwell and Thomas Road Baptist Church are Baptist, he was granted membership to the Southern Baptist Convention through monetary donations.

Falwell shares many common beliefs with conservatives at the Southern Baptist Convention. Falwell and the fundamentalists, as Falwell refers to them, both believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. According to Falwell,

To fundamentalists, the inerrancy of Scripture is ultimately linked to the legitimacy and authority of the Bible. They view the Bible as being God-breathed and thus possessing the quality of being free from errors in all of its statements and affirmations.<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>134</sup> *A Thriving Campus* (Liberty University, 2006 [cited February 15 2006]); available from <http://www.liberty.edu/index.cfm?PID=6905>.

<sup>135</sup> Dobson, Falwell, and Hindson, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon : The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity*, 8.

Furthermore, Falwell affirms,

[T]he Bible, both Old and New Testaments, though written by men, was supernaturally inspired by God so that all its words are the written true revelation of God, it is therefore inerrant in the originals and authoritative in all matters. It is to be understood by all through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, its meaning determined by the historical, grammatical, and literary use of the author's language, comparing Scripture with Scripture.<sup>136</sup>

Harding points out that Falwell extends his belief in the inerrancy of Scripture to his own words. Harding describes this self-proclaimed inerrancy,

Fundamental Baptist interpretation rests on a poetics of faith – absolute faith –not a hermeneutics of suspicion. The Bible is entirely true in the ordinary sense of accurately depicting historical events. The rule of inerrancy extends, not explicitly and by no means irrevocably (as it does to the Bible), to preachers and other “men of God.” Specifically, everything Jerry Falwell authors is true. But truth is not automatic, transparent, unmediated. It is the outcome of continuous exegetical exchanges between the Bible and its readers, a preacher and his people. A preacher’s God-given authority, like the absolute truth is Bible, is produced by a community of believers through its interpretive practices. It is as if Falwell, in his varied storied manifestations, were telling his followers, “Read me as you read the Bible. I appear in many versions, and there are awkward silences and anomalies within them. My tales are troubled and they are troubling. Harmonize my discrepancies. Close my gaps. Overcome my troubles. Make me whole. Make me true.”<sup>137</sup>

Falwell not only claims that Bible is inerrant, he also claims his own words carry the same authority. This is also found within the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Watchtower Society. The Watchtower Society has claimed that it is “‘God’s exclusive channel of Truth,’ representing ‘God’s visible organization on Earth,’ whose teachings [are] not to be questioned.”<sup>138</sup> However, the Jehovah’s Witnesses seem to take this a step further by proclaiming that in 1918 Christ adopted the Watchtower Society as His agent on earth.

---

<sup>136</sup> Thomas Road Baptist Church, *Our Doctrinal Statement* (Thomas Road Baptist Church, 2006 [cited February 16 2006]); available from <http://home.trbc.org/index.cfm?PID=9060>.

<sup>137</sup> Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell : Fundamentalist Language and Politics*, 88.

<sup>138</sup> Bergman, *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography*, 12.



Sin is a fundamental part of Falwell's beliefs and ministry. Falwell is fully aware of the power of sin and its consequences and stresses the importance of recognizing the power of sin,

When the idea of sin disappears, the possibility of forgiveness goes with it. And without forgiveness, the world is lost. Our relationship with God and with each other deteriorate and we live miserable, hopeless lives. But when we admit the possibility of sin, we hold up the possibility of forgiveness as well. And with forgiveness, there is hope that our relationships with each other and with God can be restored again.<sup>139</sup>

Salvation, according to Falwell, comes only through accepting Christ as Savior.

He explains his beliefs surrounding salvation,

Politically-correct theologians believe all religions are equally acceptable to God and there are many ways to Heaven. Whether it is Wicca, Islam, Hinduism or Christianity, we are simply all going to Heaven by different routes. The plan of salvation has not changed. The gospel has not changed. Salvation is available exclusively through the shed blood of Christ and His glorious resurrection.<sup>140</sup>

Additionally, Falwell stresses the importance of being born-again,

We affirm that each person can be saved only through the work of Jesus Christ, through repentance of sin and by faith alone in Him as Savior. The believer is declared righteous, born again by the Holy Spirit, turned from sin, and assured of heaven. We affirm that the Holy Spirit indwells all who are born again, conforming them to the likeness of Jesus Christ. This is a process completed only in Heaven. Every believer is responsible to live in obedience to the Word of God in separation from sin.<sup>141</sup>

Falwell's beliefs surrounding salvation are quite different from the Jehovah's

Witnesses who believe salvation comes through accepting Jesus Christ as Savior as well as obeying the Watchtower Society.

Falwell's millennial expectations are those of a premillennialist. He writes, for instance,

---

<sup>139</sup> Falwell, *Strength for the Journey : An Autobiography*, 28-29.

<sup>140</sup> Jerry Falwell, *Spiritual and Political Freedom* (July 4, 2004 [cited September 23 2005]); available from <http://sermons.trbc.org/20040704.html>.

<sup>141</sup> Church, *Our Doctrinal Statement* ([cited]).

The return of Christ for all believers is imminent. It will be followed by seven years of great tribulation, and then the coming of Christ to establish His earthly kingdom for a thousand years. The unsaved will then be raised and judged according to their works and separated forever from God in hell. The saved, having been raised, will live forever in heaven in fellowship with God.<sup>142</sup>

However, the premillennialism of Falwell does not, as does that of the Jehovah's Witnesses, lead him to political avoidance.

### *Political Involvement*

Falwell is very involved in politics. In 1979 he founded the Moral Majority to mobilize Christians to take political action.<sup>143</sup> Falwell believes Christians should take an active role in society as well politics. Unlike the Jehovah's Witnesses who believe that God will rectify everything and therefore feel no need to get involved in politics, Falwell believes involvement is necessary. Whereas the Witnesses believe that politics and government are tools of Satan, Falwell believes government can be used to help individuals to serve God better. He explains this in his call-to-action book, *Listen America!*. Falwell states,

Our Founding Fathers based our system of government on the First Commandment. Man was created to serve God, not the state. Since man was created in God's image, government could be used to help secure man's God-endowed rights.<sup>144</sup>

Falwell continues,

Our ministry is as committed as it ever has been to the basic truths of Scripture, to essential and fundamental Christian doctrines. But we are not willing to isolate ourselves in seclusion while we sit back and watch this nation plunge headlong toward hell.<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.([cited]).

<sup>143</sup> Although the Moral Majority dissolved in 1989, it was later revamped in 2004 and became the Moral Majority Coalition.

<sup>144</sup> Jerry Falwell, *Listen America!* (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1981), 45-46.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 225.

Falwell believes America is in a moral and spiritual crisis and it is the moral obligation of Christians to save America. Falwell introduces his readers to his main objective,

The issue is survival. If the scriptures and human history teach us anything, it is that no society that violates Divine principles can long survive. America was built on seven Judeo-Christian principles.... We must return to these principles, as a nation, if we are to survive.... Before there can be real mobilization that produces national change, people must be informed on the issues. Further, the people must understand their own need for involvement and commitment in the saving of this nation.<sup>146</sup>

Falwell continues and states that the seven principles America must return to are dignity of human life, the traditional monogamous family, common decency, work ethic, the Abrahamic covenant, God-centered education, and divinely ordained establishments.<sup>147</sup>

As part of his political agenda, Falwell in a sermon delivered May 1, 2005, called for a massive spiritual aggression. He argued that,

Biblical, non-violent, lawful and offensive strategy which I believe the Lord gave me many years ago as a plan to take America back. It is a plan to take back our children... take back our schools... take back our government... take back our Judeo-Christian culture. The church of Jesus Christ in America has been on the defense far too long. The New Testament church in the Scriptures was never on the defense. It was always charging the gates of Hell.<sup>148</sup>

However, unlike the Christian Reconstructionists, Falwell's plan to take back America does not use the Old Testament as the blueprint.

Additionally, Falwell believes the Constitution can save America, unlike the Christian Reconstructionists. Falwell has said,

I believe the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States is the most important statement of that Constitution. Even though it puts the church before the state, that is not what I believe is the most important statement of the Constitution. Even though it is chronologically the first among all of the other amendments, that is not why I believe it is the most important

---

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., Prologue.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Jerry Falwell, *Massive Spiritual Aggression: A 21st Century Call to Action* (May 1, 2005 [cited September 23 2005]); available from <http://sermons.trbc.org/20050501.html>.

statement of our Constitution. I believe it is the most important statement because it guarantees the most important freedom of all, the freedom of a person's soul. It is first because religious freedom is basic to all other freedoms.... In recent times, the government (the courts and the Congress) have gone far beyond the intent of the framers of the First Amendment. They have tried to purge America of any influence of Christianity, trying to make this nation purely secular, like the now-defunct Soviet Union. The First Amendment guarantees that the government will not establish a state church, nor will it prohibit the free exercise of a religion. Further, it is implied that government shall not be hostile to religion. There is no mention in the Constitution of any so-called separation of church and state. This is nothing more than myth. There is certainly nothing in the Constitution which justifies governmental hostility against the church. The Congress and the federal courts are grossly misinterpreting and misapplying the First Amendment and... overstepping their authority, when they so frequently show intentional malice towards people of faith.<sup>149</sup>

Falwell firmly believes America's government can be saved and returned to its Christian foundation and heritage. However, like the Reconstructionists, Falwell believes it is the moral duty of Christians to take action.

In the next section of this chapter I will examine another Christian evangelical, who some refer to as Falwell's compliment. I will examine Pat Robertson's theological beliefs, paying special attention to his eschatology, and his level of social and political involvement.

## **4.2 Pat Robertson**

Pat Robertson is another Christian evangelical who is commonly referred to and identified as a fundamentalist and the embodiment of the Christian Right.

### *Background and Biography*

Marion Gordon "Pat" Robertson was born March 22, 1930 in Lexington, Virginia. Robertson's mother, Gladys Robertson, was intensely religious and instrumental in Robertson's conversion in 1956. Robertson's father, A. Willis Robertson, a U.S.

---

<sup>149</sup> Jerry Falwell, *America Made a Deal with God* (July 6, 1997 [cited September 23 2005]); available from <http://www.trbc.org/sermons/970706PM.html>.

Congressman for 34 years –14 years as Representative and 20 years as a Senator – was not religious. Pat Robertson, although not devout or very religious as a child, did self-identify as a Southern Baptist, mainly because of his mother.

Pat Robertson attended McCallie School in Chattanooga, Tennessee, a military prep school. He attended Washington and Lee University majoring in history and graduated in 1950 with honors. While attending university, Robertson enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1946. He served in Korea and was promoted to First Lieutenant in 1952. Following his service in the Marines he attended Yale Law School from which he graduated in 1955 with a juris doctorate. While in Yale, he met Dede Elmer, a graduate nursing student. The two married after Robertson's second year of law school. Dede was raised Roman Catholic, however, she later converted and was born-again through the spiritual guidance of her husband.

Robertson remembers being “saved” in 1956. As noted earlier, his mother was instrumental in his conversion. She arranged a luncheon for her son and Cornelius Vanderbreeggen, an evangelical minister from Philadelphia. Robertson remembers Vanderbreeggen discussing God with the waiter, “I was aghast. Right here in the middle of this plush restaurant these two men were carrying on a conversation about Jesus Christ!”<sup>150</sup> However, as that conversation continued, Robertson noticed, “something was happening to me. Suddenly I found myself sharing some of the deep things in my heart.”<sup>151</sup> Robertson began to pour his heart out, so to speak, and confess.

I believe [God] is the source of all power, the guiding intellect of the universe. Not only that, but I believe he has a destiny for each man's life, and that none of us will ever be happy or productive unless we are in the center of his will.... I believe Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole

---

<sup>150</sup> Pat Robertson and Jamie Buckingham, *Shout It from the Housetops* (Plainfield, N.J.,: Logos International, 1972), 22.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

world... and for my sins, too.... If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus... thou shalt be saved.”<sup>152</sup>

Following his conversion, he felt like a new creation. He recalls, “No longer did I remember I was the son of a Senator. Now I was the son of the King.”<sup>153</sup> Robertson, following his conversion, felt the strong need to preach,<sup>154</sup> so shortly thereafter he enrolled at New York Theological Seminary. Robertson’s desire to teach and preach after his conversion is also consistent with Rutherford’s and Falwell’s conversions.

