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Religion, Fundamentalism and Ethnicity
A Global Perspective

Jeff Haynes

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Preface

In recent decades, religion has had considerable impact upon politics in many regions of the world. The belief that societies would invariably secularize as they modernize has not been well founded. Technological development and other aspects of modernization have left many people with a feeling of loss rather than achievement. By undermining "traditional" value systems and allocating opportunities in highly unequal ways within and among nations, modernization can produce a deep sense of alienation and stimulate a search for an identity that will give life some purpose and meaning. In addition, the rise of a global consumerist culture can lead to an awareness of relative deprivation that people believe they can deal with more effectively if they present their claims as a group. One result of these developments has been a wave of popular religiosity, which has had far-reaching implications for social integration, political stability and international security.

This paper provides a global perspective on the relation between religion, politics, conflict and identity. Using a wide range of cases from various parts of the world, it examines the complex ways in which religious values, beliefs and norms stimulate and affect political developments and vice versa; the social conditions which give rise to religious movements as well as how such movements are promoted and sustained over time; the relations between religious leaders and followers; and the links between social mobilization and the pursuit of particularist objectives.

The paper contends that the defining characteristic of the relationship of religion and politics in the 1990s is the increasing disaffection and dissatisfaction with established, hierarchical and institutionalized religious bodies. Contemporary religious movements seek instead to find God through personal searching rather than through the mediation of institutions. They also focus on the role of communities in generating positive changes to members' lives through the application of group effort. In this regard, the paper argues that religion's interaction with political issues carries an important message of societal resurgence and regeneration, which may challenge the authority of political leaders and economic élites.

The first part of the paper provides an overview of the relationship between religion and modernization. It surveys the contradictory effects of modernization on social values in different cultural and religious settings. Given the uneven impact of modernization in developing countries, the relationship between religion and politics has always been a close one. Political power is underpinned by religious beliefs and practices, while political concerns permeate to the heart of the religious sphere. Therefore, attempts in many countries to separate politics from religion have been largely unsuccessful, especially as economic crisis and global restructuring undermine previous arrangements for promoting social and political cohesion.

Part two develops a typology of religious movements in order to demonstrate the political significance of religion as a global phenomenon. Four types of movements are highlighted based on whether religion is used as a vehicle of opposition or as an ideology of community development. Groups which link religion to the pursuit of community development are categorized as community-oriented while oppositional movements are classified as culturalist, fundamentalist, and syncretistic. Threats from powerful outsider groups or from unwelcome symptoms of modernization largely sustain the oppositional movements; community movements on the other hand derive their *raison d'être* from state failures in social welfare development.

The remaining parts of the paper provide detailed discussions of the dynamics of these four movements. Culturalist movements emerge when a community, sharing both religious and ethnic affinities, perceives itself as a powerless and repressed minority within a state dominated by outsiders. Culture (of which religion is an important part) is mobilized as part of a wider strategy aimed at achieving self control, autonomy or self government. Cases examined include experiences of Sikhs in Hindu India, the struggles of the peoples of Southern Sudan against Arabization and Islamization, Tibetan Buddhist opposition to the Chinese state and the African-American movement of self-development, the Nation of Islam.

Syncretistic religious movements are said to be found predominantly among certain rural dwellers in parts of the Third World, especially in Africa. They involve a fusion or blending of religions and feature a number of elements found in more traditional forms of religious association, such as ancestor worship and healing practices. Sometimes ethnic differentiation may form part of syncretism. Religious and social beliefs supply the basic elements for building group solidarity in the face of threats from outside forces, such as the state, big land-owners, transnational enterprises or foreign governments. The paper examines several African, Latin American and Caribbean cases where such threats have given rise to syncretistic religions, including the Napramas of north-eastern Mozambique, the Lakwena and Lenshina movements in Uganda and Zambia, the cult of Olivorismo in the Dominican Republic and Sendero Luminoso in Peru.

Religious fundamentalist movements aim to reform society by changing laws, morality, social norms and political configurations in accordance with religious tenets, with the goal of creating a more traditional society. The paper highlights two broad categories of fundamentalist groups: those based on the Abrahamic "religions of the book" and nationalist-oriented derivatives of Hinduism and Buddhism. For the first type, scriptural revelations relating to political, moral and social issues form the corpus of fundamentalist demands. Their political orientations vary considerably: some are deeply conservative (US Protestant evangelicals), some are reformist or revolutionary (many Islamist groups), some are essentially moralistic (Protestant evangelicals in Latin America), and some are xenophobic or racist (such as the banned Kach and Kahane Chai groups in Israel). In the absence of any clear set of scriptural norms, Hindu and Buddhist fundamentalisms are indistinguishable from movements with aspirations for national or cultural purity.

Community-oriented movements often emerge from attempts to improve community livelihood; these tend to be popularly driven and may have either conservative or reformist orientation, and are found typically, but not exclusively, in Latin America. Especially prominent in this regard are local community groups, mostly Roman Catholic in inspiration, which have grown in importance over the last 25 years in Latin America, the Philippines and in parts of Africa. Many derive their ideas from the tenets of radical liberation theology. In addition, there has been a strong growth in several Latin American and African countries of popular Protestant evangelical churches. What all these groups have in common is that local self-help groups are formed to improve qualitatively communities' lives at a time when central and local governments are unable to satisfy popular developmental needs.

