

From Rallying Cry to Pejorative: The Taxonomical and Lexical Development of “Fundamentalism”

Gabriel A. Desjardins, *Concordia University, Canada*

“Fundamentalism” is an overused word with an unclear and contested meaning, often used pejoratively toward religious groups and persons seen as extreme; yet some scholarship suggests that fundamentalism is also an area for interreligious work. According to Peter A. Huff, research should focus on dialoguing with rather than demonizing fundamentalisms, since they are the final frontier for interfaith work.¹ This, however, is difficult, since fundamentalists are typically opposed to ecumenical efforts, and demonization impedes dialogue, thereby perpetuating fundamentalisms. This tension is best illustrated by the very term with which fundamentalists are identified – a term often perceived as abusive. According to Alvin Plantinga, “fundamentalist” is a label comparable to English curse words. When someone employs the term’s emotive use, they mean that a fundamentalist is “a stupid sumbitch whose theological views are considerably to the right of mine.”²

Originally, the term was a rallying cry for twentieth century American evangelicals defending their faith from modernism and liberal Christianity. This original, historic fundamentalism was (and remains) a subset of evangelicalism,³ which is itself a complex and difficult-to-define movement, understood as a subset of Protestantism.⁴ Fundamentalism, as a term, has

1. According to Huff, opening a dialogue with fundamentalisms will “revolutionize ventures in interreligious dialogue.” See Peter A. Huff, *What Are They Saying About Fundamentalisms?* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2008), 8-9.

2. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000), 244-245.

3. See Frances Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 5.

4. Evangelicalism is typically defined using D. W. Bebbington’s quadrilateral definition, which locates conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism as unifying aspects of the evangelical umbrella. See D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989), 5-10. Still, as with fundamentalism, debate

since evolved beyond this context, having obtained pejorative connotations after the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s and having its taxonomy expanded after the development of global fundamentalism. Though not all scholars support the concept of global fundamentalism, it is a legitimate academic category that is usually studied sympathetically and neutrally. Most of the pejorative associations come from the media and, at times, from some governments that have concerns about the impact of given fundamentalisms on political, social, or cultural values.⁵ Consider, for instance, Christian fundamentalism, which has played a significant role in the rise of the Religious Right – a movement that has had lasting impacts on American and Canadian politics.⁶ Most notably, 81% of white evangelicals voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election, and many continue to support his government due to his promises to fulfill their political aspirations.⁷ As this essay will show, many theologically conservative evangelicals unknowingly adhere to principles of historic fundamentalism, illustrating its lasting impact on contemporary evangelicalism. Still, in a climate of worsening polarization, pejorative terms like “fundamentalist” do little to quell tensions, which is why I turn to this term’s development from rallying cry to derogatory label.

I will begin by etymologizing the term and providing a short historical overview of its transformation into a pejorative. I will then examine its development in referential works, particularly encyclopaedias and dictionaries, thereby revealing the term’s popular usage. Next, I will discuss the development of fundamentalism as a scholarly concept, with emphasis on

continues surrounding the exact taxonomy and definition of evangelicalism, particularly in the context of its global expansion. See Molly Worthen, “Defining Evangelicalism: Questions that Complement the Quadrilateral,” *Fides et Historia* 47, no. 1 (2015): 83-86.

5. Fundamentalist forms of religion can also be beneficial for governments. In the United States, for example, Republicans have found a considerable voter base among theologically conservative evangelicals beginning in the Reagan era. See Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1995), 228-231.

6. See Lydia Bean, *The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2014), 10-13.

7. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 564. It is important to note that Donald Trump’s evangelical supporters are not all fundamentalists, but evangelicalism is a movement that has been and continues to be shaped by fundamentalism.

its evolution towards global fundamentalism. Finally, I will present several taxonomical and lexical problems associated with both global fundamentalism and fundamentalism in general, followed by a rebuttal by Bruce B. Lawrence. My aim is to dispel assumptions regarding fundamentalism and to facilitate dialogue between fundamentalists and their opponents.

1. A Brief Etymology & History of Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism's etymology and history demonstrate the term's lexical and taxonomical evolution. Though the term was coined in 1920, the early movement began in the 1800s through Princeton theology and pre-millennialism. The term itself is simple, deriving from the word "fundamental," referring to something's core, base, or essential nature. "Fundamental" comes from the French *fondamental* and the Latin *fundamentum* and *fundamentalis*, both deriving from the Latin word *fundus*, meaning "bottom."⁸ *Fundus* is rooted in a Proto-Indo-European word meaning "bottom" and relates to the English verb "fund" and the French "fond," suggesting a source or well-spring from which a supply comes. In essence, a fundamental is a thing's foundation.⁹ For early evangelical fundamentalists, these foundations were core tenets or dogmas upon which other tenets or dogmas rest.

This simple definition is what Curtis Lee Laws meant when he coined the term "fundamentalist" in the summer of 1920. Writing for *The Watchman-Examiner*, Laws defines fundamentalists as "those who still cling to the great fundamentals and who mean to do battle royal for the fundamentals."¹⁰ Laws – a self-described fundamentalist – did not specify what these fundamentals are.¹¹ Other fundamentalists, however, have identified them as the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of Christ, substitutionary atonement, and the authenticity of miracles.¹² Of these, iner-

8. *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, s.v. "Fundamental," accessed September 10, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fundamental>.

9. See *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, vol. 1 (New York: Elsevier Publishing Company, 1966), 628; *The Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 303.

10. Curtis Lee Laws, "Convention Side Lights," *The Watchman-Examiner* 8 (July 1, 1920), 834.

11. David Harrington Watt, *Antifundamentalism in Modern America* (London: Cornell UP, 2017), 51-52.

12. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 96.

rancy has been a particularly distinctive fundamentalist position. A number of fundamentalists, moreover, have also strongly identified with pre-millenarianism as another fundamental tenet.

Princeton Theology and Biblical Inerrancy

In addition to Protestant Reform theology, and an emphasis on personal religious experience following the American Great Awakenings, fundamentalism, rooted as it is in evangelical history, has also been shaped by biblical inerrancy and pre-millenarianism (known also as premillennialist dispensationalism). Biblical inerrancy developed out of Princeton Theological Seminary in the 1800s under Charles Hodge and his successors: Archibald Alexander Hodge and B. B. Warfield. Prior to Princeton Theology, Scripture's truthfulness was largely taken for granted by American Protestants;¹³ however, post-Reformation Enlightenment movements – especially biblical criticism, Darwinian evolution, and deist philosophies – contributed to the reactionary theologies developed at Princeton, leading to the formation of biblical inerrancy, that is, the idea that the Bible is fully without error in all areas, including science and history.

Biblical inerrancy, however, is but one hermeneutical system among several that strongly emphasize the authority of the Bible. Other systems include biblical literalism and biblical infallibility. Biblical literalism is perhaps the highest view of Scripture: biblical inerrancy is coupled with a literal, word-for-word reading of the text. Inerrantists, by contrast, accept that the Bible cannot be taken literally in everything it says – for example, certain passages may be interpreted poetically or allegorically – but they hold that everything the Bible says is true and without error. For infallibilists, the Bible is true only in areas concerning religious faith. Despite these differences, research shows that the distinction is unbeknownst to most modern-day evangelicals; they simply tend to choose the most authoritative option when given questions related to biblical authority. Thus, if both an inerrantist and literalist option is given, proponents will tend to choose the literalist option, which presupposes inerrancy.¹⁴

13. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 77.