Michael Lienesch, political scientist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* describes this,

For Falwell... and Robertson alike, conversion also involve[d] a calling to preach. Within three months of his conversion, Falwell feels called to forgo his plans for a degree in engineering in order to attend Baptist Bible College... Robertson does it a little differently, setting a kind of record by deciding to become a minister even before he is converted. (In fact, Robertson and his wife did not attend church at the time. When told of her husband’s plans to preach, Dede Robertson sensibly suggest[ed] that they visit churches to ‘find out what it’s all about.’) Although Robertson would later receive a clearer calling to preach, his conversion is from the start informed by a commitment to some form of service.<sup>155</sup>

Similarly, Rutherford also felt the desire to preach following his conversion. For him however, it was a longer process. He was first introduced to the Jehovah’s Witnesses through a few colporteurs from whom he purchased three Watchtower books. Twelve years later he joined the movement and simultaneously published a book on salvation. Eleven years following the publishing of his book he became the president of the Watchtower.

---

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America : Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 35.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

While attending seminary, Robertson, came into contact with many Charismatic Christians, mainly through the friendship of Su Nae Chu, a Charismatic Korean woman. In *Shout It From the Housetops*, Robertson recalls early morning prayer meetings, which led into afternoon meetings and eventually into night meetings. He also remembers the need for secrecy at the time:

In those days we had a deep-seated fear of what church people would think of our experience with the Holy Spirit, and our prayer meetings were often held late at night, like a gathering of conspirators. As was true of the disciples after the crucifixion, we made a practice of locking the doors to our prayer meetings, “for fear of the Jews.”<sup>156</sup>

Those prayer meetings gave Robertson the proof he needed of the possibility of revival, “not only in New Testament times, but in our own generation as well,” but “the big question remained: Could it come to America also?”<sup>157</sup> This last statement, dreams of revival across America, would resonate throughout his life and ministry and later play a pivotal role in his political activism.

Robertson was ordained a Southern Baptist minister in 1961 in Virginia. Although ordained, Robertson has never pastored at a Southern Baptist church. One reason is his Pentecostal and Charismatic beliefs which Southern Baptists do not agree with. “Generally, the [Southern Baptist Convention] does not hold to many of the practices held by charismatic groups, such as ‘speaking in tongues.’ Some churches do uphold these practices, which usually result in contention between the church and its local association, and has on occasion led to the church being ‘disfellowshipped’ from the association.”<sup>158</sup> However, this does not mean that the two are incompatible. Both are conservative Protestant forms of Christianity and share similar conservative reactions to

---

<sup>156</sup> Robertson and Buckingham, *Shout It from the Housetops*, 65.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>158</sup> Wikipedia, *Southern Baptist Convention* (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 2006 [cited March 1 2006]); available from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern\\_Baptist\\_Convention](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Baptist_Convention).

modernity. Additionally, both share revivalist roots. Lienesch describes the seemingly paradoxical relationship between the two:

Because Pentecostalism shared revivalist roots, and because the movement quickly found common ground with evangelicalism and fundamentalism, while at the same time insisting on denominational and doctrinal independence. Perhaps the most dramatic development, however, has been the rise since 1960 of a neo-Pentecostal or charismatic brand of conservative Christianity, crossing traditional denominational lines and conveying an orthodox but theologically diverse and experiential message of personal renewal through baptism in the Holy Spirit. Combining and diverging, each of these strains contributed to the development of the New Christian Right of the 1980s, producing an alliance that was astonishingly broad based but at the same time quite tenuous.<sup>159</sup>

This point is interesting as it is perhaps what makes Robertson more closely resemble the Christian Reconstructionists, as well shall see later.

### *Ministry*

Like many others' conversion experiences, Robertson felt compelled to minister in its aftermath. Four years following his conversion he started the Christian Broadcasting Network, the first Christian television network in the nation. He recalls this event in his autobiography. A letter of his mother's contained a message for her son. Robertson read the message, "There is a television station in Portsmouth, Virginia, that has gone defunct and is on the market. Would Pat be interested in claiming it for the Lord?"<sup>160</sup> After reading that letter Robertson began praying, "Lord, I don't know a thing about television. I've never had a drama course in my life. I hardly know a camera from a receiver... if you want me to take over that station, tell me how much it will cost."<sup>161</sup> Robertson wrote the owner of the station and in 1960 purchased a small UHF TV Station in Portsmouth, Virginia. His mission was to "prepare the United States of America ...

---

<sup>159</sup> Lienesch, *Redeeming America : Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right*, 15-16.

<sup>160</sup> Robertson and Buckingham, *Shout It from the Housetops*, 79.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.



for the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.”<sup>162</sup>  
 In order for him to meet his monthly budget of \$7,000, Robertson began the 700 Club in 1963. The 700 Club was designed to request that 700 viewers send in \$10 each month so that his station would meet its monthly budget.

Following the success of his Christian Broadcasting Network and the 700 Club, Robertson began Operation Blessing International Relief and Development in 1978. This non-profit company was started as a community relief and development organization. Its mission is to:

Demonstrate God's love by alleviating human need and suffering in the United States and around the world. In efforts to relieve human suffering we combat hunger, deprivation and physical affliction with the provision of food, clothing, shelter, medical care and other basic necessities of life. We also help facilitate the development of healthy, vibrant and self-sustaining communities by addressing larger issues of education, food security, potable water, employment, community health, and disaster mitigation projects. In every endeavor, OBI seeks to exemplify Christian compassion and benevolence while conforming to the highest standards of integrity.<sup>163</sup>

Robertson, like Falwell, believed he was called to open a university. In 1977 Regent University opened in Virginia Beach. Today, Regent University offers undergraduate and graduate level courses and includes a School of Government as well as a Law School. In 1995 Regent expanded and opened a campus in Washington, DC.

### *Eschatology*

Robertson’s eschatology in the beginning of his ministry was that of a premillennialist. As a premillennialist he,

believe[d] that Jesus will return in person to establish this kingdom, which he will rule over for a literal thousand-year period. The events that will lead up to his return are usually thought to be

---

<sup>162</sup> The Christian Broadcasting Network, *Cbn's Mission Statement* (The Christian Broadcasting Network, 2005 [cited September 21 2005]); available from [http://www.cbn.com/about/mission/mission\\_statement.asp](http://www.cbn.com/about/mission/mission_statement.asp).

<sup>163</sup> Operation Blessing International, *Our Mission* (Operation Blessing International, 2001 [cited September 14 2005]); available from <http://www.operationblessing.org/about/index.asp>.

catastrophic upheavals in both the natural and the political realms – wars, famines, earthquakes, and the like.<sup>164</sup>

According to Stephen O’Leary and Michael McFarland, both communications professors, a typical premillennialist’s political theory is that of avoidance; they tend to “avoid being connected with the human governments of this world.”<sup>165</sup> O’Leary’s and McFarland’s theory would be consistent with Robertson’s reluctance to enter into politics early on in his career and ministry. Although Robertson had assisted with his father’s campaign for Senate, he did not enter politics himself until many years later.

O’Leary and McFarland suggest that Robertson’s millennial expectations shifted to those of a postmillennialist, upon his decision to enter politics and run for president in 1988. According to O’Leary and McFarland, as a postmillennialist, Robertson believes:

The return of Jesus will not be accomplished until after the millennial kingdom, which is conceived not as a personal reign of Christ, but as a period of peace and tranquility when the church will succeed in converting unbelievers and reforming society...gradual and incremental establishment of God’s word on earth. The role of the believer...is to cleanse the earth in preparation for Christ’s return.<sup>166</sup>

O’Leary and McFarland hypothesize that in order to enter politics, Robertson had to change his millennial views. They say Robertson’s premillennial views were too pessimistic, but by shifting to postmillennialism, he could justify his entering politics and encourage active participation. O’Leary and McFarland point to the timing in Robertson’s shift as proof of his changing millennial views. Robertson’s shift to postmillennialism occurred just prior to him running for president in 1988. O’Leary and McFarland believe this was necessary for Robertson so he could generate more support

---

<sup>164</sup> Stephen O’Leary and Michael McFarland, "The Political Use of Mythic Discourse: Prophetic Interpretation in Pat Robertson's Presidential Campaign," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75, no. 4 (1989): 434.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*: 434-35.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*: 435.

from the majority of conservatives while, at the same time not losing the support of the Bible believers. O’Leary and McFarland cite several key speeches and articles delivered by Robertson which illustrate Robertson’s shift in eschatology. They cite a 1980 article from The 700 Club in which Robertson “invoke[d] a sense of imminent catastrophe and reveal[ed] a clear premillennialist outlook.” Robertson offered a “litany of recent catastrophic occurrences.” They conclude by saying,

Although Robertson does offer a qualified message of hope for believers, his prognosis for significant social and political reform is bleak.... The only concrete act readers are urged to perform to demonstrate their adherence to Robertson’s apocalyptic claims is to engage in missionary work. The Christians’ finest hour in the struggle against antichrist is depicted here as an evangelical battle, not a political one.<sup>167</sup>

An interesting aspect of Robertson’s article is that it resembles an article one would find in an issue of *Watchtower* or *Awake!*, both publications of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Robertson was also concerned with prophetic date-setting. He wrote, “If the approximate dating of events is even close and if Anti-Christ is yet to come, then we must conclude that there is a man alive today, approximately 27 years old, who is now being groomed to be the Satanic messiah.”<sup>168</sup>

O’Leary and McFarland next turn to Robertson’s book, *The Secret Kingdom*, published in 1982, which “evidence[s] that [Robertson’s] interpretation of prophecy had begun to shift radically.”<sup>169</sup> O’Leary and McFarland comment on the book,

It consists of humanity’s application of the principles of god’s kingdom to the affairs of the world. According to Robertson, “Jesus... was saying, the kingdom of God rules in the affairs of men. It has principles for living, and they will bring success.” These principles are not simply rules that must be followed because God has commanded them; they are laws that, if enacted, bring personal success and social transformation. If people would only put these principles into practice, says

---

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.: 438-39.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.: 439.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.: 440.

Robertson, disaster could be averted and the blessings of the millennial kingdom could be available to us.<sup>170</sup>

This passage shows how Robertson's eschatology was beginning to shift to postmillennialism. According to O'Leary and McFarland, his shift would be solidified in 1986. September 17, 1986, during his presidential announcement address entitled "A New Vision for America," Robertson shed his premillennialism for the more optimistic postmillennialism. O'Leary and McFarland comment of Robertson's speech,

Robertson can present himself as a prophet and an evangelist calling for national repentance, without making a truth claim concerning the end times. Perhaps the world will end soon, perhaps it will not. In any event, God has already given us an Eden. If we repent, God will honor the covenant and, until he is ready to close out time, we can and should prepare our nation to assume its destined role in God's historical plan.<sup>171</sup>

O'Leary and McFarland offer criticism from two Christians – whom they refer to as being more liberal theologically than Robertson – Jimmy Swaggart and Charles Pack, to further support Robertson's shift to postmillennialism. In their separate criticisms, Swaggart & Pack both argue against the "Kingdom Age" of which Robertson speaks. They both agree that "dark days are coming" and that Christians will not bring in God's kingdom, the King (Jesus) will set up His Kingdom, and only after the Tribulation is over."<sup>172</sup>

### *Political Involvement*

Robertson's early ministry was not involved in politics. He avoided politics to focus on his spiritual ministries. Although he assisted with his father's campaign for Virginia Senator, Robertson was not personally active, as God would not let him.

Robertson recalls,

---

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.: 446.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.: 446-47.

I yearned to get into the fray and start swinging, but the Lord refused to give me the liberty. “I have called you to my ministry,” he spoke to my heart. “You cannot tie my eternal purposes to the success of any political candidate...not even your own father.” I felt I could have helped my father tremendously in the campaign, but the Lord steadfastly refused to let me. I did write one speech for him, which was the newspapers said [sic] was the hardest-hitting speech of the campaign, but most of my efforts on his behalf were very frustrating.<sup>173</sup>

His political involvement changed in 1986 when he announced in September that he would run for president if he could receive support from 3 million people. This was not difficult for Robertson as he quickly gained the support of over 3 million and formally announced his decision to run for president.

Although his presidential campaign was unsuccessful, Robertson remained politically active. Robertson, along with Ralph Reed, whom Robertson thought was a promising young Christian conservative at the time, formed the Christian Coalition in 1989 from his campaign donors and activists. The original mission of the Christian Coalition was to i) represent Christians before local councils, state legislatures and Congress; ii) speak out in the public arena and in the media; iii) train Christian leaders for effective social and political action; iv) inform Christians about timely issues and pending legislation; and v) protest ant-Christian bias and defend the legal rights of Christians.<sup>174</sup>

In addition to the Christian Coalition, Robertson founded the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ). The ACLJ was originally organized to promote religious liberty and freedom. Today, “in addition to its religious liberties work, the ACLJ also specializes in constitutional law involving the issues of national security, human life, marriage, judicial nominations, pornography, and protecting patriotic expression

---

<sup>173</sup> Robertson and Buckingham, *Shout It from the Housetops*, 195.