Jeff Haynes is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Politics and Government at London Guildhall University. At UNRISD, production of this paper was co-ordinated by Yusuf Bangura.

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Introduction: Religion and Modernization

One of the most resilient ideas about societal development after the Second World War was that nations would inevitably secularize as they modernized. The idea of modernization was strongly linked to urbanization, industrialization and to an accompanying rationalization of "irrational" views, such as religious beliefs and ethnic separatism. Loss of religious faith and secularization dovetailed with the idea that technological development and the application of science to overcome perennial social problems of poverty, environmental degradation, hunger and disease would result in long-term human progress.

But with the decline in the belief in the efficacy of technological development to cure all human ills came a wave of popular religiosity with political ramifications. Examples include: the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1978-1980; Christian fundamentalists' involvement in political and social issues in the United States; the recent growth of Protestant evangelical sects in Central and South America which helped to elect two "born again" presidents in Guatemala; internecine conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India, between Buddhists and Hindus in Sri Lanka, and between Muslims and Christians in the former Yugoslavia; the emergence in India of Sikh separatists in Punjab and of Muslim militants in Jammu-Kashmir; religious syncretistic groups in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere whose aim was community protection; and the impact of Jewish fundamentalist groups on Israel's political configurations, especially in relation to the Palestinians.

To analyse and explain this wave of apparently unconnected developments we need to confront at the outset an issue consistently ignored in political analysis: How do religious values, norms and beliefs stimulate and affect political developments and vice versa? For example, historical analysis would point to the close relationship over time between the top hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church and successive less-than-democratic governments in Latin America, yet over the last 20 years (i.e., during periods of dictatorial rule) some Church officials emerged as champions of democracy, vocal in opposing military dictatorships. Senior members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, on the other hand, retained their roles within the ruling triumvirate along with senior military figures and big landowners and capitalists. How do we explain the contemporary divergence of views between senior Catholic figures and many priests on the ground in Latin America? A similar process occurred among followers of Islam throughout the Muslim world (i.e., some 50 countries stretching from Morocco to Indonesia). Senior Islamic figures remained close to secular rulers, while political challenges to the *status quo* were led and co-ordinated by lower- and middle-ranking Muslims. A similar type of schism was observable in Thailand and Myanmar (Burma) where senior Buddhists were often supportive of military (-supported) régimes, while junior figures attacked them for their corruption and political incompetence. A common denominator in these events was senior religious figures' close relationships with secular political and economic élites. Those closest to the people, on the other hand — those involved in religious issues at community level — found themselves responding to popular pressures for change which cut across horizontal class stratifications, vertical ethnic or regional differences, and the urban-rural divide. What emerged was a serious rift between rulers and ruled, where religion was often a focal point for demands for change.

This paper seeks to shed light upon the relationship between religion, politics, conflict and identity in the contemporary period. The focus will predominantly be on mass culture rather than élite preferences because no states are governed by actual or claimed theocratic régimes apart from a handful in the Muslim world (Saudi Arabia, Iran,

Afghanistan, the Sudan). Opposition groups, on the other hand, frequently include religious figures among their leaders. In summary, the arguments presented are: a) that the effects associated with modernization — i.e., socio-economic and political change involving urbanization, industrialization and centralization of government — are crucial to an understanding of the political role of religion in the current era; b) that religion — far from fading from political relevance — has on the contrary assumed an important — although variable — mobilizing role in many cultures; and c) that the nature of a religious vehicle will not only be accountable by reference to structural and systemic attributes and developments, but will also reflect the particular characteristics of the culture which produces and uses it.

In this paper the term "religion" is used in two distinct, yet related, ways. First, in a material sense it refers to religious establishments (i.e. institutions and officials) as well as to social groups and movements whose *raisons d'être* are to be found within religious concerns. Examples include the conservative Roman Catholic organization, Opus Dei, the reformist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) of Algeria, and the Hindu-chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party of India. Second, in a spiritual sense, religion pertains to models of social and individual behaviour that help believers to organize their everyday lives. In this sense, religion relates to the idea of transcendence, i.e., it relates to supernatural realities; with sacredness, i.e., as a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy; and with ultimacy, i.e., it relates people to the ultimate conditions of existence.

Because of the importance placed here on the explanatory value of the role of modernization, it may be appropriate at the outset to say a little about it. Throughout the Third World, with the important exception of post-revolutionary states such as China and Iran, the general direction of social change is usually referred to as either "modernization" of "Westernization". That is, social change is understood to lead to significant shifts in the behaviour and prevailing choices of social actors, with such particularistic traits as ethnicity or caste losing importance in relation to more generalistic attributes such as nationalism. Growth of formal organizations (e.g. political parties) and procedures (e.g. "the rule of law"), it is claimed, reduce the central role of clientelism and patronage. In short, some believe that the advent of social change corresponding to a presumed process of modernization will lead to a general jettisoning of older, traditional values and the adoption of other, initially alien, practices. In many respects, however, the adoption of Western traits in many Third World states is rather skin deep: Western suits for men rather than traditional dress, the trappings of statehood — flag, constitution, legislature, etc. — a Western *lingua franca*, and so on. The important point is that social change will not be even throughout a society; social and political conflicts are highly likely owing to the patchy adoption of modern practices. Social change destabilizes, creating a dichotomy between those who seek to benefit from wholesale change and those who prefer the *status quo*. New social strata arise whose position in the new order is decidedly ambiguous. Examples include recent rural-urban migrants in Middle Eastern, African, Latin American and other Third World societies who find themselves between two worlds, often without an effective or appropriate set of anchoring values. Such people are particularly open to political appeals based on religious precepts.