14. According to Ted G. Jelen, this is true for most lay evangelicals, who are not versed in the subtleties of hermeneutical differences. Such persons tend to choose the wording that gives the highest view of Scripture. On this basis, Jelen concludes that the difference between

Though early forms of these hermeneutics can be found throughout Church history, their current forms are recent developments. According to Ernest Sandeen, biblical authority did not develop into inerrancy until at least the 1850s.¹⁵ In fact, the Westminster Confession contains nothing resembling inerrancy, focussing instead on biblical inspiration and the canon's status as closed.¹⁶ Revelation, as the Confession sees it, is complete and fully found within Scripture. Even Charles Hodge, one of the first proponents of biblical inerrancy, conceded scriptural imperfection, accepting that Scripture need not be without minor blemishes. Hodge's concession represents the doctrine of inerrancy at an early stage of development. It was following Hodge that Princeton theologians began maintaining a fully inerrant view of Scripture. They would, in fact, argue that, should any error be found in the Bible, it would result in the dismantling of all Christian truth claims.¹⁷ Despite his less strict view in this context, Hodge, in his *Systematic Theology*, nonetheless reveals his high view of Scripture by comparing the study of the Bible to that of the natural sciences. Like the astronomer studies the stars for scientific truth, the theologian investigates Scripture for theological truth.¹⁸ For Hodge, the Bible is a repository of facts ready to be studied like any other object of inquiry. This Newtonian approach to Scripture fast-tracked Hodge's successors toward a solidified doctrine of biblical inerrancy.

Furthermore, advancements in biblical criticism hardened Princeton Theology.¹⁹ Beginning with Archibald Alexander Hodge (Charles Hodge's

inerrancy and literalism is unimportant (Ted G. Jelen, "Biblical Literalism and Inerrancy: Does the Difference Make a Difference?" *Sociological Analysis* 49, no. 4 [1989]: 421-429). Jelen, Wilcox, and Smidt, however, note that the difference between literalism and inerrancy is important when both options are presented, seeing that Jelen's original study separated questions containing inerrantist wording from those including literalist wording. Nevertheless, since literalism is a higher view of Scripture than inerrancy, this does not contradict Jelen's earlier findings (Ted G. Jelen, Clyde Wilcox, and Corwin E Smidt, "Biblical Literalism and Inerrancy: A Methodological Investigation," *Sociological Analysis* 51, no. 3 [Fall 1990]: 307-313).

15. Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 106.

16. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 77.

17. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 78.

18. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Greenwood: The Attic Press, Inc., 1960), 1.

19. Ernest Sandeen, "The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism," *Church History* 31 (September 1962): 315.

son), the Princeton theologians became more defensive, culminating in A. A. Hodge's 1879 edition of *Outlines of Theology*, which claims that only the "original autographs" are inerrant.²⁰ This claim allows for discrepancies in the Bible without denying inerrancy, thereby enabling the hermeneutic to survive scrutiny and thrive in contemporary evangelical theology. Hodge's argument, in fact, made its way into the 1978 *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* in which over 200 evangelical leaders codified Princeton Theology of Scripture.²¹ More recently, a 2014 Pew Research study concluded that 31% of Americans believe that the Bible should be taken as the literal word of God; a position held by 55% of evangelical Protestants, 59% of historically black Protestants, and 24% of mainline Protestants.²² As stated earlier, most evangelicals tend to choose the option with the highest view of Scripture, and in this case, that view is a literalist view, which presupposes inerrancy.

Premillenarianism

Pre-millenarianism is a Christian eschatological system involving the return and millennial reign of Christ on Earth. In the nineteenth century, pre-millenarianism competed in the United States with post-millenarianism, an eschatological system involving one thousand years of peace brought about by the Church rather than Christ, and after which Christ would return to redeem the saints. Post-millenarianism integrated Christian liberalism's optimism, specifically with respect to human progress, but was stymied by World War I and the pessimism that followed. This enabled pre-millenarianism to thrive in American evangelicalism with its hope for Christ's retribution in a darkening world.²³

20. Archibald Alexander Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Paternoster Row, 1879), 66, 75.

21. See Article X of the "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," which says: "WE AFFIRM that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original." For the full text of the Chicago Statement, see www.danielakin.com/wp-content/uploads/old/Resource_545/Book%20,%20Sec%202023.pdf.

22. "Interpreting Scripture," *Pew Forum*, accessed Dec. 19, 2017, <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/interpreting-scripture>.

23. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 103-104.

As with inerrancy, pre-millenarianism has spread throughout evangelicalism, having outgrown its fundamentalist origins. It is now commonly referred to as pre-millennialism and can be found in popular evangelical media, particularly through the *Left Behind* series,²⁴ which has sold over 80 million copies and resulted in four films. The series concerns a seven-year tribulation, which occurs after the disappearance (or rapture) of Christians and concludes with Christ's return and millennial reign on Earth. This, or some version of it, is what many evangelicals believe today. What was once part of the fundamentalist movement has bled into much of contemporary evangelicalism.

During the nineteenth century, many evangelicals held pre-millenarian conferences and Bible studies throughout the United States, and connected their apocalyptic beliefs to current events, making predictions of the future, announcing the fulfillment of prophecy, and defending the Bible against criticism. From this vantage, Lyman Stewart oversaw *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, crystallizing the fundamentalist movement. This document was distributed to more than one million American Protestants so that, by the end of World War I, the fundamentalist movement was mobilized to counter modernist threats. By 1919, William Bell Riley formed the World Christian Fundamentals Association, one year before Curtis Lee Laws provided the movement with its name: "the fundamentalists."

It was not long, however, before "fundamentalist" and its sister form "fundamentalism" were involved in controversy. In 1922, Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of Manhattan's First Presbyterian Church, preached the anti-fundamentalist sermon, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" equating fundamentalists with the Pharisees and condemning their tendencies to separate into smaller and smaller churches.²⁵ In response, fundamentalists countered with sermons including, "Shall Unbelief Win?" and, amusingly, "Shall the Funnymonkeyists Win?"²⁶

24. Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, *Left Behind*, 16 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1995-2007).

25. Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" *Christian Work* 102 (June 10, 1922): 716-722.

26. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 121-122.