<sup>174</sup> Justin Watson, *The Christian Coalition : Dreams of Restoration, Demands for Recognition*, 1st ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Florida State University., 1997), 53.

including our national motto and the Pledge of Allegiance.”<sup>175</sup> Part of the ACLJ’s mission is to provide counsel, legal advice, education and support for attorneys engaged in similar work as the ACLJ. The ACLJ states it “does not charge for its services and is dependent upon God and the resources He provides through the time, talent, and gifts of people who share our concerns and desire to protect our religious and constitutional freedoms.”<sup>176</sup> Many cases the ACLJ is involved in deal with such topics as school prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, and bible and religious clubs in public schools.

The ACLJ shares many of Robertson’s views on the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and religious freedom. Robertson, in his book, *America’s Dates With Destiny*, writes of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence,

This nation stands strong and free today, two hundred years later, because one foot stands on the Declaration of Independence; the other, on the Constitution. Remove either document and the nation will not stand at all.... Both documents were crucial in guiding this nation on her journey to liberty.... These documents live. Their carefully chosen words still guard our liberty and guide us in its preservation.<sup>177</sup>

Similar to Falwell, Robertson believes that the Constitution together with God can save America. He first and foremost believes America is a Christian nation. In his book, *The Ten Offenses*, he makes this clear, “Without dispute, the United States of America began as a nation of Christians and as a Christian nation framed by the commandments of God.”<sup>178</sup> He continues, “This new nation was not polytheistic, multicultural, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, animist, or atheist. It was a Christian nation intended to be governed by

---

<sup>175</sup> ACLJ, *History of Aclj* (ACLJ, 2006 [cited March 15 2006]); available from <http://www.aclj.org/About/default.aspx?Section=10>.

<sup>176</sup> ACLJ, *Aclj Mission* (ACLJ, 2006 [cited March 15 2006]); available from <http://www.aclj.org/About/default.aspx?Section=9>.

<sup>177</sup> Pat Robertson, *America's Dates with Destiny* (Nashville: Nelson, 1986), 88-89.

<sup>178</sup> Pat Robertson, *The Ten Offenses* (Nashville: Integrity Publishers, 2004), 2.

religious people who were guided by the precepts of the Holy Bible.”<sup>179</sup> This last sentence perhaps best explains Robertson’s views towards other faiths. He firmly believes America is a Christian nation for Christians. He believes that Christians would make the best public and governmental servants. In an interview on “This Week on George Stephanopoulos,” Robertson stated,

Right now, I think people who feel that there should be a jihad against America, read what the Islamic people say. They divide the world into two spheres, Dar al Islam Dar al Harb. The Dar al Islam are those who've submitted to Islam, Dar al Harb are those who are in the land of war and they have said in the Koran there's a war against all the infidels. So do you want somebody like that sitting as a judge? I wouldn't.<sup>180</sup>

Robertson has also been outspoken on issues concerning the United States Supreme Court. One particular topic of interest to Robertson is prayer in public schools. He states,

It would have been unthinkable that the teaching of the Holy Bible, which laid out the concepts of Christianity and, in turn, the views of ‘just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices,’ would be denied to children in their schools... by court orders in subsequent years.<sup>181</sup>

Although he is also a proponent of the Christian schools, he is a strong advocate of prayer in public schools. However, unlike Falwell and many Reconstructionists, he has not opened his own private Christian school for elementary school aged children, however, he does support them.

#### *Pat Robertson as a Fundamentalist*

Robertson, unlike Falwell, does not self-identify as a fundamentalist. Justin Watson, religious studies professor, would not classify Robertson as a fundamentalist either. He states,

---

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>180</sup> *This Week with George Stephanopoulos: Interview with Pat Robertson* (Patrobertson.com, 2005 [cited February 15 2006]); available from <http://www.patrobertson.com/PressReleases/thisweekgs.asp>.

<sup>181</sup> Robertson, *The Ten Offenses*, 4.

Robertson has often been called a ‘fundamentalist,’ but this is really a misuse of the term.... Robertson does not identify himself as such, and the hard core of ‘classic’ fundamentalists – inerrantist, separatist, and Baptist – would be profoundly suspicious of Robertson’s charismatic ‘word of knowledge’ extra-biblical revelations.<sup>182</sup>

However, this does not invalidate labeling him a fundamentalist. Robertson appears to exhibit many characteristics of a fundamentalist. According to Falwell, a fundamentalist opposes liberalism, communism, and left-wing evangelicalism. True fundamentalists hold strongly to the same basic tenets that they were debating seventy-five years ago.<sup>183</sup> Using this definition of fundamentalism, Robertson seems to fit. Additionally, Robertson seems to fit Marsden’s definitions of a fundamentalist being “an evangelical who is angry about something.”

Christian fundamentalists can come in many different varieties. There is not one characteristic that captures the essence of Christian fundamentalism. The next chapter discusses how each of the four movements discussed can rightfully be characterized as fundamentalist despite their differences.

---

<sup>182</sup> Watson, *The Christian Coalition : Dreams of Restoration, Demands for Recognition*, 32.

<sup>183</sup> Dobson, Falwell, and Hindson, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon : The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity*, 1.



## 5. Comparisons of Four Christian Fundamentalist Movements

Christian Fundamentalism has been assumed to be a single monolithic movement. For example, the essential elements common to all Christian Fundamentalism are said to be inerrancy of the Bible, a literal interpretation of Biblical texts, premillennial expectations, evangelicalism, staunch rejection of other religious traditions, embracing of strict moral codes with politically conservative undertones, social and political activism, as well as some sort of militant opposition to modern culture and secular politics.

Fundamentalism, however, is not one comprehensive movement but a phenomenon which encompasses a variety of beliefs, practices, and expectations, all worthy of individual attention. It is in fact a diverse amalgam of many individual, and quite distinct movements.

First, it is claimed that all Christian fundamentalists believe in the inerrancy of the Bible and in the literal interpretation of Biblical texts. While the four movements analyzed all claim the Bible to be inerrant, and claim to interpret the Bible literally, they do not however, reach the same conclusions.

For example, the Jehovah's Witness arrive at their belief of salvation through their literal interpretation of Revelations 7:4, which states, "And I heard the number of those who were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel," (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures). Russell believed this to mean that only 144,000 faithful followers would go to heaven. By 1932, however, the number of Jehovah's Witnesses had already exceeded 144,000. Rutherford in response created a second class of believers, called the "great crowd," who instead of living in heaven would receive an "earthly reward" and live on the restored paradisaical earth.

Russell rejected the idea of hell, instead he believed that in the aftermath of Armageddon, the unfaithful, those who have “fallen away,” and those succumbing to Satan’s temptation all would be destroyed and simply cease to exist. According to Russell, salvation was reversible, or conditional; that salvation can be taken away. Salvation is also “based only upon the continual obedience of the individual.”<sup>184</sup>

This interpretation of Scripture and salvation is quite different from Falwell’s belief in salvation. He does not believe that a heavenly reward is attainable for only 144,000. In fact, Falwell does not read Revelations 7:4 to mean that there is any limit to the number of faithful who will receive a heavenly reward. Falwell instead relies on John 8:12 for his account of salvation, in which Jesus states, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (New International Version). Falwell also relies on John 14:6, in which Jesus states, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (New international Version). Falwell does not believe in universal salvation, but he does believe that if one is born again in the Holy Spirit, that person will receive irreversible salvation. In a sermon he delivered to Thomas Road Baptist Church, Falwell states,

The myth of universal salvation...that everyone’s going to go to heaven no matter what they believe or what they’ve done.... That eventually a God of love could never put anybody in hell and liberal clergymen and secularists believe that all humans will ultimately be saved regardless of their faith or behavior. Christians believe Christ is the only way to Heaven.... Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth the light and no man comes to the Father but by me”.... If you reject God’s plan of salvation you will spend eternity in hell. You can join every church in the city, you can adopt every creed, you can read every book on faith and theology, but if you reject the crucified, buried, risen, savior as your savior and your redeemer, you will spend eternity in hell, bottom line. [I invite you] today, to get saved, for sure, forever, by trusting Jesus.<sup>185</sup>

---

<sup>184</sup> Bergman, *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography*, 17.

<sup>185</sup> Jerry Falwell, "Profane and Old Wives Fables," in *Sermons from the Thomas Roads Baptist Church* (2005).

Secondly, it is assumed that all Christian Fundamentalists see the future of the human world similarly, and that they all have premillennial expectations. Of the four movements explored, only the Jehovah's Witnesses and Jerry Falwell are firm premillennialists. However, their premillennial views differ from each other. The brand of premillennialism of the Jehovah's Witnesses is radically different from that of Falwell's. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus' return is imminent and will be marked by chaos, pain, and war and upon returning, Jesus will establish God's kingdom on earth. Additionally, the Witnesses believe in Christ's invisible return or presence. Through their understanding of the Greek word "parousia," which is more accurately translated as "presence" instead of "coming," they have concluded "parousia means not a visible physical coming, but an invisible presence;"<sup>186</sup> and "in the last days immediately before his revelation in wrath at the battle of Armageddon, Christ would be invisibly present."<sup>187</sup> From this key understanding of scripture, the Witnesses have formulated a chronology of important prophetic dates. Of particular importance is the year 1874, marking the beginning of Christ's invisible return, which was completed 40 years later in 1914. 1914 also marks the year Satan was released to present a final test of loyalty. In addition to these years, the Witnesses have on many occasions predicted the end of days to occur in such years as 1920, 1925, 1941, 1975, and 2000. They have since, for the most part, shied away from specific date predictions.

Falwell's premillennialism is quite different. Falwell believes that the return of Christ is imminent and that His return will be followed by seven years of great tribulation. Following these seven years, Christ will establish His earthly kingdom on

---

<sup>186</sup> Bergman, "The Adventist Movement and Jehovah's Witness Branch of Protestantism," 36.

<sup>187</sup> Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 17.

earth of one thousand years. Humankind will be risen and judged and the faithful will live forever in heaven and the unfaithful and unsaved, will live in hell.

The Christian Reconstructionists reject premillennialism and are very outspoken against it and its supporters. Reconstructionists have often criticized Falwell and other premillennialists as being “fatalistic pessimists and defeatists who believe in an eschatology of shipwreck.”<sup>188</sup> While they may agree with premillennialists that the current state of the world has been marked by chaos and war, their postmillennialism tells them Christ will only return once a Christian establishment has been formed, which can come only through their involvement. As part of their postmillennialism, Reconstructionists also believe in dominion theology, which states that Christians must be socially and politically active to advance and maintain God’s established order and dominion over all nations.

Robertson’s eschatology can be seen as a transition from premillennialism to something more resembling postmillennialism. As O’Leary and McFarland have stated, Robertson shifted to postmillennialism upon entering politics and his decision to run for president. They think Robertson’s shift in millennial views is what made him more appealing to mainstream conservatives, that in order to reach more supporters he had to adopt the more optimistic views of postmillennialism and separate himself from premillennialism. Although his bid for president was unsuccessful, it does not appear that Robertson has since dismissed any postmillennial expectations. He has remained very vocal in urging Christians to take action and assist in building God’s kingdom on earth. Since the 1980s Robertson has remained socially and politically active. In

---

<sup>188</sup> Shupe, "Christian Reconstuctionism and the Angry Rhetoric of Neo-Postmillennialism," 199.

addition to campaigning for president, he founded Operation Blessing, the Christian Coalition and the American Center for Law and Justice.

Robertson may have even adopted some Christian Reconstructionist views. Reconstructionists all over the nation assisted in grassroots efforts to help with Robertson's presidential campaign.<sup>189</sup> There have also been other points of contact between Robertson and the Christian Reconstructionists. Rushdoony and Gary North have appeared on the 700 Club, and Regent University has Reconstructionist professors. Additionally, Joseph Morecraft has shown enthusiasm regarding the possibility of Christian Reconstructionists and Charismatics merging together, especially after a 1987 theological conference which brought together the Reconstructionists and Pentecostal Christians. Vincent Crapanzano, professor of Anthropology at the City University of New York, in his book, *Serving the Word: Literalism from the Pulpit to the Bench*, briefly alludes to Robertson's "flirtation" with Reconstructionism. It has also been suggested that Robertson has now adopted a version of dominion theology. For example, some cite Robertson's book, *The Secret Kingdom*, as a dominionist handbook. Additionally, Sara Diamond, a well-known journalist and author of *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right*, writes about the Reconstructionist's influence upon Robertson and the Christian Coalition. It is important to note that Robertson's connections with Reconstructionism may be just speculation. Bruce Lincoln writes, "Much of the literature on the religious right is either alarmist or derisive."<sup>190</sup> Justin Watson rejects the claims that Robertson has adopted Reconstructionist views. In *The Christian Coalition: Dreams of Restoration, Demands for Recognition*, he states that

---

<sup>189</sup> PBS, *God and Politics. On Earth as It Is in Heaven*.