Generally, religion is an important source of basic value orientations. It may have a powerful impact upon politics within a state or region, especially in the context of ethnicity, culture or fundamentalism. Ethnicity relates to the shared characteristics of a racial or cultural group. Religious belief may reinforce ethnic consciousness and inter-ethnic conflict, especially in the Third World (but not only there: think of Northern Ireland or the former Yugoslavia). Religious fundamentalism, on the other hand, connotes a "set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive

identity as a people or group" in response to a real or imagined attack from those who apparently threaten to draw them into a "syncretistic, areligious, or irreligious cultural milieu" (Marty and Scott Appleby, 1993:3). Sometimes such defensiveness may develop into a political offensive which seeks to alter the prevailing social, political and, on occasions, economic realities of state-society relations.

Religion relates to politics in ways which are themselves linked to the particular historical and developmental trajectories of individual societies, whether traditional or modern. In traditional societies the relationship between religion and politics is always a close one. Political power is underpinned by religious beliefs and practices, while political concerns permeate to the heart of the religious sphere. Rulers are not only political heads: they are also religious leaders, whose well-being is closely linked to their people's health and welfare.

Modernization often leads to a high degree of secularization and a practical although not necessarily symbolic separation of politics and religion at the state level. The process is not, however, always complete or clear-cut. For example, Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom is a constitutional ruler who is also formally the head of the Church of England. In practice, she is much less politically powerful than most state presidents; from a religious point of view her role is practically moribund, yet symbolically it still has some importance. King Hassan II of Morocco, on the other hand, is imbued with a high degree of religious authority which ramifies into political standing. His religious authority derives from his role as *Al Amir al Mumineen*: Commander of the Faithful. Many Moroccans believe that he is a direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammad. King Hassan uses his popular religious standing to offset challenges to his position from a growing Islamist (i.e., seeking Islamicization of society by political means) threat. He built one of the world's largest mosques, which opened in August 1993, as a way of demonstrating his piety.

The Saudi monarch, King Fahd, also has a significant religious title: "Protector of the Holy Places" — Mecca and Medina. Yet, he protects them as the head of a modern state rather than as leader of a religious community alone. For King Fahd, the role of religion (in an institutional sense) in the upholding of his power is limited: there is no elected assembly, no written constitution, and no advisory body of religio-legal scholars (*ulama*) to give the king's authority an Islamic gloss. In Saudi Arabia, there is no public scrutiny of decision-making and political processes at all. Fahd rules by way of his own absolutist political and tribal authority rather than because of his religious credentials, although the latter are useful in bolstering his position.

Somewhere in the middle of the two extremes — a virtual absence of religious authority (Queen Elizabeth) and a high degree of it (Kings Fahd and Hassan) — is King Bhumipol Adulyadej of Thailand. Theravada Buddhism is the state religion according to the constitution of 1968. King Bhumipol must profess and defend the Buddhist *dharma* (the moral and physical order of the state) and the community of monks (*sangha*). He is, however, in the position of needing to reach a *modus vivendi* with the military because of its traditional role as power broker.

Monarchical systems, often with a connotation of traditional forms of rule, are of course relatively rare in the late twentieth century. Much more common are political systems whose leading bodies have authority derived from politicians' ability to win and hold on to power. The current norm is for national political leaders and governments to be formally unconnected with one particular set of religious beliefs. Yet over the last quarter century or so, religion — in both material and spiritual senses — appears to have enjoyed a global renaissance. Sometimes this was in the face of official attempts to diminish its

stature, as in the former Eastern European communist countries where the object of the state was social engineering — the creation of ideologically new people; sometimes it was an apparently surprising development in the face of modernization and socio-economic change, as in Western Europe and North America.

A Typology of Political Religion

> Attempts to salvage the secularization model have interpreted evidence of burgeoning religiosity in many contemporary political events to mean that we are witnessing merely a **fundamentalist, antimodernist backlash against science, industrialization and liberal Western values** ... Religious fervour is often dismissed as **ethnic hostility** ..., typically explained away as an isolated exception to unremitting trends of secularization and seldom recognized as part of a larger global phenomenon (Sahliyeh, 1990:19; emphases added).

The quotation suggests two areas where religion is of particular importance in understanding political and social developments: ethnicity issues and "religious fundamentalism". Yet this is only part of the story: we also need to be aware of the political importance of religious syncretism and of community-oriented religious groups (whose position may be bolstered by a national religious hierarchy's institutional voice of opposition during dictatorship), in order to understand fully what has been happening in recent times in the sphere of interaction between religion and politics.

Four broad types of religion-inspired entities — "culturalist", "syncretistic", "fundamentalist", "community-oriented" — have an impact upon politics. **Culturalist groups** emerge when a community, sharing both religious and ethnic affinities, perceives itself as a powerless and repressed minority within a state dominated by outsiders. The mobilization of the opposition group's culture (of which religion is an important part) is directed towards achieving self-control, autonomy or self-government. Examples include Sikhs in India, southern Sudanese Christian peoples (such as the Dinka and the Nuer fighting both Islamization and Arabization), Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhists in China, Muslim Palestinians living in Israel's occupied territories, Bosnian Muslims in former Yugoslavia, radical Muslims in Britain, and followers of the American radical, Louis Farrakhan, and his organization, the Nation of Islam. In each case, the religion followed by the ethnic minority provides part of the ideological basis for action against representatives of a dominant culture whom the minority perceives aims to undermine or to eliminate their individuality.