The Scopes “Monkey” Trial: When Fundamentalism Became Pejorative

Fundamentalists and “funnymonkeyists” took centre stage at the Scopes “Monkey” Trial, where William Jennings Bryan – three-time presidential candidate and self-described fundamentalist – battled famed attorney, Clarence Darrow, over the fate of John T. Scopes, a high school teacher arrested for teaching evolution in a Dayton, Tennessee high school. Though Scopes was convicted and fined a mere \$100, fundamentalism lost all legitimacy. The trial attracted media outlets from across the country who witnessed Bryan’s humiliation at the hands of Darrow, as he laid bare Bryan’s fundamentalist beliefs in a 6,000-year-old Earth, the historicity of Jonah, and various biblical miracles; this resulted in the media’s ridicule of fundamentalists, thereby relegating them to the cultural outskirts. According to George M. Marsden, fundamentalists lost the ability to “raise the level of discourse to the plane where any of their arguments would be taken seriously. Whatever they said would be overshadowed by the pejorative associations attached to the movement by the seemingly victorious establishment.”²⁷

This humiliation was joined with incorrect judgment. The media mistakenly equated fundamentalists with bigots from the agrarian south. Leading the charge was H. L. Mencken of *The Baltimore Sun*, a staunch anti-religion reporter and author who wrote extensively about the trial, designating the residents of Dayton, Tennessee as fundamentalists.²⁸ Though other reporters also referred to Daytonians with the label,²⁹ Mencken was particularly harsh, also designating them as “gaping primates,” “peasants,” “hillbillies,” and “morons.”³⁰ For Mencken, fundamentalists were everywhere and were sinister, even having ties to the Ku Klux

27. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 1980), 188.

28. H. L. Mencken, “Scopes Monkey Trial,” *Deadline Artists: America’s Greatest Newspaper Columns*, eds. John Avlon, Jesse Angelo, and Errol Louis (New York: The Overlook Press, 2011), 66-69.

29. *The New York Times*, in particular, posted scathing articles on the apparent fundamentalism in Dayton, while admitting that Mencken’s work bordered on extreme. See Susan Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (New York: Princeton UP, 2000), 67; “Mencken Epithets Rouse Dayton’s Ire,” *The New York Times*, July 17, 1925.

30. Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, 67.

Klan.³¹ According to Marsden, Mencken's rhetoric against fundamentalism altered public perception. The term now "applied to almost every aspect of American rural or small-town Protestantism";³² its use was no longer limited to a small group of anti-modernist evangelicals.

These false portraits tainted fundamentalists, portraying them as bigoted and ignorant southerners, despite recent scholarship having identified early fundamentalism as a northern, urban movement that emerged when agrarian traditionalists encountered urban culture. As Nancy Ammerman argues, "Fundamentalism is most likely to be found at the points where tradition is meeting modernity rather than where modernity is most remote."³³

Actual fundamentalists, unfortunately, worsened their own situation. According to Susan Harding, the Scopes trial was interpreted as Bryan's defeat, but it could have been interpreted as his victory.³⁴ However, fundamentalists acquiesced to the narrative of loss, cementing the negative portrayal that has continued to the present throughout the media, entertainment industry, and popular culture.³⁵

Billy Graham and the Neo-Evangelicals

After their cultural defeat, fundamentalists seemingly disappeared, though denominational disputes continued during and after the 1930s as fundamentalists frequently separated from churches perceived as liberal or modern. Eventually, the movement resurfaced, particularly through the rising popularity of Billy Graham in the 1940s and 50s. Graham was a self-described fundamentalist who held to biblical infallibility, the virgin

31. Mencken is known for saying, "Heave an egg out a Pullman window, and you will hit a Fundamentalist almost anywhere in the United States today" (quoted in Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 188).

32. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 188.

33. Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* (London: Rutgers UP, 1987), 8.

34. Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, 71.

35. Portrayals of fundamentalists in entertainment culminated in the play, and eventual film, *Inherit the Wind*. The story is a retelling of the Scopes "Monkey" Trial, except that the names of figures central to the trial are changed. According to David Harrington Watt, *Inherit the Wind* is a "catechism for the set of feelings, assumptions, and beliefs" that he calls antifundamentalism (Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, 113).

birth, and pre-millenarianism.³⁶ Through his preaching, Graham propagated fundamentalist views in a manner devoid of controversy, thereby removing stigma from fundamentalist beliefs and separating the movement from the tainted label. This success occurred under the guise of neo-evangelicalism, a movement started by Graham to attract mainline Protestant denominations. Graham, however, understood that attracting these denominations meant changing people's perceptions of fundamentalism.³⁷ From his efforts, tension arose between neo-evangelicals and fundamentalists, resulting in the call for unification under the banner of evangelicalism,³⁸ which further blurred the lines between fundamentalists and evangelicals. Though the term "neo-evangelical" fell into obscurity, Graham and his successors further infused evangelicalism with fundamentalist positions, particularly in relation to the Bible.

Religion Fights Back

In the latter half of the 1970s, much of evangelicalism aligned with the Republican party due to the leadership of self-described fundamentalist Jerry Falwell, who rallied evangelicals against abortion and homosexuality. To this day, most American evangelical denominations lean to the right of the political spectrum. According to Pew Research, 64% of the Southern Baptist Convention is Republican, along with 57% of the Assemblies of God. The only evangelical denomination surveyed with less than 50% of its members leaning Republican is Seventh Day Adventism.³⁹ Though degrees vary amongst such right-leaning Christians, Falwell effectively united them with the hope of making the United States the Christian nation he believed it had once been; to return it to its Christian roots.⁴⁰ This aspiration has ties to dominionism, that is, the worldview that Christians should have dominion over secular institutions.⁴¹ While Falwell and most conservative evangelicals

36. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 175-176.

37. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 186-187.

38. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 195.

39. Michael Lipka, "U.S. Religious Groups and Their Political Leanings," *Pew Research*, accessed Nov. 30, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/23/u-s-religious-groups-and-their-political-leanings>.

40. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 307.

41. See Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 246.

do not directly espouse this worldview, it has influenced proponents of the Christian Right.⁴²

Owing to its influence, Falwell's political movement sparked fear. God was not "dead," as many had thought, especially during the 1960s. Rather, God was "fighting back" through the fundamentalists, but not just evangelical fundamentalists; God was fighting back through militant believers from many faiths around the world. These faithful were labeled extremists, and extremism became synonymous with fundamentalism. This synonymy took full shape after the 1979 Iranian Revolution through the concept of global fundamentalism. No longer limited to American evangelicalism, fundamentalism expanded to every religion, typically as a form of religious revitalization responding to modernization, secularization, and westernization. This global application, however, has been quite elastic.

2. Fundamentalism's Lexical Development in Reference Works

The evolution of fundamentalism can be seen in encyclopaedias and dictionaries (including theological dictionaries) throughout the twentieth century. Earlier reference works represent fundamentalism as a Protestant movement, related to biblical inerrancy and dispensationalism; however, reference works slowly reflected the changes in scholarship related to global fundamentalism. In this section, I will explore some of these lexical changes in order to understand popular conceptions of fundamentalism.

Fundamentalism, according to the online *Oxford Dictionary* (2017), is "A form of a religion, especially Islam or Protestant Christianity, that upholds belief in the strict, literal interpretation of scripture."⁴³ Oxford also provides a broader definition encompassing non-religious fundamentalism: "Strict adherence to the basic principles of any subject or discipline." *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2017), by contrast, offers the following definition: "a movement in 20th century Protestantism emphasizing the literally interpreted Bible as fundamental to Christian life and teaching."⁴⁴ The Merri-

42. Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 248; see also Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 8.

43. *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, s.v. "Fundamentalism," accessed September 10, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fundamentalism>. Another online source with a similar definition is that of Dictionary.com, s.v. "Fundamentalism," accessed Dec. 22, 2017, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/fundamentalism>.