<sup>190</sup> Lincoln, *Holy Terrors : Thinking About Religion after September 11*, 110.

mainly “opponents of the Christian Right have emphasized the connections and affinities between the two movements.”<sup>191</sup> He further states, “Few evangelicals have become reconstructionists. But reconstructionism’s critique of the presuppositions of humanism, secularism, and modernity have provided politically active evangelicals with useful ideological and rhetorical tools.”<sup>192</sup>

Although Watson makes an impressive argument to refute the alleged relationship between Robertson and the Reconstructionists, their points of contact are undeniable. Perhaps, Robertson is not going to sign on to Reconstructionism and risk losing his base of support from his vast audiences from the 700 Club, CBN, and Regent University. However, his points of contact with the Reconstructionists in light of O’Leary’s and McFarland’s theory do make for a more plausible argument surrounding his eschatological beliefs.

Political involvement, however, is not an essential characteristic of Christian fundamentalism. Although many fundamentalist movements have been politically active and at times militant, there are fundamentalist movements that refuse to enter the political arena. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have remained adamantly against political involvement, arguing that government is a tool of Satan. In addition to remaining politically closed off, they also strive for social separation as well. One example of their social separation can be found in their rejection of higher education. While they do not place a total prohibition on their members from attending college or university, the Watchtower Society strongly urges against it. Instead, it pushes its members into becoming proficient

---

<sup>191</sup> Watson, *The Christian Coalition : Dreams of Restoration, Demands for Recognition*, 113.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

in a trade or a skill. The Watchtower Society views secular humanism as commonplace in many universities and fears young Jehovah's Witnesses will be taught false doctrine.

This fear of secular humanism in today's universities is also a concern of Falwell. However, Falwell's response was to open his own university and promises that he will only hire professors who believe the Bible is the word of God. In a recent sermon, Falwell commented on America's universities:

Vulgar and profane... tearing down dignity and Judeo-Christian ethics. And people send their kids to those schools and spend thousands of dollars every year for godless professors to ruin them. I'll never understand that. That's why when I started Liberty University we made a commitment that we would never hire a professor who doesn't believe the Bible is the word of God, no matter how many PhD's he's got, no matter how much background experience. If he doesn't believe in the Genesis account of creation, if he doesn't know Christ is his personal savior, he can't work here. Now that is called discrimination and we're guilty of it and shall practice it until Jesus comes.<sup>193</sup>

Christian Reconstructionists share in Falwell's criticism of many American universities and have recently established several small universities and theological seminaries which are committed to Reform theology. Additionally, many Reconstructionists hold prestigious professorships at universities, Christian and secular alike. However, it should be noted that there are discrepancies in the curriculum at these institutions. For example, Christ College's website states, "The founders were very critical of other colleges that had been founded on Reformed principles, but were no longer practicing their Reformed heritage."<sup>194</sup>

Lastly, another commonly assumed essential characteristic of Christian fundamentalists is their staunch rejection of all other religious denominations and traditions. Here the Jehovah's Witnesses make for a good example. Witnesses exhibit a

---

<sup>193</sup> Falwell, "Profane and Old Wives Fables."

<sup>194</sup> Inc. Christ College, *A Brief History of the School* (Christ College, Inc., 2004 [cited April 22 2006]); available from <http://www.christ-college.edu/about/history.htm>.

staunch, almost total, rejection of other Christian denominations as well as other faiths. Witnesses at times are hostile to other religions and adamantly refuse to engage in intra- and inter-faith dialogue. They even believe that non-Witness Christians will be destroyed alongside the heathen at the end of the world.

Falwell, on the hand, does not appear as staunch and rigid in his opposition to other faiths (although, this point may be debatable). For instance, in a recent sermon he stated,

There are 650,000 churches in America, maybe 700,000 and 200,00 profess to be evangelical... and when I brought the message from Luke 1:1 on things which are surely believed among us, I gathered a big group under the umbrella; those who believe the Bible is the word of God and you go to heaven by trusting in Jesus, and that would be evangelical Pentecostals, Methodists, and Catholics, and Episcopalians, and Baptists, you name it, Lutherans. Any and all who have put their faith in an inerrant Bible, and a savior named Jesus who is God, through whose blood that was shed obtained redemption. Those have a basic number of things that are surely agreed upon. Now we have some differences on eschatology, or the mode of baptism. We may have some differences on other nonessentials of salvation and that's fine, that doesn't break fellowship. But we've got to believe ... the basic doctrines, inerrancy of scripture, deity of Christ, vicarious death, bodily resurrection, and the second-coming.<sup>195</sup>

The Reconstructions, on the other hand, are not as willing as Falwell to accept other Christian denominations. As Rushdoony has stated regarding Christians who do not accept Reconstructionist beliefs,

Having denied God's law, they have no settled and fixed word by which to judge all things. Good intentions carry weight with people who lack a law of foundation, and the world of socialism, like hell, is paved with "good" intentions.<sup>196</sup>

As we have seen, defining Christian Fundamentalism in essentialist terms is problematic. This is also true when defining fundamentalism in a global, cross cultural context. The next chapter will discuss the problems of defining fundamentalism by

---

<sup>195</sup> Falwell, "Profane and Old Wives Fables."

<sup>196</sup> Rushdoony, *God's Plan for Victory : The Meaning of Post Millennialism*, 4.



turning to three different scholarly approaches dealing with the global phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism, specifically al-Qaeda.

## 6. Global Fundamentalism

In this chapter I will turn to fundamentalism as it is used as a comparative category within the academic study of religion. While some scholars argue for a very narrow definition of the term fundamentalism and apply it only to American Christianity, and despite the term's origins as an American Protestant term, fundamentalism has been used to describe a global phenomenon. I will discuss three different scholarly approaches dealing with this global phenomenon by turning to the work of Bruce Lawrence, Mark Juergensmeyer and Bruce Lincoln on the Islamic "fundamentalist" group al-Qaeda.

### 6.1 Osama bin Laden and the Rise of al-Qaeda

Before analyzing the three scholarly approaches dealing with global fundamentalism, it will be necessary to have a brief historical and biographical account of al-Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden. Osama bin Muhammad bin Laden was born March 10, 1957, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; he had 54 brothers and sisters. Bin Laden's father, Mohammed bin Laden, an illiterate laborer of Yemeni descent, built a very successful construction business in Saudi Arabia. Muhammad bin Laden's construction company, the Saudi Binladen Group, acquired many government contracts, which included the building of the mosques in Mecca and Medina and restoration work on the Dome of the Rock Mosque in Jerusalem. The company has expanded its business interests to include petroleum, chemicals, mining, telecommunications, manufacturing and trading. Osama bin Laden, in an interview with Al-Jazeera television in 1999 said of his father, "It is not a secret that he was one of the founders of the infrastructure of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."<sup>197</sup> Upon the death of bin Laden's father, bin Laden received

---

<sup>197</sup> Peter L. Bergen, *The Osama Bin Laden I Know : An Oral History of Al-Qaeda's Leader* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 2.

a portion of his father's 11 billion dollar estate.<sup>198</sup> Bin Laden's inheritance has been estimated at 20 million dollars.<sup>199</sup>

Bin Laden received formal education at the Management and Economics School at King Abd al-Aziz University in Jeddah, although he never graduated. One comment which seems to be repeated often of bin Laden at this time was that he evidenced religiosity and piety. Jamal Khalifa, a close friend of bin Laden's at the university who later became his brother-in-law, said of the university days, "At that time we were religious and we were very conservative; we go to that extreme side. When I met [bin Laden], he was religious already."<sup>200</sup> Yeslam bin Laden, bin Laden's older half brother, recalls, "Osama was more religious than the rest of us.... He did not like to listen to music or to watch TV."<sup>201</sup> Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist who knew bin Laden while he attended university said,

Osama was just like many of us who become part of the Muslim Brotherhood movement.... The only difference which set him apart from me and others, he was more religious. More religious, more literal, more fundamentalist. For example, he would not listen to music. He would not shake hands with a woman. He would not smoke. He would not watch television, unless it is news. He wouldn't play cards.... [E]ven though he comes from a rich family, he lives in a very simple house.... He lived a very simple, basic life. He doesn't attach himself to extravagant or to good living.<sup>202</sup>

Bruce Lawrence, religious studies professor at Duke University, notes that bin Laden was indifferent to his business classes at the university, however he took a course in Islamic Studies taught by Abdallah Azzam and Muhammad Qutb, who were very

---

<sup>198</sup> Osama Bin Laden and Bruce Lawrence, *Messages to the World : The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London ; New York: Verso, 2005), xii.

<sup>199</sup> Bergen, *The Osama Bin Laden I Know : An Oral History of Al-Qaeda's Leader*, 10.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

influential for bin Laden.<sup>203</sup> Abdallah Azzam, a Muslim Brother from Palestine, was bin Laden's mentor throughout his university days and later during the Afghanistan-Soviet war. Bin Laden eventually split with Azzam in 1987, one year before the formation of al-Qaeda. Muhammad Qutb was the younger brother of Sayyid Qutb, a leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and prolific writer advocating Islamic revivalism. In his popular and influential book, *Milestones*, Qutb spoke of Islam as being in a state of *jahiliyyah* or ignorance, and in a state of decay. Qutb believed that Islam had in fact been erased and that he no longer lived in an Islamic society. Qutb said,

[T]he Muslim community has been extinct for a few centuries.... Islam cannot fulfill its role except by providing the leadership for all of mankind, for which the Muslim community must be restored to its original form. That Muslim community is now buried under the debris of the man-made traditions of several generations and is crushed under the weight of those false laws and customs that are not even remotely related to the Islamic teachings.<sup>204</sup>

Qutb believed Islam needed to be rescued from the world of *jahiliyyah*, and the Muslim community needed to be returned to this world. Qutb continues,

It is essential that a community arrange its affairs according to it and show it to the world. In order to bring this about, we need to initiate the movement of Islamic revival in some Muslim county. Only such a revivalist movement will eventually – sooner or later – attain world leadership. How to initiate the revival of Islam? A vanguard must set out with this determination and then keep going, marching through the vast ocean of *jahiliyyah* which encompasses the entire world.<sup>205</sup>

Qutb describes this “vanguard” movement, thus creating the blueprint for al-Qaeda,

This group must separate itself from the *jahili* society and become independent and distinct from the active and organized *jahili* society whose aim is to block Islam. The center of this new group should be a new leadership, the leadership which first came in the person of the Prophet himself, peace be on him, and after him was delegated to those who strove to bring people back to Allah's sovereignty, authority and laws....The Muslim society cannot come into existence simply as a

---

<sup>203</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence, *Messages to the World : The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, xii.

<sup>204</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, trans. Ahmad Zaki Hammad, revised and trans. ed. (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1990), 7.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

creed in the hearts of individual Muslims, however numerous they may be, unless they become an active, harmonious, and cooperative group, distinct by itself, whose different elements, like the limbs of a human body, work together for its support and expansion, and for its defense against all those elements that attack its system. This group must work under a leadership that is independent of the *jahiliyyah* so it can organize its various efforts in support of one harmonious purpose, and strengthen and widen the Muslim's Islamic character in order to abolish the negative influences of *jahili* life.<sup>206</sup>

Qutb was also interested in what he called *hijra*, or emigration. Frederick M.

Denny, Islamic scholar at the University of Colorado at Boulder, explains *hijra* as,

Emigration from the world of *jahiliyyah* to the society of authentic Muslim faith and order, just as Muhammad and his Companions emigrated from Mecca to Medina in the great Hijra to establish the umma in 622. Qutb's idea of *hijra* is that true Muslims must create a provisional society separate from the structures of *jahiliyyah* and develop a disciplined core that will carry on the struggle, indeed the *jihad*, required to transform the world according to Islamic principles.<sup>207</sup>

Qutb's ideas of an Islamic revival and *hijra* would also later resonate with bin Laden.

While Qutb himself was neither militant nor violent, the Egyptian government saw his writings as hostile, subversive, and a threat to the state. President Nasser had him arrested and executed in 1965. Qutb has become very influential for many Islamic revivalist movements and thinkers, including bin Laden.

Bin Laden never completed his degree at the university, instead he began working for his father's construction company. In 1979 the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. In 1980 bin Laden arrived in Peshawar, Afghanistan to assist the *mujahidin* in their resistance efforts. While in Afghanistan, bin Laden began working with Azzam recruiting and training the *mujahidin*. Another endeavor they took up was the circulation of *al-Jihad*, an international magazine designed mainly to inform the Muslim community about Afghanistan, and to help the funding and recruiting of the *mujahidin*.