A second type of religious entity, found predominantly among certain rural dwellers in parts of the Third World, especially sub-Saharan Africa, are religious **syncretistic groups**, i.e., those involving a fusion or blending of religions. They typically feature a number of elements found in more traditional forms of religious association, such as ancestor worship, healing and shamanistic practices. Sometimes ethnic differentiation forms an aspect of syncretism. A syncretistic community uses both religious and social beliefs to build group solidarity in the face of a threat from outside forces — often, but not invariably, the state. Examples include the cult of Olivorismo in the Dominican Republic and, according to some, Sendero Luminoso in Peru, whose ideology, a variant of Maoism, also utilizes aspects of indigenous (i.e., pre-Christian) cultural-religious beliefs to attract peasants in Ayacucho; the Napramas of north-eastern Mozambique who combine traditional and Roman Catholic beliefs, and were temporarily successful in defeating the South African-supported guerrilla movement, the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) in the early 1990s; and the two "Alices" — Lakwena and Lenshina — who led syncretistic movements in Uganda and Zambia respectively,

involving a fusion of mainstream Christian faith and traditional beliefs, against their governments in pursuit of regional autonomy.

Third, **religious fundamentalists**, feeling their way of life under threat, aim to reform society in accordance with religious tenets — to change the laws, morality, social norms and sometimes the political configurations of their country. They seek to create a traditionally oriented, less modern(ized) society. Fundamentalists tend to live in population centres — or are at least closely linked with each other by electronic media. Fundamentalists fight against governments because the latter's jurisdiction encompasses areas which the former hold as integral to the building of an appropriate society, including education, employment policy (of men rather than women) and the nature of society's moral climate. Fundamentalists struggle against both "nominal" co-religionists whom they perceive as lax in their religious duties and against members of opposing religions whom they perceive as evil, even satanic. Examples of fundamentalist groups are to be found among followers of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism — the Abrahamic "religions of the book" — and, some would argue, among Hindus and Buddhists as well.

Finally, **community-oriented** groups utilize aspects of their religious faith to inspire themselves primarily toward self-help improvements in their lives: this may or may not involve overt conflict with government. Especially prominent in this category are local community groups, mostly Roman Catholic in inspiration, which have mushroomed over the last 25 years in Latin America, the Philippines and in parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Many — but not all — derive their ideas from the tenets of radical liberation theology. In addition, due to the oppression associated with the dictatorships which were common in Latin America until recently, national religious hierarchies — such as the Catholic church in Chile — may emerge as a highly significant source of opposition which is capable of offering a degree of sustained resistance, seeking to protect local communities from the depredations of oppressive government.

These four broad categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, some fundamentalist groups may also be community oriented, while a number of culturalist groups may also be syncretistic. The purpose of differentiating between them in what is inevitably a somewhat ideal fashion is to seek to identify the nature of their relationship with other religious or ethnic groups and with government. By separating the four types of religious groups it is possible to arrive at some conclusions relating to the way in which each copes with the stresses and strains of modernization, as well as their potential for conflict with others. The table on the following page sets out in schematic form the relationships which each has with government

Types of Religious Groups and Political Interaction

	Culturalist	Syncretist	Fundamentalist	Community-Oriented
Objective	To use cultural separateness to seek to achieve autonomy in relation to centralized state. Examples: Sikhs, Tibetans	To achieve higher political standing within national culture of diverse groups. Examples: Napramas, Holy Spirit Movement	To protect self-proclaimed groups of the "religiously pure" against governmental attempts to belittle religion. Examples: Gush Emunim, Hamas, Islamic Salvation Front (FIS)	To direct community activities for enhancement of local groups' self-interest. Examples: Basic Christian Communities
Perceptions of state and society	Aggregation of diverse groups with state structure dominated by one particular group	Society comprises diverse groups with one or a few often dominating at state level	Society is dichotomized between "believers" and "non-believers". State aims to extend its power at the cost of believers'	Society comprises diverse interests. Local groups need to be aided so that self-interest can be protected and furthered
Perception of role of government	To prevent the full flowering of diversity	Seen as hostile or indifferent	Regarded as seeking to undermine religion's role in society	Seen as hostile or indifferent to plight of local communities
Role in political process	May use vehicle of political party if government permits; non-constitutional means may also be employed	Will often remain outside any formal political process pursuing goals through direct action, negotiation and lobbying	May fight elections if permitted. In addition, a wide range of means of gaining political ends may be employed	Formally uninvolved although activists may ally themselves with most progressive political parties
Citizen participation	Active participation of group members will be encouraged by group leaders in seeking political goals	Individual interests seen as synonymous with community goals	Individual interests seen as subordinate to the interests of the religious entity	Popular participation essential to offset élite dominance of politics and society
Tactics to achieve objectives	Any means necessary considered - constitutional or non-constitutional - including terrorism	Defensive mobilization of community interests which may become more aggressive	Depending on the ideology of the fundamentalist group most tactics would be regarded as legitimate	Lobbying of political élites, and as widespread as possible popular mobilization

