



Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction

By Malise Ruthven

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Fundamentalism is seen as the major threat to world peace today, a conclusion impossible to ignore since the events in New York on September 11, 2001. But what does "fundamentalism" really mean?

Since it was coined by American Protestant evangelicals in the 1920s, the use of the term "fundamentalist" has expanded to include a diverse range of radical conservatives and ideological purists, not all religious. Fundamentalism could now mean both militant Israeli settlers as well as the Islamist radicals who oppose them, it can mean Christians, Hindus, animal liberationists, and even Buddhist nationalists. Here, Middle East expert Malise Ruthven investigates fundamentalism's historical, social, religious, political, and ideological roots, and tackles the polemic and stereotypes surrounding this complex phenomena--one that eludes simple definition, yet urgently needs to be understood.

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`Review from previous edition 'Ruthven's careful analysis of the phenomena ... provides a much-needed mental map [from] one of today's most perceptive observers and historians of religion.'

Guardian

`...powerful stuff ... this book is perceptive and important.'

Observer

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Sasthi Brata, Spectator 10/04/2004

`The first clear definition of this indispensable yet misused term.'

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`... an important contribution to the current political and cultural debates about Islam and the West, religious extremism, and the changing identity of supposedly secular societies.'

R. Scott Appleby, University of Notre Dame

About the Author

Malise Ruthven is a freelance writer and journalist, and visiting professor at the University of California, San Diego. A former scriptwriter with the BBC Arabic and World Services, he holds an MA in English Literature and a PhD in Social and Political Sciences from Cambridge University. He is renowned as a commentator on Islam and the Arabic world.

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