---

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>207</sup> Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1993), 350.

Bin Laden began his own military operation as well, which eventually led to his split with Azzam. Bin Laden set up his own Arab military force inside Afghanistan and a military base for his Arab military, which would later be known as al-Qaeda, “the Base.” According to Peter Bergen, terrorism analyst for CNN and adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University, al-Qaeda was formed in 1988. Among the many documents Bergen studied were the minutes of a meeting between bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders discussing the formation of al-Qaeda. A description of al-Qaeda was offered, “Al-Qaeda is basically an organized Islamic faction; its goal will be to lift the word of God, to make His religion victorious.”<sup>208</sup> The pledge of its members is, “The pledge of God and His covenant is upon me, to listen and obey the superiors, who are doing this work, in energy, early-rising, difficulty, and easiness, and for his superiority upon us, so that the word of God will be the highest, and His religion victorious.”<sup>209</sup> This document was dated September 10, 1988.

Bin Laden also conceived of al-Qaeda as being the “vanguard movement” Sayyid Qutb spoke of earlier. Bruce Lincoln, professor of religious studies at the University of Chicago, states,

By associating itself with the first generation of Muslims in the fashion urged by Qutb, the al-Qaeda network conceived itself as a militant vanguard institution, mounting counteroffensives on behalf of the Muslim community. That community, in their view, had been weakened by the influence of savage nonbelievers, whose ways are debased and irreligious. Overcoming them becomes possible only as the vanguard recovers and revives the proper Islamic faith, by grounding all practice – indeed, all existence – in the sacred discourse revealed by God through his prophet.<sup>210</sup>

---

<sup>208</sup> Bergen, *The Osama Bin Laden I Know : An Oral History of Al-Qaeda's Leader*, 81.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Lincoln, *Holy Terrors : Thinking About Religion after September 11*, 15.

Upon the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan on February 15, 1989, the *mujahidin* split into many factions and began fighting each other. Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia in 1990, however, his camps remained intact in Afghanistan. Peter Bergen argues that al-Qaeda “went global” in the time following bin Laden’s return to Saudi Arabia. An example of this is found in bin Laden’s offer to the Saudi government to organize his forces to counter the threat from Saddam Hussein when he invaded Kuwait in August 1990. Bin Laden’s offer was declined and the Saudi government welcomed American troops to protect the Kingdom. Many scholars view this incident as the beginning of bin Laden’s more stringent and radical ideas of Islam. The decision to allow American forces to protect the Saudi Kingdom created a loud outcry of dissent from bin Laden, many Muslim theologians (the *sahwa*, as the dissident theologians were called), and the wider Muslim community. The dissenters accused the Saudi Royal family of renouncing Islam. The Saudi government had many of these dissenters jailed, bin Laden was among them. Bin Laden later fled to Sudan and in 1994 he was stripped of his Saudi citizenship.

While in Sudan, bin Laden built a base outside of Khartoum. He remained in Khartoum under the protection of the Sudanese military for two years. In Sudan bin Laden’s contempt for the Saudi Royal family strengthened, especially with the Saudi’s acceptance of the Oslo Accords in August 1993 between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Bin Laden called these contracts, “a serious and dangerous calamity containing deceit and deception.”<sup>211</sup> Additionally, bin Laden was outraged at the Saudi government’s permitting the installation of American military bases in the

---

<sup>211</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence, *Messages to the World : The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, 9.

Kingdom. Bin Laden saw this as an invasion of Islam worthy of retaliation. Bin Laden, in a statement to Sheikh Abd al-Aziz bin Baz, a jurisconsult to the Kingdom, wrote,

The enemy invaded the land of *umma*, violated her honor, shed her blood, and occupied her sanctuaries. This aggression has reached such a catastrophic and disastrous point as to have brought about a calamity unprecedented in the history of our *umma*, namely the invasion by the American and western Crusader forces of the Arabian peninsula and Saudi Arabia, the home of the Noble Ka'ba, the Sacred House of God, the Muslim's direction of prayer, the Noble Sanctuary of the prophet, and the city of God's Messenger, where the Prophetic revelation was received.... [T]his is the first, the biggest, and the most dangerous Crusader invasion of Saudi Arabia, and the leaders that some were counting on to defend our *umma* from aggression appear in fact to be the tools of that same aggression.... Honorable and righteous scholars, come and lead your *umma*, and call her to God, and return her to her religion in order to correct beliefs, spread knowledge, enjoin good, and forbid evil. Call her to *jihad* for the sake of God Almighty and call her to motivate people for it.... And if you cannot to do so in your own country, then emigrate for the sake of God Almighty.... Emigration is related to jihad, and jihad will go on until the Day of Judgment.<sup>212</sup>

It is important to note that bin Laden perceived these international, foreign policy decisions as religious. As his statements emerge, it becomes clear that bin Laden's worldview is based solely on his religious interpretations of these events.

Al-Qaeda, through bin Laden, was very active internationally during bin Laden's time in Sudan. One such undertaking was al-Qaeda's activity in Somalia in 1993. Bin Laden denounced American presence in Somalia saying, in an interview to CNN,

[The United States government] went there with pride... to fight a poor unarmed people. The goal of this was to scare the Muslim world and the whole world, saying that it is able to do whatever it desires. As soon as the troops reached the Mogadishu beaches, they found no one but children.... Resistance started against the American invasion, because Muslims do not believe the US allegations that they came to save the Somalis.... [H]ow can we believe your claims that you came to save our children in Somalia while you kill our children in [Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq or Bosnia]?<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 15-19.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 54.



Al-Qaeda members were sent to Somalia, according to one member, to “train tribes in fighting and to provide food and money.... It was unacceptable for U.S. armed troops to be in Somalia. Bin Laden... considered this colonization.”<sup>214</sup>

Bin Laden was joined by Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian militant, in Sudan. However, there appears to be evidence that bin Laden had established contact with al-Zawahiri earlier while in Afghanistan. Al-Zawahiri would later become bin Laden’s closest associate. Shortly thereafter, there was an assassination attempt made upon Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president, while he was traveling in Ethiopia. Upon learning that Mubarak’s assassination plot originated in Sudan, America and Saudi Arabia pressured Sudan, and bin Laden was forced to leave. Bin Laden returned to Afghanistan.

Bin Laden was welcomed by the Taliban upon returning to Afghanistan. By that time, the Taliban had consolidated their control over much of Afghanistan. In their early years, the Afghan people welcomed the Taliban, as they helped restore order to Afghanistan as it plunged into civil war following the withdrawal of Soviet forces. The Taliban sought to restore Afghanistan’s monarchy. However, over the years the Taliban’s authoritarian control worked more to suffocate Afghanistan than it did to revive the nation. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship. The Taliban offered al-Qaeda safe refuge and in return al-Qaeda supplied the Taliban with much needed resources in the form of cash or willing fighters.

Bin Laden viewed his return to Afghanistan as his *hijra*, modeled after Muhammad’s *hijra* from Mecca to Medina in 622. As Lawrence points out,

Muhammad and his followers left Mecca under intense pressure from their fellow Meccans, pagans who did not follow Islam. From Medina, Muhammad waged war for eight years until he

---

<sup>214</sup> Bergen, *The Osama Bin Laden I Know : An Oral History of Al-Qaeda's Leader*, 139.

retook Mecca from the unbelievers. This serves as a paradigm for bin Laden's own emigration under pressure from the Saudi government, first to Sudan, and then to Afghanistan, and for his *jihad* against the "apostate" Saudi regime and the West. Afghanistan was to become for bin Laden the Medina of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>215</sup>

One statement Bin Laden made in 1996 appears to support this idea,

And today, in the same peaks of Afghanistan, we work to do away with the injustice that has befallen our *umma* at the hands of the Judeo-Crusader alliance, especially after its occupation of Jerusalem and its appropriation of Saudi Arabia. We pray to God that He might bless us with victory – He is our protector and is well capable of doing so. And so here we are today, working and discussing with each other to find ways of rectifying what has happened to the Islamic world generally and Saudi Arabia in particular. We need to study the appropriate paths to take in order to restore things to good order, and to restore to the people their rights after the considerable damage and harm inflicted on their life and religion.<sup>216</sup>

As bin Laden stated earlier in his 1994 letter to bin Baz regarding his disdain for the installation of American military bases in Saudi Arabia, emigration is necessary, "And if you cannot do so [referring to *jihad*] in your own country, then emigrate for the sake of God Almighty.... Emigration is related to *jihad*, and *jihad* will go on until the Day of Judgment.... For according...to the Messenger of God...emigration will never cease, so long as there is *jihad*."<sup>217</sup>

Bin Laden continues to expand the al-Qaeda network and camps in Afghanistan and elsewhere. He also continues to aid and plan many attacks against the "apostates," the Saudi regime and the West. Some of these attacks included the bombing of two American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the attack on the USS Cole, the assassination of an Afghan military commander and long time enemy of the Taliban, Ahmad Shah Massoud, on September 9, 2001, and the September 11, 2001 attacks. What should be stressed in all of these attacks is their religious nature. As Lawrence points out,

---

<sup>215</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence, *Messages to the World : The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, 19.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

Objectively speaking, bin Laden is waging war against what many – admirers as well as critics – now call the American empire. But it is crucial to note that he himself never uses this vocabulary. The word “imperialism” does not occur once in any of the messages he has sent out. He defines the enemy differently. For him, *jihad* is aimed not at an imperium, but at “global unbelief.” Again and again, his texts return to this fundamental dichotomy. The war is a religious war. It subsumes a political war, which he can wage with terms appropriate to it, as he demonstrates in his addresses to the peoples of Europe or of America. Yet the battle in the end is one of faith.<sup>218</sup>

## 6.2 The Question of Global Fundamentalism

Can al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden be considered fundamentalist? While some scholars argue for a very narrow definition of the term fundamentalism and apply it only to American Christianity, and despite the term’s origins as an American Protestant term, fundamentalism has been used to describe a global phenomenon. Three different scholarly approaches dealing with this global phenomenon, proposed by Bruce Lawrence, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Bruce Lincoln, analyze the usefulness of categorizing bin Laden and al-Qaeda as fundamentalist.

Bruce Lawrence undertook one of the first comparative studies of fundamentalism across cultures. In his groundbreaking book, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age*, Lawrence shows caution about using the term fundamentalism. He opens by saying,

So pervasive have been generalizations about fundamentalism, so strident denunciations of fundamentalists themselves that at the outset it is essential to state what fundamentalism is not. Fundamentalism is not a political gambit, to seize public power through appeal to aggrieved parties. Nor is it an economic ploy, to take resources from the privileged few and redistribute them among the disadvantaged and dispossessed. Nor is it a social strategy, to gain visibility and prestige for upwardly mobile malcontents.<sup>219</sup>

However, Lawrence believes that the term fundamentalism can be applied cross culturally. He rejects the notion that fundamentalism should only be applied to American

---

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., xx.

<sup>219</sup> Lawrence, *Defenders of God : The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age*, 1.