Religious Mobilization and Political Action

Each of the four categories of religious movement identified above has two factors in common. First, leaders of each utilize religious precepts to present a message of hope and a programme of action to putative followers, which may have a political impact. Second, such religious movements tend to be inherently oppositional in character; their leaders

capitalize upon pre-existing dissatisfaction with the *status quo* in order to focus and direct organized societal opposition to the *status quo*. It is important to note, however, that not all of the four groups target the governing régime in an overtly politicized manner. Fundamentalist and culturalist groups have as their *raison d'être* an inherent antipathy to government; community-oriented and syncretistic groups, on the other hand, tend to be more diffuse in character, often rurally-based and more concerned with self-help issues than with emphasizing straightforward opposition to government policies. This section of the paper examines the relationship between religious leaders and followers, in the context of the four identified categories, in order to suggest how support is gained and maintained for the objective of societal, political and religious change.

The character and impact of fundamentalist doctrines is located within a nexus of moral and social issues revolving around state-society interactions. The main progenitor of recent fundamentalist movements has been a perception on the part of both leaders and followers that their rulers are performing inadequately and, often, corruptly. Religious fundamentalism is often (but not always: Buddhist and Hindu "fundamentalism" are exceptions) strongly related to a critical reading of religious texts, and the relating of "God's words" to believers' perception of reality. The significance of this from a political perspective is that it supplies already restive peoples with a ready "manifesto" of social change leading to a more desirable goal, which their leaders use both to berate their secular rulers and to propose a programme for radical reform of the *status quo*.

It is relatively easy for fundamentalist leaders to gain the support of those who feel that in some way the development of society is not going according to either God's will or a community's interests. Yet fundamentalism appeals to different groups for different reasons at different times. The issue of contemporary Christian fundamentalism in the United States and Islamic fundamentalism in Britain has already been alluded to: in both cases, dissatisfaction with the way that society appears to be developing is at the root of the fundamentalist appeal. Although it is impossible to deal adequately with all aspects of religious fundamentalism in the space available in the current paper, a few remarks must suffice to explicate the general outlines of the political relationship between leaders and led, and of the impact of their programmes upon state-society relations.

Of greatest political import among fundamentalist groups are those embedded in an Islamic context. Some propose (or practise) armed struggle to wrest power from government, some believe in incremental change through the ballot box, others seek to achieve their goals by way of a combination of extra-parliamentary struggle, societal proselytization and governmental lobbying. Despite differences in tactics, Islamic fundamentalist groups share two broad ideas: that politics and religion are inseparable and that *sharia* law must be applied to all Muslims — whether voluntarily or by force. Many Islamic fundamentalists believe that Muslims as a group are the focal point of a conspiracy involving Zionists and imperialists whose aim jointly is to wrest Muslim lands and resources (especially oil). American transnational corporations' control over Middle Eastern oil, and Israel's denial of full rights for its (largely Muslim) Arab Palestinian constituency, provide grist to the mill of Islamic fundamentalists' claims of conspiracy to belittle and deprive Muslims.

Militant Islamic groups recruit most of their members from a range of professions and backgrounds; they tend to come from lower-middle or middle class backgrounds and are to be found predominantly among teachers, university students and graduates (especially from scientific and technical backgrounds), military and police officers, and shopkeepers. Many live in urban areas with a recent history of a rural past. The arguments and appeals of the leaders are couched in theological language, but the chief concerns of followers are probably more prosaic: social and economic goals predicated upon fundamental political

change. In other words, bolstering and strengthening the overtly theological and religious terminology are a range of basic political issues and socio-economic grievances which account for the widespread political support in the Middle East and elsewhere for Islamic groups' programmes and policies. Islamic fundamentalist groups seek participation in what are essentially closed political and economic systems dominated by an often cohesive political and economic élite, including the upper echelons of the military (Bromley, 1994).

Islamic movements in several Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt, Jordan, Algeria and Tunisia, have registered electoral successes in recent times. Islamists in these countries (with the exception, controversially, of Algeria) have recently gained seats in legislatures, which has also helped to sustain public support for their movements' aims and objectives. The effects of this have been twofold: on the one hand, pressure is kept up against the governing élites — which may lead to further concessions — while, on the other hand, Islamist victories help both to sustain the support of the existing followers while making it more plausible for others to add their weight to the fundamentalist campaign for change. Practical steps to increase societal influence include the staging of demonstrations which may have a number of targets: the ubiquitous International Monetary Fund-supported economic structural adjustment programmes; Israel's treatment of the Palestinians; the failure to implement (or implement quickly enough) the incorporation of *sharia* law into the legal system; and the claimed corruption of political office holders.

Islamic fundamentalist campaigns are directed against both "lax" co-religionists and a governing élite. Culturalist campaigns, on the other hand, seek to further one particular cultural or ethnic group in relation to either state power or that of other groups within the state. The driving force for such movements is a striving for greater autonomy and a larger slice of the "national cake" in relation to other groups which are perceived to be enjoying more than their fair share. India has become the locus of a number of culturalist challenges to the *status quo*. During the 1980s, politicization of communal tensions expanded into rural areas where they had been more or less unknown before; they became especially pronounced in the south of the country and in Jammu-Kashmir. Moves towards separation and autonomy within Indian society were accompanied by an increase in communal violence. Developing from isolated incidents involving only limited numbers of combatants, over the last few years increasingly serious, large-scale clashes have erupted between communal groups. In the 1980s, such communal violence came to characterize relations between Sikhs and Hindus, through terrorist acts on the part of Sikhs and, in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984, Hindu destruction of Sikh life and property in many northern Indian cities. Political support in Punjab, the Sikh homeland which Sikh militants call "Khalistan" became polarized among parties and groups on the basis of religion, as central governments successively demonstrated extreme reluctance to concede Sikh demands for greater autonomy and decentralization of power within the federal system.

