

AMERICAN FUNDAMENTALISM

Hilary Term 2005 Oxford University – Fridays at noon. Schools

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Fundamentalism is a major force in the world today and its religious and political facets are deeply intertwined. Originally American religious fundamentalism stressed the inerrancy of the Bible and the literal belief in Christ's virgin birth, miracles, deity, substitutionary atonement, resurrection, and the second coming. There are now wider definitions. Today American Fundamentalists are supportive of stronger church and state links, heterosexuality, Israel, creationism, and are anti-ecumenical, anti-Muslim, anti-feminist, anti-secular, and anti-abortion. 'Modernist' thought and critical scholarship on sacred texts are taboo. 'Puritan' piety is strong. This is to be enforced in America by the spiritual rule of the chosen that are sent by God to rule. America is often cast as a 'light unto the nations' and interventions by the American military and her allies are asked for because freedom is 'God's gift for the world.' The roots can be traced to Spanish expansionism, Reformation, English Revolution, and aspects of American theology, politics, and history. There are some close structural parallels to other forms of fundamentalism: exclusivism, certainty, binary cognition, obsession with time, universalized gospel, intolerance of dissent, and firm watch of the boundaries are common features.

The series will be interdisciplinary with political and theological reflections.

OUTLINE as of April 14, 2005

Introduction:	Holy Fire	from the Burning Bush to George W Bush
16 th c.	Europeans	Christopher Columbus, the Penitentes ¹ , John Calvin
17 th c.	Puritans	Oliver Cromwell, John Winthrop, Increase Mather
18 th c.	Awakenings	Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Mother Ann
19 th c.	Rebels	John Nelson Darby, Joseph Smith, John Brown
20 th c.	Politicians	W Wilson, Wm. J Bryan, Pat Robertson, Pat Buchanan
21 st c.	Militants	Jerry Falwell, Roy Moore ² , Tim LaHaye ³ , Tom DeLay ⁴
Future:	Holy Smoke	from Culture Wars to Clash of Civilizations

¹ Sangre de Cristo Mountains 3d Order Franciscans who imitate the sufferings and passion of Jesus.

² Chief Justice Moore tried to monumentalized Ten Commandments in the Alabama Supreme Court

³ At present America's most popular novelist. He has 12 volumes of 'Left Behind' (Rapture) stories.

⁴ Leader of the House of Representatives and '2d most powerful person in Washington after Cheney'