Protestant Christians. He states that doing so “preempt[s] a global consideration of the fundamentalist protest against modernism.”<sup>220</sup> The term “fundamentalism” can be applied to other traditions besides Christianity if, according to Lawrence, it can pass a three-pronged test of analytical investigation – description, comparison, and evaluation. He explains,

To describe fundamentalism in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam is to presume that it exists in all three. It is also to presume that what they hold in common as fundamentals is comparable. Though fundamentalism originated in Christianity and though certain groups of Protestant Christians use the term widely, there is ample precedent for expanding the category “fundamentalism” to other religions than Christianity. We can designate certain non-Christian groups as “fundamentalist” if the term draws attention to qualities among these groups that, when clustered together, make more sense of what they do, or claim to do, than other abstracting umbrella categories.... Before we can demonstrate that it exists out there, beyond the confines of the original and continuing American context, we have to set forth hypotheses that must be tested and modified, verified or rejected in specific cases. Only then is evaluation possible.<sup>221</sup>

Lawrence states that fundamentalists are “above all religiously motivated individuals, drawn together into ideological structured groups, for the purpose of promoting a vision of divine restoration.”<sup>222</sup> He offers the following definition of fundamentalism,

Fundamentalism is the affirmation of religious authority as holistic and absolute, admitting of neither criticism nor reduction; it is expressed through the collective demand that specific creedal and ethical dictates derived from scripture be publicly recognized and legally enforced.<sup>223</sup>

The main characteristics of all fundamentalisms, according to Lawrence, are anti-modernism and the centrality of scripture. Before these two characteristics are explained, the term “modern” must be understood. Lawrence carefully details the history and development of the modern world. He echoes Marshal Hodgson’s discussion on the

---

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 27.

impact of the Great Western Transmutation,<sup>224</sup> which discusses how modernity happened in the West. The West is said to have ushered in the modern age around 1800. Although, according to Hodgson, “it was the transformations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that served to set off decisively the Westerners from the rest of mankind.”<sup>225</sup>

Lawrence offers a concise description of the Great Western Transmutation,

The Great Western Transmutation was “great” because it was *global*: European norms of political rule and social and economic exchange were introduced throughout Asia and Africa. It remained “Western” not only because it was European in origin but also because it reflected changes going on in the New World, especially North America. But finally it remained a transmutation because it depended on a variety of factors rather than a single, predictable response to European events and actors; it was not inevitable to one region or one culture or one time; it was not even a transformation but rather, following biological models, a transmutation.<sup>226</sup>

The Great Western Transmutation included a series of interrelated events, as Hodgson remarks, and happened

relatively suddenly, compared with other human history.... The essential changes were constitutive: they altered not merely particular social and cultural traits but some of the most elementary presuppositions of any subsequent human social and cultural development. Henceforth, historical events all over the world took place, in certain respects, in a radically new way.... After the Western Transmutation the kind of changes that earlier, in agrarianate times, had required hundreds of years now required at most, decades; once again, a new sort of historical process was loosed upon the world.<sup>227</sup>

Once this process was underway, it was irreversible. One crucial accomplishment of the Great Western Transmutation was the institutionalization of innovation. Hodgson states,

in the new social organization, innovation was institutionalized.... It was inevitable in such an atmosphere that the notion of ‘progress’ became for the first time the dominant theme of serious

---

<sup>224</sup> Marshall G. S. Hodgson, "The Impact of the Great Western Transmutation: The Generation of 1789," in *The Venture of Islam : Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>226</sup> Bruce B. Lawrence, *Shattering the Myth : Islam Beyond Violence*, *Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 28.

<sup>227</sup> Hodgson, "The Impact of the Great Western Transmutation: The Generation of 1789," 179.

thinking about historical change. Not merely perpetual variation but constant improvement of all kinds became a routine expectation.<sup>228</sup>

It should be noted that what Hodgson meant by “accomplishment” and “progress” is not intended to imply judgment. He recognized this aspect and states,

It can be disputed what aspects of our modern life have meant change for the better and what have meant change for the worse. What concerns us here is not any general ‘progress’ that may have occurred, but the immediately decisive rise in the level of social power, whether for better or worse.<sup>229</sup>

According to Lawrence, fundamentalists are anti-modernist. But the relationship between fundamentalism and modernism is more complicated than this. While recognizing fundamentalists are modern, Lawrence is cautious to say they “are not atavistic Luddites opposed to the instrumentalities of modern media, transport, or warfare. Fundamentalists relate fully to the infrastructures that have produced the unprecedented options for communication and mobility that today’s world offers.”<sup>230</sup>

Lawrence describes this relationship more fully:

To begin to analyze modernism and fundamentalism is to acknowledge that they interact one with the other at multiple levels. It is not enough to repeat tired slogans and say that modernism embraces change, fundamentalism opposes it, or to claim that the dispute between them is an internal squabble, limited to Protestant America in the twentieth century. Instead, it is a battle that has been in the offing for at least two centuries. Its impact reverberates throughout Africa and Asia as well as Europe and America. The current phase of the conflict has a long prologue, inseparable from the historical emergence of the West. Yet the West was itself an accident of time and geography. Without attention to that accident we cannot interpret the modernist-fundamentalist controversy in our own era. Only when we have reconstructed the coming into being of our world can we hope to understand how and why some of its determinative forces provoked the fundamentalist response.<sup>231</sup>

What fundamentalists are reacting against, according to Lawrence, is the impact of the Great Western Transmutation and the institutionalization of innovation. It is this aspect

---

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>230</sup> Lawrence, *Defenders of God : The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age*, 1.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 42.

of the Great Western Transmutation which fundamentalists view as hostile to their religion and hostile to their traditions.

The second necessary characteristic of fundamentalism, according to Lawrence, is the centrality of scripture.

Remove scripture, and you no longer have fundamentalism but some other, nonreligious social movement. Intimately linked to the authority of scripture is the penchant of fundamentalists for particular selections of scripture: all scripture is invoked, but not all is cited with equal relevance to the actual outlook of particular fundamentalist cadres. Intertwined with a select reading of scripture is a partial loyalty to the past and a selective recall of its importance: not all moments, persons, or events are recalled with equal fervor, not all crystallize the point of crisis that provokes action. Charismatic leaders choose; they choose enemies from their contemporaries, scripture from scripture, focal points from the past. For the humanist it is impossible to study fundamentalism without making sense of all three: the invocation of scripture, the reference to the past, the reliance on charismatic mediaries. But the point of departure rests with scripture.<sup>232</sup>

Without scripture, there is no fundamentalism. Fundamentalists rest their religious ideology in scripture.

Mark Juergensmeyer, professor of sociology and religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, holds a different view of fundamentalism. He proposes that the term should not be used at all. Juergensmeyer instead, prefers the term religious nationalism. He offers three objections to the usage of the term fundamentalism. First, he sees the term as pejorative. "It refers... to those who hold an intolerant, self-righteous, and narrowly dogmatic religious literalism. The term is less descriptive than it is accusatory."<sup>233</sup> The term has become a shopping list of unfavorable characteristics. He states, "it reflects our attitude toward other people more than it

---

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>233</sup> Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? : Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, 4.

describes them.”<sup>234</sup> This creates a slippery slope for him, as it becomes easy to dismiss these actors and not take them seriously.

Secondly, Juergensmeyer states fundamentalism is an imprecise comparative category. He cites the term’s historical origins as an American Protestant term which does not translate to other traditions easily. He adds,

The only thing that most religious activists around the world have in common, aside from their fervor, is their rejection of Westerners and those like us who subscribe to modern secularism. For that reason, a better comparative category would be *antimodernism*, the term Bruce Lawrence uses to define fundamentalism as a global concept, for it suggest a religious revolt against the secular ideology that often accompanies modern society.<sup>235</sup>

Juergensmeyer’s third objection to the use of fundamentalism is that the term does not carry any political meaning. He states,

To call someone a fundamentalist suggests that he or she is motivated solely by religious beliefs rather than by broad concerns about the nature of society and the world.... But when such people fuse their religious perspective with a broad prescription for their nation’s political and social destiny, one must find an inclusive term.<sup>236</sup>

In *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Juergensmeyer further discusses his hesitation in using the term fundamentalism, which also hinges on his view that the term fundamentalism does not carry any political meaning.

[I]t is not their spirituality that is unusual, but their religious ideas, cultural contexts, and world views – perspectives shaped by the sociopolitical forces of their times. These movements are not simply aberrations but religious responses to social situations and expressions of deeply held convictions.<sup>237</sup>

Juergensmeyer instead prefers to label these groups as religious nationalists because their interests are both religious and political.<sup>238</sup> “Although they reject secular

---

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>237</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God : The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd ed., *Comparative Studies in Religion and Society* ; 13 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 225-26.

<sup>238</sup> Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? : Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, 6.



ideas, religious nationalists do not necessarily reject secular politics, including the political apparatus of the modern nation-state.”<sup>239</sup> Juergensmeyer continues, “The new religious revolutionaries are concerned not so much about the political structure of the nation-state as they are about the political ideology undergirding it.”<sup>240</sup>

Juergensmeyer views the current phenomenon as a competition between two ideologies which he more specifically labels *ideologies of order*, so as not to confuse the term with political ideology. The competing ideologies of order are religion and secular nationalism, because as he explains,

Both religious and secular-nationalistic frameworks of thought conceive of the world in coherent, manageable ways; they both suggest that there are levels of meaning beneath the day-to-day world that give coherence to things unseen; and they both provided the authority that gives the social and political order its reason for being. In doing so they define for the individual the right way of being in the world and relate persons to the social whole.<sup>241</sup>

Juergensmeyer sees religion and secular-nationalism as the “glue that holds together broad communities.”<sup>242</sup> Within each ideology of order there is a conflict between appearance and a deeper, more permanent reality. Each ideology of order has within itself the language of “images of grave disorder as well as tranquil order, holding out the hope that, despite appearances to the contrary, order will eventually triumph and disorder will be contained.”<sup>243</sup> Proponents of secular-nationalism can be found within the minority religious communities of a particular nation-state who see an assurance that public life would not be dominated by the majority religious community.<sup>244</sup> Additionally, there are members of the urban educated elite who see secular-nationalism as assurance

---

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 13.

of the separation of religion from politics. However, secular-nationalism has become the enemy to a growing number of religious communities who feel increasingly marginalized. Juergensmeyer cites three reasons for this conflict. First, the moral decline of a country is often blamed on the country's secular ideas and institutions. Second, secular-nationalists are viewed synonymously with the West, which to some translates to a "global conspiracy against religion."<sup>245</sup> Lastly, secular institutions have simply failed to perform – economically, politically and socially.

The resulting outcome is the eventual conflict between these two ideologies of order and the rise of religious-nationalism. Religious-nationalists accept the nation-state as the best possible political apparatus for the modern nation. By state, Juergensmeyer is referring to "the locus of authority and decision making within a geographical region," and by nation he is referring to "a community of people associated with a particular political culture and territory that possesses autonomous political authority."<sup>246</sup> This relatively new phenomenon of religious-nationalism is therefore nothing more than an "attempt to link religion and the nation-state," albeit a movement with the potential to be a dangerous revolt that, if not balanced, will "destroy itself and its neighbors."<sup>247</sup> These movements Juergensmeyer prefers to label as religious-nationalists, rather than fundamentalists.

Bruce Lincoln, in his poignant work, Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion After September 11, offers a redescription of religion as well as its role in the modern political arena. Lincoln uses the terrorism of September 11 to re-evaluate the role of

---

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 40-41.

religion in culture and politics, and like Juergensmeyer, reevaluates religion in relation to modernity, secularization, and post-colonialism.

Lincoln argues that religion is comprised of four parts – discourse, practice, community, and institution. Religious discourse must claim a transcendent authority, beyond the earthly realm. Lincoln says that the content is not as important as its “metadiscursive capacity to frame the way any content will be received and regarded.”<sup>248</sup> Religion must include a set of practices which become religious in nature when religious discourse relegates them religious. A religious community is one “whose members construct their identity with reference to a religious discourse and its attendant practices.”<sup>249</sup> Lastly, religion must include a regulatory institution which oversees discourse, practice, and community. Religious institutions may vary in size, structure, and operation, however, they must at a minimum preserve and interpret the group’s discourse; supervise rituals; enforce and adjudicate ethics; and nurture, defend, and advance the community.<sup>250</sup>

Lincoln is confident that this redescription of religion is necessary in order to understand the role and function of religion as well as its relationship to politics. He achieves this in his analysis of al-Qaeda and the set of instructions given to the hijackers responsible for the September 11 attacks by explaining the profoundly religious nature of these instructions, albeit a “militant reformulation of maximalist currents within Islam.”<sup>251</sup> Additionally, Lincoln compares the “symmetric dualisms” in the statements of President Bush made on October 7, 2001 and bin Laden’s videotaped response. Lincoln

---

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 16.

again analyzes these statements in a religious context and shows how each perceive of a Manichaeic-like struggle between the forces of evil and of good.<sup>252</sup>

Lincoln, like Juergensmeyer, opts to discard the term fundamentalist, “a term that has inflammatory connotations and fails to capture what is really crucial: that is the conviction that religion ought to permeate all aspects of social, indeed of human existence.”<sup>253</sup> Additionally he states, “the connotations of this term have become so strong, however, that I think it preferable to avoid it altogether.”<sup>254</sup> Lincoln instead prefers to use the terms “maximalist” and “minimalist” when referring to religious individuals. A maximalist, as he states, holds the conviction that religion pervades all aspects of life. A minimalist on the other hand seeks to “restrict religion to an important set of (chiefly metaphysical) concerns, protects its privileges against state intrusion, but restricts its activity and influence to this specialized sphere.”<sup>255</sup> Lincoln argues that “religion” must encompass and make room for both a minimalist view and a maximalist view as well as everything that falls between.

What type of picture are we left with from the discourse of these three scholars? While they may not agree on the usage of the term “fundamentalism,” it is evident that there is a global phenomenon worthy of inquiry.