Syncretistic religious movements are commonly found in sub-Saharan Africa. During the colonial era, such movements flourished in the rural areas in the context of widespread dissatisfaction with aspects of colonial rule. On occasion, erstwhile foes — such as the Shona and the Ndebele in colonial Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) — combined to resist British colonialism. Religious identification was an important facet of such organization. Spirit mediums used "medicines" to enhance "warriors" martial efforts. They created a national network of shrines to provide an agency for the transmission and co-ordination of information and activities, a structure which was re-established during the independence war of the 1970s. The use of medicine also helped galvanize the anti-colonial Maji-Maji rebellion of 1905-1907 in German controlled Tanganyika. The diviner and prophet,

Kinjikitili, gave his followers medicine which was supposed to render them invulnerable to bullets. He anointed local leaders with the *maji* ("water") which helped to create solidarity among about 20 different ethnic groups and encouraged them to fight together in a common anti-European cause. In northern Uganda, the cult of Yakan amongst the Lugbara, which also centred on the use of magic medicine, galvanized the Lugbara in their short war against Europeans in 1919 (Allen, 1991:379-380). The list of such religio-political movements could be extended; the point however is already hopefully clear: many cults arose, led by prophets, stimulated by colonialism and the social changes to which it led. They employed local religious beliefs as a basis for anti-European protest and opposition.

After colonialism, similar cults continued to appear: clearly their existence could not only be explained by the stresses and strains occasioned by colonial rule. The beliefs associated with the followers of syncretistic leaders, such as Alice Lenshina and Joseph Kony in Zambia in the 1950s and 1960s, and the violence these beliefs engendered, should be located within a general background of upheaval which occurred as a result of the end of colonial rule (Allen, 1991:379). They can be explained as a response to extreme social trauma, a manifestation of collective despair at an unwelcome political outcome. As colonialism waxed and waned, the spread of both Christianity and Islam throughout sub-Saharan Africa continued apace. Lenshina and Kony skilfully fashioned an ideology of resistance which used a blend of both pre-Christian and Christian religious beliefs to create a potent mobilizational force. What these examples suggest is that in many rural areas of Africa threatened by crisis and the problem of profound social instability — provided there is a sufficient degree of communal solidarity — prophet-led resistance, whether to a colonial or post-colonial state or rebel attack, will succeed in organizing communities in self-defence. Given the lack of clear class differentiation in many rural African societies, the appeal of religious syncretist ideologies has a wide currency. Oppressed and defeated peoples turned to the metaphysical in pursuit of their struggle against outside control. What seems clear is that such movements were not merely a reaction either to colonialism or to discrete post-colonial political developments. Rather, they were concerned with cultural, regional, ethnic, political and economic tensions which existed before colonialism (and which the latter helped to politicize), and which resurfaced in the post-colonial epoch when one group sought to achieve hegemony over others. Groups that resorted to religious symbolism as political ideology were generally those which not only felt that they had been mistreated or abandoned by government, but had also traditionally been marginalized by both colonial and post-colonial political and economic structures and processes.

The remaining category of religious expression is the community-oriented groups found most typically, but not exclusively, among the Catholic population of Latin America. In recent times, the spread of Protestantism in the region has facilitated the growth of evangelical community groups which function as conduits of solidarity and mobilization. The origins of the Catholic Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) can be traced back further, to the moves towards popular community development which developed from the early 1960s, encouraged by radicalized clergy at the grassroots. Such priests organized their followers for self-help and spiritual purposes, guided by a vision of the Christian promise of redemption which directly linked the temporal sphere with the spiritual. Linked to Paulo Freire's contemporaneous literacy campaigns, social change in the present was seen as integral to people's long-range spiritual redemption.

Concretely, this meant the full participation of ordinary people in the shaping of their own lives. Profound dependence and passivity had to be replaced by full participation and self-determination in the economic and political spheres. To achieve these goals, radical priests became spokesmen for a broad political programme with two main aims:

participatory democracy and practical development to deliver desirable social goods, including electricity, schools, health posts, clean water, roads and latrines. BCCs occasionally produced leaders for mass movements, such as trade unions and the Brazilian Labour Party, which were important in the process of popular mobilization that ultimately helped to undermine the credibility and viability of the country's military dictatorship, forcing it to hand over power to elected civilians in 1985 (Medhurst, 1989:25).

The contribution that the BCCs made to the democratic transition in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s has been the subject of considerable debate. Different perspectives may be summed up as follows: first, those on the secular left-wing, perhaps exhibiting a doctrinal unwillingness to believe that anything progressive can result from religiously-inspired initiatives, tend to dismiss the groups as largely ineffectual agents of social change. A second analytical focus sees the BCCs as having a primarily secular impact in the electoral sphere, as nuclei of support for progressive political parties. Third, for those attracted to the theology of liberation, BCCs represent the seeds of a new, more just and fraternal society, helping to transform societies from the bottom up through a variety of liberating practices. A final interpretation sees their role in more complex and abstract terms: the groups' primary contribution to democratization should be seen in their ability to forge a spirit of Tocquevillian enlightened self-interest among participants, forging a citizenry aware of its political rights and duties (Roelofs, 1988:559). BCCs thus represent a number of discernible socio-political orientations which differ depending on the wider state-society context.