44. *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "Fundamentalism," accessed September 10, 2017, <https://www>.

am-Webster definition is similar to that of Oxford, except that it highlights fundamentalism as a single movement within Protestantism, while Oxford presents fundamentalism as a global phenomenon. As we will see, most reference works offer variations of these two definitions, except for earlier reference works, which describe fundamentalism pejoratively, reflecting post-Scopes trial attitudes.

One of the earliest definitions is from H. Richard Niebuhr in his entry “Fundamentalism,” published in the 1931 *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Niebuhr presents fundamentalists as imposing their creed – the five points of fundamentalism – on public schools, religious colleges, and seminaries.⁴⁵ He describes fundamentalists as “aggressive conservatives,”⁴⁶ who had succeeded in banning the teaching of evolution in many American states. Like Mencken, Niebuhr relates fundamentalism to racist movements like the Ku Klux Klan and describes adherents as having little affinity for change.⁴⁷

Fundamentalism, however, did not immediately appear in dictionaries. For instance, the 1933 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* does not define fundamentalism or fundamentalists. Nonetheless, many dictionaries as late as the 1980s and early 1990s portray fundamentalism as a strictly Protestant phenomenon. For instance, the 1973 edition of the *Funk & Wagnalls New Comprehensive International Dictionary of the English Language* defines fundamentalism as, “The belief that all statements made in the Bible are literally true,” connecting their definition to evangelical Protestants and literalism.⁴⁸

The 1980 edition of the *Oxford American Dictionary* presents a more inclusive definition by connecting fundamentalism to the “strict main-

merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fundamentalism.

45. H. Richard Niebuhr, “Fundamentalism,” in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 6 (New York: Macmillan 1931), 526-527.

46. Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, 89.

47. Niebuhr, “Fundamentalism,” 527.

48. *Funk and Wagnalls New Comprehensive International Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Ferguson Publishing Company, 1973), s.v. “Fundamentalism.” For similar definitions, see s.v. “Fundamentalism,” in *The New Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus* (Hong Kong: South China Printing Co., 1987); *Webster’s New World Dictionary, Third College Edition* (New York: Simon & Shuster 1988); and *The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (New York, Oxford UP, 1989).

tenance of traditional orthodox religious beliefs (especially Protestant), such as the literal truth of the Bible.”⁴⁹ Though global fundamentalism had not yet taken root in contemporary dictionaries, this definition by Oxford broadens the term, removing it from its strict relation to evangelical dogmas. Thereafter, the second edition of *Oxford’s English Dictionary* (1989) directly connects fundamentalism with global religions, while mentioning that non-evangelical fundamentalism especially occurs in Islam.⁵⁰

By the late 1990s, certain dictionaries provided broader definitions than even global fundamentalism. The *Nelson Canadian Dictionary of the English Language* (1997), for example, defines fundamentalism as, “A movement or point of view characterized by rigid adherence to fundamental or basic principles,”⁵¹ thereby connecting fundamentalism to political and economic fundamentalism. Similar definitions occur in the second edition of *Oxford’s English Dictionary* (1989), and more recently in *Collins Cobuild Advanced American English Dictionary* (2016), which defines fundamentalism as, “the belief in the original form of a religion or theory, without accepting any later ideas.”⁵²

By the 2000s, global fundamentalism was an established academic concept, as reflected in the differences between the second edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1974) and the third edition (2005). In the second edition, the term is defined strictly as a Protestant phenomenon, involving a “profession of strict adherence to (esp. Protestant) orthodoxy in the matter of biblical interpretation.”⁵³ Despite being virtually the same, the third edition adds an addendum regarding global fundamentalism and highlights the term’s pejorative connotations.⁵⁴

49. *The Oxford American Dictionary* (New York: Oxford UP, 1980), s.v. “Fundamentalism.”

50. *The Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), s.v. “Fundamentalism.”

51. Note: this dictionary’s second definition connects fundamentalism directly to twentieth century evangelicalism, and opposition to liberalism and secularism. See *Nelson Canadian Dictionary of the English Language* (Ontario: International Thomson Publishing, 1997), s.v. “Fundamentalism.”

52. *Collins Cobuild Advanced American English Dictionary* (Bishopbriggs: HarperCollins, 2016), s.v. “Fundamentalism.”

53. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 1974), s.v. “Fundamentalism.”

54. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 2005), s.v. “Fundamentalism.”

Global fundamentalism, however, has not been uncontested in reference works. In *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (1999), James Barr states that fundamentalism's application beyond Protestantism has yet to be proven viable by scholarly analysis.⁵⁵ Barr also describes fundamentalism as a pejorative label often rejected by purported fundamentalists. According to Barr, many apparent fundamentalists prefer to call themselves “evangelical” or “orthodox.”⁵⁶ Moreover, the 2008 *Global Dictionary of Theology* describes fundamentalism as having taxonomical and lexical problems, illustrating the near impossibility of establishing a strict definition.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, a broad definition can be made, encompassing believers who “attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group.”⁵⁸

Although revealing the term's opacity, these definitions are reflections of fundamentalism scholarship. Doubtlessly, fundamentalism is difficult to define, having passed through various stages of lexical development. Prior to the Scopes trial, the term was not inherently pejorative, but it later gained negative connotations, as seen in Niebuhr's encyclopedic entry. It has since morphed into a category involving non-Protestant and even non-Christian movements, though this global application has not been accepted universally. In the next section, I turn to fundamentalism scholarship, detailing the term's evolution therein from a strictly Protestant phenomenon to one applicable across faiths.

3. Fundamentalism Scholarship

According to Peter A. Huff, there have been three stages in the study of Protestant fundamentalism, the first of which began during the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s when research was mostly conducted by modernists and opponents of fundamentalism. The second stage began in the 1970s and contains the influential works of Ernest Sandeen and George M. Marsden – historians sympathetic to the movement.

55. James Barr, “Fundamentalism,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 2, eds. Erwin Fahlbusch et al. (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 365.

56. Barr, “Fundamentalism,” 364.

57. For an additional example of a contemporary reference work questioning global fundamentalism, see *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (New York: Oxford UP, 2005), 481-482.

58. *Global Dictionary of Theology* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2008), s.v. “Fundamentalism.”

They revolutionized fundamentalism scholarship, paving the way for a third stage, which occurred in the 1980s and involved feminist and comparative perspectives.⁵⁹ Contemporaneously to the third stage, the Iranian Revolution and the reinvigoration of global religions motivated scholars to apply the category of fundamentalism across faiths.

The First Stage: Early Scholarship

In the early twentieth century, initial fundamentalism scholarship undertaken by Shailer Matthews and Shirley Jackson Case centered on pre-millenarianism. They did not, however, fully explore its historical origin or cultural background. Matthews, nonetheless, co-wrote a complete study of fundamentalism with William Warren Sweet, entitled *The Story of Religion in America* (1939), in which they describe the competing forms of fundamentalist and modernist Christianity.⁶⁰ This approach exemplifies one of three models related to fundamentalism research – that of a cultural clash between fundamentalists and modernists, where fundamentalism is defined by what or who it opposes. The second model, known as the “rural-urban theory,” portrays fundamentalism as a rural movement in opposition to urbanism, representing the false portrait that circulated after the Scopes trial. The third model is the “cultural lag thesis,” which portrays fundamentalism as a remnant of an outdated religion that “has been left behind by the Western World’s rapid advance toward modernization.”⁶¹ Of the three, this third model has been the most viable.