If Lawrence’s definition of fundamentalism is applied accurately, al-Qaeda and bin Laden appear to be fundamentalist. Bin Laden appears staunchly opposed to modernity and what he perceives as current innovations within Islam. He has a special reverence for the past which he sees as the protector of true Islam and accordingly; he is

---

<sup>252</sup> Lincoln, *Holy Terrors : Thinking About Religion after September 11*, 19-32.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

after all informed by and appears fond of the revivalist tradition within Islam. However, there appears to be a tension and inconsistency within his religious belief. As Lawrence notes, bin Laden's belief is absent of a social dimension.<sup>256</sup>

Bin Laden was barred from the kind of analysis that would have allowed him to distinguish the different structural features of the various Muslim societies in which *jihad* was to be awakened.... Morally, he does denounce a host of evil. Some of them – unemployment, inflation, and corruption – are social. But no alternative conception of the ideal society is ever offered. There is an almost complete lack of any social program. This alone makes it clear how distinctive al-Qaeda is as a phenomenon. The lack of any set of social proposals separates it... from the earlier wave of radical Islamism, whose leading thinker was the great iconoclast Sayyid Qutb. Bin Laden's messages rarely hold out radiant visions of final triumph. His emphasis falls far more on the glories of martyrdom than the spoils of victory.... Above all, there is no rush to restore a Caliphate today. Bin Laden seems at some level to recognize the futility of a quest for restitution.... Instead he vows that *jihad* will continue until “we meet God and get his blessing!”<sup>257</sup>

It appears from this analysis that bin Laden's reverence for the past is actually a longing for the future. Regardless, bin Laden's beliefs are still anathema to modernity. Whether or not he incorporates a social dimension into theology, his view is that an unending *jihad* will be waged against the modern world until he “meets God and gets his blessing.”

The second aspect of fundamentalism, according to Lawrence, would also apply to bin Laden as he invokes the Qur'an, or at least his penchant for particular selections. It is undeniable bin Laden is well versed in the Qur'an and “moves easily in the Qur'an as a book of day-to-day guidance.”<sup>258</sup> However, Lawrence also notes that bin Laden is not an “outstanding Qur'anic scholar: he lacks the command of textual subtleties.”<sup>259</sup> However, the degree to which one cites scriptural authority or the command one exhibits of scripture is not the deciding factor.

---

<sup>256</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence, *Messages to the World : The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*

However, comparing al-Qaeda to the four previously discussed Christian fundamentalist groups, Lawrence's definition seems incomplete; it does not fully capture the dynamic of fundamentalism. While there does appear to be some sort of anti-modern streak within these various groups, their reaction to modernity greatly varies. One assumption made by many critics about anti-modernists is that they outwardly revolt, as in the case of al-Qaeda. However, this is not true of the Jehovah's Witnesses, their reaction is to retreat inward.

Juergensmeyer states a valid claim in his response to Lawrence, which points to the essentialist nature of Lawrence's definition of fundamentalism. Juergensmeyer believes that a more appropriate category for Lawrence to use would be "antimodernism" as opposed the charged and tired category of fundamentalism.

Like Lawrence, Juergensmeyer attempts to reevaluate the role of religion in culture and politics in light of secularization, modernity, colonialism and the post-colonial struggles facing many newly formed nation-states. Juergensmeyer's conclusion that the new religious conflict with secularism is what he calls religious-nationalism - a term which, according to him, holds more political meaning in addition to its religious meaning. Juergensmeyer's description, however, does not fit well with the description of al-Qaeda nor bin Laden. I disagree with Juergensmeyer's objection that the term does not carry political meaning. It is my contention that fundamentalists are above all religiously motivated. Their religious views subsume whatever political views they have; religion is the prime motivator and subsequently shapes their political views. To put it another way, their political views are informed by their religious motivations. Bin Laden,

for example, has continuously demonstrated that his religious beliefs are the motivating factor for his actions.

While I agree with Juergensmeyer's contention that the term fundamentalism, in some instances, has become pejorative, I believe meaningful comparison can lead to a redescription of the term absent any pejorative connotation. I believe Juergensmeyer errs in his claim that religious nationalists, while they reject secular ideas, do not reject the notion of the modern nation-state<sup>260</sup> While this idea works well using the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 as an example, it falls short with al-Qaeda. Perhaps a more accurate term for Juergensmeyer would be ethnic-nationalism. Al-Qaeda on the other hand appeals to the larger, global Muslim community, not necessarily a specific ethnic/religious community within one nation-state. I agree with Lincoln's position regarding the global nature of al-Qaeda.

The al Qaeda network represents something else again, insofar as its aspirations point beyond the struggle to reconfigure extant states along more religious lines. Rather than being a militant fragment within a nation-state, it understands and constructs itself as simultaneously the militant vanguard and the most faithful fragment of an international religious community. The goal it articulates is the restoration of Islam in a maximalist form and its consequent triumph over its internal and foreign enemies.<sup>261</sup>

Perhaps Juergensmeyer's discussion of religious terrorism may more accurately apply to al-Qaeda than his discussion on religious nationalism. Regarding religious terrorism, Juergensmeyer addresses the culture of violence of which religious terrorism is part of as well as reasons for its emergence and function and how terrorism can be conceived of in

---

<sup>260</sup> Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? : Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, 40.

<sup>261</sup> Lincoln, *Holy Terrors : Thinking About Religion after September 11*, 75.

a religious context.<sup>262</sup> However, this examination is not focused solely on religious violence.

While Lincoln's redescription of religion gives us a framework which allows us to imagine religion after the events of September 11, I disagree with his view that the term fundamentalism is no longer useful. His use of categories like minimalism and maximalism do not separate bin Laden's maximalism from the maximalism of those choosing the quietude of a cloistered monastic life. There are other factors at work, and when combined form the fundamentalist phenomenon.

Despite the definitional conflicts of the term fundamentalism, as well as its redefinitions and repositions, the term appears to be here to stay. How then is the term fundamentalism to be understood in a global context? In an attempt to salvage the term from its pejorative connotations and conflicting usages, I will argue in the next chapter that the category "fundamentalism" can be best understood in terms of a family resemblance. While the work of Lawrence, Juergensmeyer, and Lincoln are useful in unearthing the problems with the term, it is unlikely that the term will disappear.

---

<sup>262</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God : The Global Rise of Religious Violence*.



## 7. Conclusion

The term “fundamentalism” is here to stay. A Google search of the word “fundamentalism” returned 14,000,000 references. A Google search of the phrase “religious fundamentalism” returned 1,220,000 references.<sup>263</sup> According to the Overture Keyword Selector Tool, “fundamentalism” was searched 2,039 times in March 2006.<sup>264</sup> In the Introduction to volume one of *The Fundamentalism*, editors Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby state,

No other coordinating term was found to be as intelligible or serviceable. And attempts of particular essayists to provide distinctive but in the end confusing accurate alternatives led to the conclusion that they were describing something similar to what are here called fundamentalisms. The prefix “ultra-“ or the word “extremist” did not connote enough. When scholars made suggestions for replacements such as “revolutionary neotraditionalist Islamic (or Jewish, or Christian, or whatever) radicalism” and were then asked to define these alternatives, they came to describe pretty much what the other authors were calling “fundamentalism.”<sup>265</sup>

There is an undeniable, identifiable, modern, and global movement which can be categorized as fundamentalist. However, given the extensive amount of information surrounding fundamentalism, careful attention must be given when constructing a framework within which to study this global phenomenon. When developing this framework and describing common patterns, one must balance description with the explanatory generalities in order for the comparison to be valid and fruitful.

Fundamentalism is not one comprehensive, monolithic movement but is, in fact, a phenomenon which encompasses a variety of beliefs, practices, and expectations, all worthy of individual attention. Fundamentalism is a diverse amalgam of many individual and quite distinct movements. Attempting to salvage the term from its pejorative

---

<sup>263</sup> Both searches were conducted 1 May 2006.

<sup>264</sup> *Overture Keyword Selector Tool* (Overture Keyword Selector Tool, 2006 [cited May 1 2006]); available from <http://www.inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>.

<sup>265</sup> Martin E. Marty, R. Scott Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences., *Fundamentalisms Observed, The Fundamentalism Project ; V. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), viii.

connotations and conflicting usages, the category “fundamentalism” is best understood in terms of a family resemblance. There is no one essential characteristic common to all fundamentalist movements. Fundamentalism is best viewed as a category with “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.”<sup>266</sup> Not all fundamentalist movements are identical, as we have seen in the analysis of four Christian fundamentalist movements – Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Reconstructionists, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson – and an Islamic fundamentalist group, al-Qaeda. While these groups neither function the same nor do they all share the same characteristics, they are related to each other through their family resemblances.

Martin Marty and Scott Appleby have developed a list of “ideal typical impulse[s] of fundamentalism.”<sup>267</sup> These impulses include: religious idealism; a tendency to depict revealed truth as whole, unified, and undifferentiated; the scandalous attitude towards outsiders; dramatic eschatologies; a tendency to see themselves as actors in a cosmic struggle; the demonization of enemies; boundary setting for protection and preservation; missionary zeal; totalitarian impulse; political in nature; selectivity of which parts of history, tradition and heritage to invoke; charismatic male leadership; and selectively traditional and selectively modern.

From the five movements analyzed, I have developed a list of family resemblances I believe are common, to a varying degree, to all fundamentalist movements. However, it is not important that all of these traits are present in all fundamentalist movements. The nine family traits of fundamentalist movements are:

---

<sup>266</sup> Rem B. Edwards, "The Search for Family Resemblances of Religion," in *Philosophy of Religions in Global Perspective*, ed. Gary E. Kessler (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1997).

<sup>267</sup> Marty, Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences., *Fundamentalisms Observed*, 817.

active political participation, dramatic eschatology (to borrow the phrase from Marty and Appleby), firm authoritarianism within the group which prohibits deviation, literalist interpretation of scripture, militant behavior, a reaction to modernity, rejection of secularization, and separatist inclinations.

The following table illustrates how a family resemblance may be applied to fundamentalism and illustrates the variety of fundamentalism. I have alphabetically listed a series of traits characteristic of fundamentalism which are important to the study of this phenomenon as presented in the above analysis of five fundamentalist movements. An “X” indicates the presence of each characteristic within the five movements studied.

**Table 1. Family Traits of Fundamentalism Present in Five Fundamentalist Movements**

<i>Family Traits</i>	<i>Fundamentalist Movement</i>				
	<b>Jehovah's Witnesses</b>	<b>Christian Reconstructionists</b>	<b>Jerry Falwell</b>	<b>Pat Robertson</b>	<b>Al-Qaeda</b>
Actively involved in politics		X	X	X	X
Dramatic eschatology					
Premillennial	X		X		
Postmillennial		X		X	
Neither					X
Firm authoritarianism within group that prohibits deviation	X				X
Literalist interpretation of Scripture	X	X	X	X	
Militant		X			X
Reaction to Modernity	X	X	X	X	X
Rejection of other traditions	X	X			X
Rejection of secularization		X	X	X	X
Separatist	X				X

As the preceding table illustrates, there is in fact a great deal of similarity and variety within fundamentalism. It is important to note that the presence of certain characteristics within a movement are not meant to be construed as static or permanent; there is a great deal of change present within each fundamentalist movement. Additionally, there can be found within each movement a variety of views – I have chosen the view which most often appears or which is most often agreed upon within these groups.

Fundamentalist movements are above all genuinely religious. However, politics becomes important for many fundamentalist movements. Christian Reconstructionists for example, require active political participation on behalf of their members. As Gary DeMar states, “Christianity should be involved in politics even if it is dirty. Who else has the means to clean up politics (or any other area of human activity)?”<sup>268</sup> However, a careful understanding of dominion theology will help to shed light onto their political activism. Additionally, the Reconstructionists’ goal is not political, it is a biblically reordered society to advance God’s mandate before the second-coming. Similarly, bin Laden’s political activism is religiously motivated – an unending *jihad* to restore the Islamic community free from the clutches of *jahiliyyah*. However, not all fundamentalist movements become active in politics. Jehovah’s Witnesses constantly strive to remain separate from politics. According to their belief, human beings cannot rule themselves without God. Additionally, they believe nationalism is a tool of Satan used to lead people astray and away from God.

---

<sup>268</sup> Barron and Shupe, "Reasons for the Growing Popularity of Christian Reconstructionism: Determination to Attain Dominion," 93.

Connected to some fundamentalist movements' political activism is a militant nature. As we have seen with the Reconstructionists and al-Qaeda, militancy is an important component to their political activism. This is not true of all fundamentalist movements who enter politics. While Falwell is politically active and very passionate in his statements, his words have not solidified into active militant behavior and he nonetheless appears most comfortable in the pulpit and.