Typically, BCCs are small, face-to-face groups of 15 to 20 families (20-40 people), frequently bonded by physical proximity and poverty. They meet periodically, perhaps once a fortnight or once a month. Because of a serious shortage of Catholic religious professionals on the ground in Latin America, priests' efforts have been focused on getting the basic communities to operate on their own. In practice, this has meant that BCCs demonstrate a wider diversity in both religious beliefs and roles and practices than many accounts suggest. Even so, BCCs have three common functions. First, bible study is usually what brings the communities into existence. The bible may of course be interpreted from either a fundamentalist perspective or from a reformist viewpoint. In other words, the bible can be used as a justification either to attack the *status quo* or to support it; bible study *per se* is free of ideology. Sessions may last an hour or so and involve the reading of selected passages and the unrehearsed discussion of them based on personal experience and reflection. These discussions are often combined with equally unrehearsed prayer and some liturgical experimentation, and perhaps a communal meal. Second, communal action is ubiquitous, often comprising group projects with educational or health purposes, to improve the local environment. A third common aim of the BCCs, as we have already noted, is to change people's self-consciousness. Sometimes, as in Chile, there is little need to develop people's self-consciousness or even to use bible study as a means of achieving politicization. It was unfortunately only too clear to many poor people that the exercise of power in the country was for the benefit of a small proportion of the total population.

The political orientation of BCCs is obviously linked to the types of people who join them, and their precise functions vary according to the nature of the régime under which they must operate. In Chile, for example, an increasingly politically repressive and economically stringent series of measures (whose net effect was seriously to disadvantage the poor) led to a radicalization of the local BCCs. Many became vehicles for those who wished to change society to empower the poor, those who were unrepresented — or at least seriously under-represented — in the power hierarchy. During the authoritarian rule of General Augustus Pinochet's junta (1973-1990) members of local BCCs angered

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elements in the government and its supporters. Verbal attacks began to appear in the government-controlled media by 1977, charging that the Chilean BCCs' umbrella group, the Vicaria de la Solidaridad (Vicariate of Solidarity), harboured communist sympathizers and received foreign money to support political dissidents in Chile. As a result, local BCC members were harassed. Foreign priests were frequently perceived as politically undesirable by Pinochet's régime: between 1973 and 1979, nearly 400 foreign priests were expelled from Chile, precipitating a net decline of over 10 per cent in the total clergy (Smith, 1982:343).

The most dynamic period in many BCCs' existence was during the long periods of military rule in Latin America in the 1970s and early 1980s. According to Rudolfo Cardenal in his assessment of BCCs in El Salvador:

> The primary factor in the base Christian communities was the characteristic awareness of having overcome the alienating aspects of traditional popular religiosity. They rejected not what was popular, but rather the separation of religious values from the real and distressing problems of life which, furthermore, they discovered opposed popular Christian religiosity (1990:245).

In other words, in El Salvador during military rule, BCCs became vehicles of liberation theology in the absence of alternative means of mobilization. In conservative Colombia, on the other hand, Catholic bishops vigorously attacked democratization within the churches, reserving special fire for liberation theology, the "popular Church" and autonomous BCCs (Levine, 1990:26). Socialist-oriented Nicaragua during the 1980s was the home of numerous BCCs, most of which were wedded to a radical vision of a Christian-socialist future. A few others were politically opposed to the régime. Nevertheless, the Sandinistas saw the BCCs as political allies and, as a result, encouraged them (Serra, 1985:151-74).

A primary benefit of the BCCs should be seen in the contribution that they make to the establishment of a sense of citizenship — primarily among lower-class participants — rather than necessarily in their impact upon the national political scene *per se*. At the same time, they are almost invariably vehicles for conscientization: the poor, by far the largest participants in the BCCs, long enveloped in the patron-client mentality that has traditionally defined class relations in Catholic societies are, for the first time, co-operating to create a world of their own making. In working together with pastoral agents to press local officials for infrastructural improvements such as sewers, streetlights and land reform, for example, they are learning that sometimes the best way to achieve their goals is not by appealing as individuals to powerful figures and bureaucratic authorities, but by working together for the community as a whole. In an analysis focusing on 22 BCCs located in Brazil's large and dynamic Archdiocese of São Paulo, Hewitt shows them to be maintaining an effective presence on the Brazilian political scene (1990:139-52). Nevertheless, his data suggest that the role of the groups is changing in such a way that the BCCs *per se* may fade as *bona fide* agents of social and political transformation. Such a change is attributable, in part, to the rejuvenation of democratic politics in Brazil, which has led to people's attentions being focused on other avenues to socio-political change. Yet such a conclusion may be open to doubt: the growth of community Protestant evangelical groups in Latin America evoked below may be, in part, a result of the ineffectiveness of legitimate avenues to political and economic change which the re-introduction of democratic systems led people to expect.