In 1931, Stewart Cole wrote one of the first historical accounts of the fundamentalist movement. Though he focusses on the cultural clash model, elements of the rural-urban model and the cultural lag thesis find their way into his text. Like his contemporaries, Cole presents fundamentalism negatively and modernism positively. For Cole, fundamentalists are extremists and modernists are progressives.⁶² Still, according to Huff, Cole’s *The History of Fundamentalism* “remained the benchmark of the field well into the 1950s.”⁶³

59. Huff, *What Are They Saying About Fundamentalisms?* 38-39.

60. Huff, *What Are They Saying About Fundamentalisms?* 42, 44.

61. Huff, *What Are They Saying About Fundamentalisms?* 44.

62. Huff, *What Are They Saying About Fundamentalisms?* 47.

63. Huff, *What Are They Saying About Fundamentalisms?* 46.

The Second Stage: Neutral Historiographies

Fundamentalism research dwindled after the 1930s, since fundamentalism was perceptibly dying. However, interest stirred in the 1950s as fundamentalism returned to the forefront of mainstream currents. The zenith of scholarship in this period was Ernest Sandeen's influential work, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930*, which epitomizes the neutrality of the second stage. Sandeen wrote his text in 1970 – ten years before the Iranian Revolution and the propagation of global fundamentalism as a category. His attempted neutrality is expressed in his introduction, wherein he says, “This book is not the obituary of Fundamentalism.”⁶⁴ A few pages later, he calls the rural-urban model invalid, stating that the campaign against evolution may have been led by “rural, southern interests,” but not by fundamentalism.⁶⁵ He also reveals the shocking state of contemporary fundamentalism research, showing that scholars had not verified the rural-urban hypothesis against fundamentalist demographics.⁶⁶

According to Sandeen, fundamentalism should be understood as an offshoot of millenarianism's history, and not the other way around. Typically, fundamentalism scholarship had focused on the apparent five fundamentals, which Sandeen demonstrates are problematic. The five fundamentals were propagated by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and not directly by fundamentalists. They were also mistakenly identified as originating at the 1895 Niagara Bible Conference, an idea spread by Cole's *History of Fundamentalism*. This, however, was incorrect; the five fundamentals began in 1910 and were reaffirmed in 1916. According to Sandeen, students of fundamentalism were familiar with the fundamentals, but not with fundamentalism's roots; they were unacquainted with millenarianism, and this lack of familiarity caused scholars to correlate fundamentalism with old-time religion.⁶⁷

Though focussing on millenarianism, Sandeen also examines biblical literalism based on the millenarian mindset. For millenarians, if the Bible

64. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalisms*, ix.

65. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalisms*, xi.

66. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalisms*, xii.

67. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalisms*, xix, xiv, xv.

contains any error whatsoever, their enterprise is jeopardized, tarnishing their ability to make predictions. Sandeen also connects biblical literalism to Princeton biblical inerrancy, which he argues was largely a response to nineteenth century secularism. Though millenarian biblical literalism predated Princeton inerrancy, the millenarians were ill-equipped to respond to higher criticism, which was left to Princeton theologians.⁶⁸ Still, demand for an inerrant Bible is deemed the “central question of Fundamentalist historiography,”⁶⁹ despite the minority status of inerrantists in the nineteenth century.⁷⁰

The Roots of Fundamentalism is doubtlessly one of the most influential historiographies of fundamentalism; however, according to Huff, Sandeen’s focus on its early forms does not explain fundamentalism’s resurgence in the 1950s onward. Though its roots were in biblical inerrancy and millenarianism, fundamentalism – as Huff illustrates – had become enveloped in a culture war against abortion, homosexuality, evolution, and secularism.⁷¹ To fill this void in the scholarship, George M. Marsden published *Fundamentalism and American Culture* in 1980.

Marsden’s work is partially the result of his disagreement with Sandeen. For Marsden, millenarianism is not the bedrock of fundamentalism, since not all fundamentalists are pre-millenarianists; for example, J. Gresham Machen, a prominent fundamentalist leader, opposed pre-millenarianism. Sandeen also did not consider cultural factors influencing fundamentalism, hence, Marsden explores the impact thereon of anti-liberalism, anti-evolution, ecclesiastical separatism, and moral purity. Early on, Marsden saw anti-worldliness as the factor common to all fundamentalists. But he later adapted his position, perceiving modernism as the central fundamentalist opposition, and this perception has become Marsden’s lasting influence on fundamentalism scholarship.⁷²

As his title suggests, Marsden places fundamentalism in the context of twentieth century American evangelicalism. He is careful, however, to

68. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalisms*, 107, 104, 114.

69. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalisms*, 107.

70. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalisms*, 107.

71. Huff, *What Are They Saying About Fundamentalisms?* 71-72.

72. Huff, *What Are They Saying About Fundamentalisms?* 75, 77. See Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 5.

situate fundamentalism as a particular form of evangelicalism shaped by its temporal and cultural context.⁷³ He then explains the fundamentalist drive: “Evangelicals were convinced that sincere acceptance of this ‘Gospel’ message was the key to virtue in this life and to eternal life in heaven; its rejection meant following the broad path that ended with the tortures of hell.” He suggests that appreciating fundamentalists’ “thought and action” requires that we appreciate their “deep religious commitment” to the Gospel and man’s eternal fate.⁷⁴ Often forgotten, this drive reveals the perceptibly altruistic aims of many fundamentalists – however misguided they may be.

After examining the movement’s early history, Marsden presents fundamentalism as social, political, intellectual, and American phenomena. He does this while continuing to critique Sandeen’s focus on the theology of fundamentalism and lack of concern for the social and cultural influences on the fundamentalist experience.⁷⁵ This experience, for Marsden, is similar to the immigrant experience of arriving in an alien territory with a culture removed from one’s own.⁷⁶ Through these vantage points, Marsden goes beyond Sandeen’s focus on fundamentalist theology and complexifies this once misrepresented and misunderstood movement that has shaped and been shaped by American society, politics, culture, and intellectualism. As a result, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* stands as a magisterial historiography in fundamentalism research.

The Third Stage: Feminist and Comparative Perspectives

Scholars of the third stage delved further into fundamentalism’s cultural underpinnings, utilizing comparative and postmodern methods to better understand historical and contemporary fundamentalism. Amidst these new angles, Betty Deberg, Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, R. Marie Griffith, and Brenda Brasher employed feminist approaches in their fundamentalism scholarship.⁷⁷ Of these four, I will focus on the work of Betty Deberg.

73. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 3.

74. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 3.

75. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 200-202.

76. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 204-205.

