

What are fundamentalists, and why don't I like them? Here is a post I published almost exactly four years ago now. My views have not changed!

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### QUESTION:

You note that fundamentalism is dangerous and harmful. How do you define fundamentalism and why do you think it's dangerous?

### RESPONSE:

There are of course actual definitions of "fundamentalism" that you can find in scholarship on religion, but I sense that you're asking more for a rough-and-ready description. Years ago I started defining fundamentalism as "No fun, too much damn, and not enough mental."

When I was a fundamentalist myself (yet to be described) I understood it in a positive way. Originally, in Christian circles, it referred to believers who held on to the "fundamentals" of the faith, which for us included such things as the inspiration of Scripture, the full deity of Christ, the Trinity, the virgin birth, the physical resurrection, and, well, probably a collection of other doctrines. Fundamentalism, for us, was to be differentiated from liberalism, which had sacrificed these basic fundamental doctrines to the gods of modernity. And we would have nothing of it.

Some scholars today understand fundamentalism to be an inordinately conservative branch of a religion (Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, for example) that stresses that it alone has the truth, that insists that everyone agrees with its perspective, and that focuses exclusively on religious issues with no interest in for broader concerns of society such as social justice. I don't agree with that last bit. But I do think that...

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