Many fundamentalist movements embrace a dramatic eschatology. Counter to common assumptions, these movements see the future of the human world differently. Within Christian fundamentalism, some movements embrace premillennial expectations such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Jerry Falwell, while others embrace postmillennial beliefs such as Christian Reconstructionists. Others still embrace a combined eschatology. As Pat Robertson has demonstrated, consistency is not a requirement; his eschatology shifted from premillennial to postmillennial upon entering the political arena. Bin Laden's eschatology, although neither premillennial nor postmillennial, as these terms work best within a western framework, is nonetheless dramatic. However, as Lawrence points out, bin Laden's end-times vision is unique and quite narrow. "There is almost a complete lack of any social program.... In place of the social, there is a hypertrophy of the sacrificial.... [Bin Laden's] emphasis falls far more on the glories of martyrdom than the spoils of victory."<sup>269</sup> While end-times beliefs may vary, there is still present within each a belief that the current world order is doomed and will be replaced through the intervention of God or some other supernatural entity.

Scriptural interpretation is oftentimes literalist in nature. While many of the fundamentalist movements subject of this analysis embrace a literalist interpretation of

---

<sup>269</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence, *Messages to the World : The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, xxii.

scripture, these interpretations are oftentimes contradictory to each other. Within the Christian fundamentalist movements, while these groups claim to know the absolute and literal truth, this truth differs and these movements often arrive at different conclusions.

Many fundamentalist movements are structured in a totalitarian or authoritarian manner, however, this varies as well. Of the movements subject of this analysis Jehovah's Witnesses and al-Qaeda have a firm authoritarian structure which prohibits deviation from the group. As we have seen, a Jehovah's Witness may be disfellowshipped for violating Watchtower teachings. The "Theocratic Organization" Rutherford created commands total obedience. Individual Bible study is often frowned upon as a member may arrive at contradictory conclusions to those the Watchtower teaches. Similarly, members of al-Qaeda, upon joining, are required to make an oath to the leadership of the group. While the Reconstructionists, Falwell and Robertson frown upon deviation from their teachings, their groups are not as authoritarian. Within the Reconstructionists, there are many differing views and at times these views are critical towards one another.

Another trait of fundamentalist movements is a reaction to modernity. Fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon, that is, it has been shaped by and grew out of modernity. Fundamentalist movements do not reject modern technologies, in fact many of them incorporate these technologies into their evangelism. However, not all movements choose to do so. Jehovah's Witnesses have thus shied away from television as a means of evangelism and proselytizing, whereas Robertson quickly saw the value in television, became one of the first Christian televangelists and has built his empire on such technologies. However, modernity brought about many changes other than new

technologies and innovations, such as Darwinism, reliance upon empirical sciences, liberal theological perspectives as well as secularism, which many fundamentalist movements view as hostile to their tradition and values. One common reaction to modernity has been revivalism; many fundamentalist movements cherish the past and view it as pure, something modern times is lacking. However, this is not necessarily the case. Whereas many fundamentalist theologies look to the past for order and glory, Jehovah's Witness theology seems to lack any notion of revivalism, and instead looks to the second-coming for order and glory.

Secularization, for many fundamentalist movements, has become a common enemy. Many fundamentalists view secularization as a marginalizing force which seeks to alienate religion from other aspects of society. For example, Falwell and Robertson insist that secularization is their enemy and view it as a harmful force which acts only to marginalize Christianity and relegate it to the private sector. Conversely, Jehovah's Witnesses appear to support secularization, in the sense that it seeks to separate religion from politics and acts as a protection from persecution.

While fundamentalism is varied and changing, fundamentalism is above all religious. Each fundamentalist movement constructs its own worldview based solely on religion. Religion informs and dictates everything else – it permeates all aspects of their world. As Marty and Appleby state, “We will fail to understand these movements if we neglect their irreducible religious dimension.”<sup>270</sup>

---

<sup>270</sup> Martin E. Marty, R. Scott Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences., *Fundamentalisms Comprehended, The Fundamentalism Project ; V. 5* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 504.

## Works Cited

- ACLJ. *Aclj Mission* ACLJ, 2006 [cited March 15 2006]. Available from <http://www.aclj.org/About/default.aspx?Section=9>.
- . *History of Aclj* ACLJ, 2006 [cited March 15 2006]. Available from <http://www.aclj.org/About/default.aspx?Section=10>.
- Armstrong, Karen. *The Battle for God*. 1st Ballantine Books ed. New York: Ballantine Books, 2001.
- Barron, Bruce, and Anson D. Shupe. "Reasons for the Growing Popularity of Christian Reconstructionism: Determination to Attain Dominion." In *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective : Revival of Religious Fundamentalism in East and West*, edited by Bronislaw Misztal and Anson D. Shupe, xii, 223 p. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992.
- Beckford, James A. *The Trumpet of Prophecy : A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses*. New York: Wiley, 1975.
- Beliefs - Frequently Asked Questions: Are You Fundamentalists?* Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2003 [cited December 14 2005]. Available from <http://www.jw-media.org/beliefs/beliefsfaq.htm>.
- Bergen, Peter L. *The Osama Bin Laden I Know : An Oral History of Al-Qaeda's Leader*. New York: Free Press, 2006.
- Bergman, Jerry. *Jehovah's Witnesses : A Comprehensive and Selectively Annotated Bibliography, Bibliographies and Indexes in Religious Studies, No. 48*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999.
- Bergman, Jerry "The Adventist Movement and Jehovah's Witness Branch of Protestantism." In *America's Alternative Religions*, edited by Timothy Miller, ix, 474 p. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Bin Laden, Osama, and Bruce Lawrence. *Messages to the World : The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*. London ; New York: Verso, 2005.



- Carpenter, Joel A. *Revive Us Again : The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Christ College, Inc. *A Brief History of the School* Christ College, Inc., 2004 [cited April 22 2006]. Available from <http://www.christ-college.edu/about/history.htm>.
- Church, Thomas Road Baptist. *Our Doctrinal Statement* Thomas Road Baptist Church, 2006 [cited February 16 2006]. Available from <http://home.trbc.org/index.cfm?PID=9060>.
- . *Our History* Thomas Road Baptist Church, 2006 [cited February 16 2006]. Available from <http://home.trbc.org/index.cfm?PID=9059>.
- DeMar, Gary. *Public Schools — Get out Now!* American Vision, 2006 [cited March 7 2006].
- . "Using the Simpsons to Teach the Five Freedoms of the First Amendment." *Biblical Worldview Magazine*, May 2006, 3.
- Denny, Frederick Mathewson. *An Introduction to Islam*. 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1993.
- Dobson, Ed, Jerry Falwell, and Edward E. Hindson. *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon : The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity*. 1st ed. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981.
- Edwards, Rem B. "The Search for Family Resemblances of Religion." In *Philosophy of Religions in Global Perspective*, edited by Gary E. Kessler. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1997.
- Elliot, Joel. "Jehovah's Witnesses." In *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism*, edited by Brenda E. Brasher, xviii, 558 p. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Epstein, Lee, and Thomas G. Walker. *Constitutional Law for a Changing America. Rights, Liberties, and Justice*. 4th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2001.
- Falwell, Jerry. *America Made a Deal with God*, July 6, 1997 [cited September 23 2005]. Available from <http://www.trbc.org/sermons/970706PM.html>.

- . *Listen America!* New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1981.
- . *Massive Spiritual Aggression: A 21st Century Call to Action*, May 1, 2005 [cited September 23 2005]. Available from <http://sermons.trbc.org/20050501.html>.
- . "Profane and Old Wives Fables." In *Sermons from the Thomas Roads Baptist Church*, 2005.
- . *Spiritual and Political Freedom*, July 4, 2004 [cited September 23 2005]. Available from <http://sermons.trbc.org/20040704.html>.
- . *Strength for the Journey : An Autobiography*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.
- Foundation, The Chalcedon. *What Chalcedon Believes* The Chalcedon Foundation, 2005 [cited February 28 2005]. Available from <http://www.chalcedon.edu/credo.php>.
- Gaustad, Edwin S., and Leigh Eric Schmidt. *The Religious History of America*. Rev. ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002.
- Harding, Susan Friend. *The Book of Jerry Falwell : Fundamentalist Language and Politics*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Hodgson, Marshall G. S. "The Impact of the Great Western Transmutation: The Generation of 1789." In *The Venture of Islam : Conscience and History in a World Civilization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- International, Operation Blessing. *Our Mission* Operation Blessing International, 2001 [cited September 14 2005]. Available from <http://www.operationblessing.org/about/index.asp>.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark. *The New Cold War? : Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State, Comparative Studies in Religion and Society ; 5*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

- . *Terror in the Mind of God : The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. 3rd ed, *Comparative Studies in Religion and Society* ; 13. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- The Key to a Happy World* Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania 2001 [cited March 3 2005]. Available from [http://www.watchtower.org/library/w/2001/10/15/article\\_02.htm](http://www.watchtower.org/library/w/2001/10/15/article_02.htm).
- Lawrence, Bruce B. *Defenders of God : The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1995.
- . *Shattering the Myth : Islam Beyond Violence*, *Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Lienesch, Michael. *Redeeming America : Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- Lincoln, Bruce. *Holy Terrors : Thinking About Religion after September 11*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Marsden, George M. "Defining American Fundamentalism." In *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon : A View from within; a Response from Without*, edited by Norman J. Cohen, xiii, 266 p. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1990.
- . "Evangelical and Fundamental Christianity." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion* edited by Mircea Eliade, 16 v. in 8. New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1993.
- Marty, Martin E., R. Scott Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences. *Fundamentalisms Comprehended, The Fundamentalism Project ; V. 5*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- . *Fundamentalisms Observed, The Fundamentalism Project ; V. 1*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Moen, Matthew C. "Christian Right." In *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, edited by William H. Swatos and Peter Kivisto, xiv, 590 p. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 1998.

- Network, The Christian Broadcasting. *Cbn's Mission Statement* The Christian Broadcasting Network, 2005 [cited September 21 2005]. Available from [http://www.cbn.com/about/mission/mission\\_statement.asp](http://www.cbn.com/about/mission/mission_statement.asp).
- O'Leary, Stephen, and Michael McFarland. "The Political Use of Mythic Discourse: Prophetic Interpretation in Pat Robertson's Presidential Campaign." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75, no. 4 (1989): 20.
- Overture Keyword Selector Tool* Overture Keyword Selector Tool, 2006 [cited May 1 2006]. Available from <http://www.inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>.
- PBS. *God and Politics. On Earth as It Is in Heaven*. United States: PBS, 1987.
- Penton, M. James. *Apocalypse Delayed : The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*. 2nd ed. Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- Peters, Shawn Francis. *Judging Jehovah's Witnesses : Religious Persecution and the Dawn of the Rights Revolution*. Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2000.
- Qutb, Sayyid. *Milestones*. Translated by Ahmad Zaki Hammad. revised and trans. ed. Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1990.
- Robertson, Pat. *America's Dates with Destiny*. Nashville: Nelson, 1986.
- . *The Ten Offenses*. Nashville: Integrity Publishers, 2004.
- Robertson, Pat, and Jamie Buckingham. *Shout It from the Housetops*. Plainfield, N.J.,: Logos International, 1972.
- Rushdoony, Rousas John. *God's Plan for Victory : The Meaning of Post Millennialism*. 2nd ed, *Chalcedon Monograph Series ; No. 1*. San Jose, CA: Chalcedon Foundation, 1997.
- Rushdoony, Rousas Mark. *From the President's Desk: Rousas John Rushdoony, April 25, 1916 — February 8, 2001: Funeral Eulogy by His Son, Rev. Mark Rousas Rushdoony* The Chalcedon Foundation, 2001 [cited Bebruary 16 2006]. Available

from

<http://web.archive.org/web/20021230021116/www.chalcedon.edu/report/2001apr/rushdoonym1.shtml>.

Sandlin, Andrew. *The Creed of Christian Reconstructionism* [cited March 21 2005]. Available from <http://www.dabney.com/charles/Sandlin-CR.html>.

Shupe, Anson D. "Christian Recontstructionism and the Angry Rhetoric of Neo-Postmillennialism." In *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem : Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, edited by Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer, 334 p. New York: Routledge, 1997.

*This Week with George Stephanopoulos: Interview with Pat Robertson* Patrobertson.com, 2005 [cited February 15 2006]. Available from <http://www.patrobertson.com/PressReleases/thisweekgs.asp>.

*A Thriving Campus* Liberty University, 2006 [cited February 15 2006]. Available from <http://www.liberty.edu/index.cfm?PID=6905>.

Wald, Kenneth D. *Religion and Politics in the United States*. 4th ed. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.

Watson, Justin. *The Christian Coalition : Dreams of Restoration, Demands for Recognition*. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, Florida State University., 1997.

*West Virginia State Board of Education V. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943).

Wikipedia. *Southern Baptist Convention* Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 2006 [cited March 1 2006]. Available from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern\\_Baptist\\_Convention](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Baptist_Convention).