77. See Betty Deberg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990); Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993); Marie R. Griffith, *God’s Daughters:*

Deberg's *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (1990) is ground-breaking for its approach. Deberg, unlike previous scholars, focusses on the fundamentalism of common persons and not that of fundamentalist leaders, taking into consideration that the average pew-sitting fundamentalist is unaware of liberal Christianity's intellectual threats. She separates what she calls "official" fundamentalism from "popular" fundamentalism, with the latter being that of the common person.⁷⁸ As she says, "No interpretation that fails to examine fundamentalism's broad, popular appeal can adequately explain the movement."⁷⁹

According to Deberg, there were two principal approaches to fundamentalism scholarship: the religious/theological approach, and the social/cultural approach. Sandeen and Marsden focus on the former by concentrating on fundamentalism's doctrinal concerns. Though Marsden, as Deberg argues, entertains fundamentalism's cultural influences, he is concerned with its theological substructure.⁸⁰ Deberg's concern, in contrast, is with its social and cultural base, especially related to gender and family, since changes with respect to gender roles were major factors in the rise of fundamentalism.⁸¹

Take, for example, the 1898 *Women's Bible* – published by Elizabeth Cady Stanton – which sparked outrage among proto-fundamentalist communities. One beleaguered preacher called any Stanton follower, "an awful creature," stating that "you had better not come near such a reeking lepress. She needs to be washed, and for three weeks to be soaked in carbolic acid, and for a whole year fumigated, before she is fit for decent society."⁸² Without reservation, Deberg is unsympathetic to such rhetoric, arguing that a balanced scholarly view would "do grave injustice to the historical materials themselves," since "[t]he fundamentalists were not objective or balanced when it came to gender."⁸³ With that, she signals a derogating

Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Brenda E. Brasher, *Godly Women: Fundamentalism and Female Power* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1998).

78. Deberg, *Ungodly Women*, 6.

79. Deberg, *Ungodly Women*, 7.

80. Deberg, *Ungodly Women*, 2.

81. Huff, *What Are They Saying About Fundamentalisms?* 80-81.

82. Deberg, *Ungodly Women*, 1.

83. Deberg, *Ungodly Women*, vii.

stance toward early fundamentalists, which would tinge her excursion into an unexplored aspect of the movement.

Global Fundamentalism

Written in the 1990s, *Ungodly Women* was one among many contemporary ventures into fundamentalism. With the rise of reactionary religious movements throughout the world, scholars became increasingly interested in comparing (Christian) fundamentalism to global religions. Propelled by the Iranian Revolution, the comparisons began with Islam, although such had been made much earlier. In fact, the first comparisons began in the 1920s, and one of the first mentions of “Muslim fundamentalists” was made by William Jourdan Rapp in 1925; he wrote an article titled, “Islam Fundamentalists Fight Modernist Trend,” which draws an analogy between the fundamentalist-modernist conflict in the United States and Muslim encounters with modernity. He is perhaps the first author to make a direct connection between fundamentalism and Islam, yet he was not the only author of the 1920s to do so. One year later, Edwin W. Hullinger made a similar point, tying Muslim fundamentalists to conservatism and extreme traditionalism.⁸⁴ The conclusions drawn by Rapp and Hullinger mirror later scholarship surrounding global fundamentalism.

In his text *Antifundamentalism in Modern America*, David Harrington Watt invites readers to imagine a line-graph representing textual mentions of Muslim fundamentalism from the 1920s to the present. The line would be barely visible from 1920-50, after which the line would slowly inch upwards through the 1950s and 1960s before shooting straight up after the 1970s.⁸⁵ It was not, therefore, until the 1980s that scholars began exploring global fundamentalism in depth. For example, Marsden’s *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (1980) acknowledges the global phenomenon, stating that fundamentalist tendencies are not strictly American, or even Christian.⁸⁶ Full-fledged explanations of global fundamentalism followed years later;

84. Edwin W. Hullinger, “Islam’s Ties of Union are Loosening,” *The New York Times*, July 18, 1926, accessed November 26, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/1926/07/18/archives/islams-ties-of-union-are-loosening-danger-of-a-holy-war-wanes-as.html>.

85. Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, 85. Note: these results can be reproduced through Google Book’s Ngram Viewer™ by searching for “Islamic Fundamentalism” or “Muslim fundamentalism.”

86. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 227-228.

one of the more successful is found in Bruce B. Lawrence's *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age*.⁸⁷

Defenders of God (1989) is largely a response to abuses of the term “fundamentalism” and to those denying its global application. In many ways, serious fundamentalism scholarship sought to course-correct misuses of the concept, which were widespread after the Iranian Revolution. Unbound from its evangelical origins, the term became a powerful, rhetorical device – a Devil's word, applicable to all religious dissidents. For journalist Robin Wright, all that is needed to dismiss militant Islamic movements is to deem them fundamentalists.⁸⁸ To counter such abuses, Lawrence examines fundamentalism with remarkable sympathy, considering it not as a “political gambit, to seize public power,” nor as an “economic ploy, to take resources from the privileged,” nor as “a social strategy, to gain visibility and prestige.”⁸⁹ For Lawrence, fundamentalism is shaped by “religiously motivated individuals, drawn together into ideologically structured groups, for the purpose of promoting a vision of divine restoration.”⁹⁰ Fundamentalists are, above all, against modernism. Yet, they *are* moderns, recognizing the changed and changing state of the world – a world where, as Marshall Berman states, “all that is solid melts into air.”⁹¹ Lawrence argues that, because modernism is global, so is fundamentalism. As he sees it, one of the uniting factors for fundamentalists is their scripture, since such encompasses more than religious texts; scripture is also “an appeal to one community as authoritative interpreters of the pure, the sole, the ‘inerrant’ sense of scripture.” In this manner, Lawrence expands the use of inerrancy to more than sacred texts as such.⁹²

He also perceives fundamentalists as a marginalized group, whose marginalization occurs at the hands of the media and academia. For the media, “[f]undamentalists are marketable symbols ... mined for the

87. Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989).

88. Robin Wright, *Sacred Rage: The Wrath of Militant Islam* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1986), 19.

89. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 1.

90. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 1.

91. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 1. See Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1982), 345.

92. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 5-6.

combination of fear, awe, and ridicule that they evoke in the minds of modern readers.”⁹³ According to Lawrence, they do not understand fundamentalism’s complexity, seeing fundamentalists as merely prey on whom a target is painted. For academia, Lawrence says that fundamentalism is “anathema” due to its opposition to modernity. In fact, up until the Iranian Revolution, fundamentalism was understudied and treated as non-threatening.⁹⁴ Academia’s apparent aversion to fundamentalism and religion in general is, Lawrence suggests, due to a prevalent mindset in the humanities that religion is dying, to be replaced by science. Ironically, however, science is the field most populated by religious persons – at least it was when *Defenders of God* was published – according to Robert Bellah.⁹⁵ As Lawrence sees it, academics would rather see fundamentalism disappear, yet it remains and is worth our attention.⁹⁶

Two years after Lawrence’s publication, Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby produced a massive study entitled the *Fundamentalism Project* (1991-1995), which is perhaps the most enduring examination of global fundamentalism, involving hundreds of scholars and spanning five volumes, a documentary, a radio program, and a companion text, each exploring fundamentalist movements from around the world. The first volume concludes with Marty and Appleby declaring the existence of “family resemblances,”⁹⁷ and arguing that fundamentalism is a militant form of traditionalism: the result of traditionalists reacting against real and perceived threats, particularly modernism and its tenets.

In the companion text, Marty and Appleby offer the following definition of fundamentalism:

93. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 3.

94. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 7.

95. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 7. See Robert Bellah, *Religion and America: Spirituality in a Secular Age*, eds. Mary Douglas and Steven M. Tipton (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), ix; additionally, see Rodney Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P.,” *Sociology of Religion* 60 (1999): 264-266.

96. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 8. Also, strict forms of religion are typically those that see the most growth, so fundamentalism will not be disappearing anytime soon; see Laurence R. Iannaccone, “Why Strict Churches Are Growing,” *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 5 (March 1994): 1180-1211.

97. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, “The Fundamentalism Project: A User’s Guide,” in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), ix.

... a distinctive tendency—a habit of mind and a pattern of behavior—found within modern religious communities and embodied in certain representative individuals and movements. Fundamentalism is, in other words, a religious way of being that manifests itself as a strategy by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group.⁹⁸

Though they argue there are shared patterns among fundamentalist groups, Marty and Appleby maintain that fundamentalisms contain “substantive differences.”⁹⁹ For this reason, they employ Ludwig Wittgenstein’s concept of family resemblances, wherein the example of shared characteristics between different games is used. For Wittgenstein, though there are many different *types* of games – board games, Olympic games, card games, etc. – they are all members of the same genus, “game.”¹⁰⁰ Likewise, fundamentalisms have certain commonalities, though each form is distinct. Evangelical fundamentalists accept biblical inerrancy, whereas Catholic fundamentalists believe in papal infallibility, and Islamic fundamentalists adhere to a particular interpretation of an inerrant Qur’an. This utilization of Wittgenstein’s family resemblances is perhaps the *Fundamentalism Project’s* lasting contribution to the field, establishing an effective conceptual framework in which global fundamentalism can be understood.¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, the *Fundamentalism Project* encouraged scholars to expand the horizons of global fundamentalism. Questionable tactics were employed, as fundamentalism’s categorical reach was broadened – not only in relation to global religions but also with respect to its historical origins. Some scholars have located fundamentalism in movements much earlier than twentieth century evangelicalism. For instance, Robert Glenn Howard locates fundamentalism’s origins with Martin Luther, since Howard sees

98. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *The Glory and the Power: The Fundamentalist Challenge to the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 34.

99. Marty and Appleby, *The Glory and the Power*, 35.

100. Similar to games, the members of a family may share certain visual and character traits, such as eyes, hair colour, height, and personality, yet each person has unique characteristics within the same family. See Anthony Kenny, ed., *The Wittgenstein Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 48-49.

101. It is worth mentioning, however, that this use of “family resemblances” in speaking of fundamentalisms did not originate with Marty and Appleby. Examples of this correlation can be found in earlier works, such as Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 100.

the reformer as the cause of pluralist and fundamentalist ideologies.¹⁰² For Howard, fundamentalist ideology is “made possible by Martin Luther’s location of divine authority in the individual experience of the biblical texts.”¹⁰³ This claim incorporates many, if not all, Protestants under the label of fundamentalist, thereby broadening the term’s religious scope and historical roots.

Global fundamentalism has also been a source of academic controversy.¹⁰⁴ Since its inception as a category, it has been questioned and scrutinized with scholars like Watt arguing that fundamentalism is best left in its original evangelical context.¹⁰⁵ While early scholarship fixated on evangelical fundamentalism, especially its cultural and doctrinal particularities, later scholarship has followed the journalistic trend of equating fundamentalism with global religions. In many cases, the development of global fundamentalism as a category has led to a more neutral, mature, nuanced, and sympathetic approach to fundamentalisms; however, the expansion of this category has also led to the distension of fundamentalism’s pejorative connotations, which are no longer limited to evangelicals.

4. Lexical and Taxonomical Problems

Thus far, we have seen fundamentalism’s development from rallying cry to derogatory label through its history, lexical development, and conceptual evolution in academia. In this section, I will examine several lexical and taxonomical issues associated with fundamentalism based on the work of David Watt. I will also examine the work of James Barr, who highlights the problematic nature of defining fundamentalists as strict literalists. To balance these critiques, I will return to Lawrence, who responds to several problems with fundamentalism’s global application.

102. Robert Glenn Howard, “The Double Bind of the Protestant Reformation: The Birth of Fundamentalism and the Necessity of Pluralism,” *Journal of Church and State* 47, no. 1 (2005): 104; 107.

103. Howard, “The Double Bind,” 106.

104. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, “Introduction,” in *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 6.

105. Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, xvii.

Antifundamentalism and Orientalism

In *Antifundamentalism in Modern America* (2017), Watt examines the phenomenon of antifundamentalism, or “a set of conversations (literal and metaphorical) that began in the 1920s and that have continued to the present.”¹⁰⁶ Amidst these conversations, proponents of antifundamentalism have been attempting to assess what fundamentalism is and what threats it poses to society. These conversations have led to the delegitimization of specific religious movements and persons, whose grievances and positions are often ignored.

Watt begins his text by examining the advantages and disadvantages of sustaining fundamentalism’s global application. In his first chapter, he explores the arguments against applying fundamentalism beyond American evangelicalism. For Watt, global fundamentalism is a problematic category, because many purported fundamentalists do not describe themselves as such. This label blurs the lines among fundamentalist groups, compounding differences under the banner of anti-modernism.¹⁰⁷ Watt then explores two issues: the use of fundamentalism as a political tool, and the problem of orientalism.¹⁰⁸

Fundamentalism’s use as a political tool is tied to the notion of antifundamentalism. It is important to note, however, that Watt did not coin this term. It can be found in the *Fundamentalism Project* in an article written by Mark Juergensmeyer, who discusses fundamentalism as an object of fear for much of the Western world. He refers to this fear as “‘fundaphobia’—the irrational fear of fundamentalism.” He then indicates a preference for naming this attitude “antifundamentalism.”¹⁰⁹ According to Juergensmeyer, being accused of fundamentalism is a serious issue, which has led to the delegitimization of religious communities by political entities. Using contemporary examples from Algeria, Israel, and India – wherein governments used this term to justify violating the human rights of supposed fundamentalists – Juergensmeyer demonstrates the dangers of a

106. Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, xii-xiii.

107. Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, 18-20.

108. Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, 28-30.

109. Mark Juergensmeyer, “Antifundamentalism,” in *Fundamentalism Comprehended*, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 354.

pejoratively charged term like fundamentalism.¹¹⁰

Watt also highlights the work of Saba Mahmood, who argues that the *Fundamentalism Project* uses double standards in designating certain nations as fundamentalist hotspots. According to Mahmood, the *Fundamentalism Project* fails to adequately scrutinize nations like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for encouraging fundamentalist movements, which, he argues, is the result of the United States' alliances with these nations. In contrast, the *Fundamentalism Project* focusses greatly on Iran, a prominent threat to American interests.¹¹¹

One of the better arguments against the category of global fundamentalism is that it is orientalist. In fact, this argument is mentioned at the beginning of Marty and Appleby's *The Glory and the Power* as the "best case against the word..."¹¹² For Watt, the use of fundamentalism to describe non-Western religious movements treats the European Enlightenment with "too much deference."¹¹³ This also situates the West as the protagonist, turning Eastern fundamentalist movements into global antagonists. Since the West already encountered fundamentalism in its regions prior to outbreaks in the East, the West is placed on the pedestal of solving the problem of global fundamentalism, which – as implied by this narrative – is now found predominately in the Orient.¹¹⁴ This approach has the effect of relegating fundamentalist movements to the bottom of an advancing society. Fundamentalists are backwards, while proponents of the secular West are forward-thinking.

Inerrancy & Ethnography

As we saw earlier, fundamentalists are often defined as holding literal interpretations of sacred texts. However, according to James Barr, whose analysis is centered on fundamentalism as an evangelical phenomenon, fundamentalists are not true literalists, since literalism is not the root of their hermeneutics. Their true root is biblical inerrancy. Fundamentalists slip in and out of literalism based on their need to maintain the aura of

110. Jeurgensmeyer, "Antifundamentalism," 355-365.

111. Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, 27-28.

112. Marty and Appleby, *The Glory and the Power*, 4.

113. Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, 29.

114. Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, 29.

textual perfection. For Barr, then, it is inerrancy and not literalism that indicates fundamentalism.¹¹⁵ Yet, while many evangelicals adhere to biblical inerrancy in some form – whether knowingly or not – it is difficult to label all inerrantists as fundamentalists. In fact, if we label much of evangelicalism as fundamentalist due to the diffusion of inerrancy, we risk decreasing the term's value and precision.

The same is true of other religions, such as Islam. For Muslims, scriptural perfection is a virtually universal belief,¹¹⁶ and most Muslims perceive the Qur'an as the literal word of God. Though interpretations differ, the general hermeneutic is, thus, centered on inerrancy. Would it then be fair to say that all Muslims are fundamentalists? Muslims are, also, offended by the notion that fundamentalists are the *strict* literalists.¹¹⁷ Does this make non-fundamentalist Muslims not true Muslims? Even Muslims labeled fundamentalists frequently do not consider themselves such. The only religious movements with adherents labeling themselves fundamentalists are found within Protestant Christianity and Mormonism – yet even these individuals are a minority.¹¹⁸

Ethnographic studies in both fundamentalism and evangelicalism have provided insights about the distension of fundamentalist beliefs in broader evangelicalism. Many evangelicals unknowingly hold to the five fundamentals, especially inerrancy, as well as premillennial dispensationalism; yet, most would resist the label fundamentalist.¹¹⁹ This creates a tension in scholarship over whether such individuals can be labeled such, based on their beliefs, or if the term applies only to those who adopt it. If we apply the term's original sense, based on its original context, many who would not call themselves fundamentalist would be labeled such, based on what they believe. However, what they know about this term are its negative connotations, making such a designation unhelpful towards dialogue.

As we have seen, many reference works and scholars define fundamentalists as strict literalists, though fundamentalist hermeneutics

115. James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 40.

116. Malise Ruthven, *Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004), 5; 83.

117. Huff, *What Are They Saying About Fundamentalisms?* 129.

118. Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, 18.

119. See Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* (New York: Oxford UP, 1989), xvii; also see Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004), 15.

are anything but strictly literal. Even if we define fundamentalists as persons adhering to an inerrant form of their tradition or religious text, this definition also poses several problems, since inerrancy is not only the norm in Islam but also in many forms of evangelicalism. Moreover, only select forms of American Protestantism and Mormonism refer to themselves as fundamentalists, making fundamentalism, for the most part, a term labeled on the *other*, rather than a term upheld by those who are so labeled.

Rebuttal: Nominalism and Originism

Lawrence objects to nominalism (i.e., the notion that religious movements can only be named fundamentalists if they call themselves such) and originism (i.e., the notion that fundamentalism cannot be extended beyond its origins in evangelicalism). Against nominalism, Lawrence argues from analogy, revealing the *reductio ad absurdum* of the nominalist position. If we are to restrict the labeling of groups to titles used by the groups themselves, then “the only humanists are those who claim to be humanists.”¹²⁰ Nominalist arguments should also lead to the rejection of secularization and nationalism, since it is mostly academics who use these terms. For Lawrence, this form of argumentation is “tantamount to empirical literalism.”¹²¹ As he sees it, labeling is necessary for comparing one group to another.¹²²

Lawrence then argues that originism leads to the rejection of Christianity and Marxism, except in their places of origin.¹²³ Christianity, by originist logic, should not exist outside of first century Palestine. Moreover, the very notion of *religion* should not be applied to many movements, since the category developed much later than the rise of, for instance, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity; yet few will deny that these movements are religions. For Lawrence, “[p]laces are incidentally significant, not historically decisive in the development of socio-religious movements.”¹²⁴

Like Marty and Appleby, Lawrence sees fundamentalists as sharing

120. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 93.

121. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 94.

122. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 95.

123. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 92.

124. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 93.

certain traits, forming a category applicable across religious divides. For him, fundamentalists are a minority confronting a supposed majority; they are oppositional; they appeal to a “direct, unmediated” scriptural authority; they “generate their own technical vocabulary”; and their ideology is a recent phenomenon, despite their historical antecedents.¹²⁵ Though most of these categories can, in my view, be questioned, that there are commonalities between certain fundamentalisms seems undeniable. As Marty and Appleby say: “Fundamentalists... fight back. That is their mark.”¹²⁶ They fight back against modernization, secularization and all opponents of their traditional ways of life.

Despite his insistence on global fundamentalism, Lawrence maintains that scholars and journalists should be wary of fundamentalism’s pejorative connotations, which is precisely my focus. I am not attempting to argue against the category’s global applicability; I am drawing attention to its abuses and potential for harm. If religion has its place, then so do fundamentalisms, which are not disappearing anytime soon. As a result, we must learn to live with them, instead of perpetuating their griefs and sustaining their perceived otherness.

Conclusion

Fundamentalism is a simple word that has spawned a complex category. On the surface, this term represents a return to the source, a return to the foundations. However, from its history, and its lexical and taxonomical transformation, the term has morphed into a pejorative leveled at pious people of all faiths. It has evolved from a rallying cry for twentieth century evangelicals to a term spanning across global religions. Global fundamentalism as a concept highlights a series of traits common to faiths from around the world; while there are problems with this concept, it is not the concern of this paper. My concern is with the distension of fundamentalism’s pejorative connotations.

Certainly, critiques are not without warrant as there are legitimate concerns with fundamentalisms, particularly with groups that advocate theocratic authoritarianism. This calls for thoughtful critique and

125. Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 100-101.

126. Marty and Appleby, *The Glory and the Power*, 17.

engagement; but such critiques will doubtfully be successful if delivered with prejudice and infused with pejoratives. Still, words have a life of their own. Even if scholars were to limit their use of pejoratives, the words would continue in popular culture. David Harrington Watt best captures the issue when he says, “The problem is with the assumptions, hopes, and habits of mind upon which [the words] rest.”¹²⁷ The problem then is with attitudes toward otherness; attitudes toward those who seemingly have no place at the pluralist’s table. Fundamentalists are reluctant to join the table, yet they should be invited continuously. They deserve the courtesy of inclusion, and this requires that we check our own assumptions and prejudices. For the time being, fundamentalisms are here to stay, so we should make room for discussion instead of demonization, which begins with choosing our words carefully.

127. Watt, *Antifundamentalism*, 173.