What is clear is that Christian community groups cannot easily be pigeon-holed ideologically in a uniform manner: socially progressive groups exist side by side with those of a conservative orientation. Some of the most politically radical of the BCCs were

to be found in Chile during the period of the Pinochet-led dictatorship. They served as solidarity organizations, providing a haven for many who had lost their jobs because of opposition to the junta. In São Paulo, Brazil on the other hand, BCCs showed a tendency to become vehicles for middle class political activity, especially before the return to democracy in Brazil in 1985. Since the return to democratic politics in Latin America, there has been a strong growth in several countries of popular Protestant evangelical churches. Critics charge that these groups are no more than American "Trojan horses": they are the most recent examples of an increasingly determined attempt on the part of the United States to submerge Latin American culture beneath a layer of alien, born-again Christian propaganda. The scope of the present paper does not allow a full discussion of the popular evangelical churches in Latin America; no more than a few points concerning these aims and orientations will thus have to suffice.

First, there is no evidence that such churches are funded and guided from abroad; in fact, quite the contrary: church members support the work of the church by regular payments from often meagre incomes. Second, the ironical result of re-democratization was to bring it home to many people that the formal process of electing political representatives did not necessarily result in clear improvements to their own lives. Under these circumstances, the creation of church groups which would function as community-solidarity groups fulfilled many people's religious and, increasingly, material needs. Popular evangelical church ministers come from the same class and culture as their congregations; Catholic church religious professionals, on the other hand, are often viewed as culturally different, representatives of a class which can never know the hopes, fears and aspirations of poor people. Finally, many converts to Protestantism come not from groups who participated in BCCs, but rather from the large majority of people who viewed themselves as culturally part of the Catholic church but who, in reality, were never active in the Church's congregation. What this represents is not so much an "invasion of the US sects"; rather, as Berryman notes, the "Protestant coming of age marks the end of Catholic religious hegemony" in Latin America (1994:10). Understandably opposed to this development is the Catholic hierarchy which finds it expedient to paint the growth of Protestantism as a United States-controlled imperialistic move.

In examining the characteristics of the social conditions which give rise to religio-political movements, this section of the paper has sought to establish how such movements are promoted and sustained over time, and to identify the links between mobilization and the pursuit of particularist objectives. The next four sections seek to deepen the analysis by focusing on the geographical spread of religio-political movements in the contexts of modernization and state-society relations.

Religion and Ethnicity: Culturalist Forms of Solidarity

Political culture is an important variable in analysis of culturalist groups, as it suggests underlying beliefs, values and opinions which a people holds dear. For some groups, ethnic identity is closely linked with religion. It may be practically impossible to separate out defining characteristics of a group's cultural composition when religious belief is an integral part of ethnicity, as both are highly important components of a people's self-identity. For example, it would be very difficult indeed to isolate the different cultural components — religious and non-religious — of what it means to be a Sikh, a Jew, a Tibetan, a Somali, an East Timorese, or a "loyalist" (i.e., Protestant) or "nationalist" (i.e., Roman Catholic) Ulsterman or woman.

It is important to note, however, that not all ethnic groups are also collectively followers of one particular region. For example, the Yoruba of south-west Nigeria are divided roughly equally between followers of Islam and adherents of various Christianities, including Roman Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism. Yoruba group self-identity is tied closely to identification with certain geographically specific areas; religious differentiation is a more recent accretion, traceable in part to the impact of colonialism. It does not define "Yoruba-ness" in relation to other ethnic groups. The Ibo of eastern Nigeria, on the other hand, are predominantly Christian; very few are Muslim. While this religious orientation was largely a result of European colonialism, Christianity became an integral facet of Ibo identity in relation to predominantly Muslim groups who mostly reside in the north of the country. Many Ibos came into contact (and conflict) with northern Muslims as a result of their migration to the north in pursuit of economic rewards. In the civil war between 1967-1970, the Ibo secessionists used hatred of Islam as part of their rallying propaganda. They sought to depict the north of the country as exclusively Muslim, when the true proportion was in the region of 60-70 per cent of the population. In the civil war, Christian middle belt peoples (Tiv, Idoma, Igalla, Southern Zaria and others) formed the bulk of the federal infantry, while Yorubas (both Muslim and Christian) took many posts in the federal technical services.

Over the last 30 years there have been many examples of ethnic conflict in both industrialized and developing areas. Until the early 1970s scholars argued that ethnic conflict would wither away as societies modernized. When this manifestly failed to occur, academic theories were turned on their head to posit a radically different interpretation of ethnicity in national politics. These "conflictual modernization" ideas suggested that growing inter-ethnic social and economic activity, rather than increasing the likelihood of co-operation between ethnic groups, would rather make conflict more likely (Newman, 1991). In other words, economic modernization was a sufficient condition for the emergence of ethnic political conflict. In the 1970s, ethno-regional parties, such as the Parti Quebecois in Quebec, the Scottish National Party in Scotland, Plaid Cymru in Wales, and various Belgian and Spanish manifestations, indicated unequivocally the growing importance of sub-national political parties in industrialized countries. In the 1990s, the existence of political conflicts between culturalist groups in Eastern Europe, especially the erstwhile Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia, underlined the potentials for conflict in multi-ethnic states. Ethnic strife in Christian Armenia and Muslim Azerbaijan and the three-way struggle between (Christian) Serbs, (Christian) Croats, and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina have also involved religious issues. Each constituency has had its international support — while the Muslims have been supported by Middle Eastern Muslim states and Islamist groups, the Christian Armenians, Serbs and Croats have received backing from Russia, Germany and Greece.

It was not only religious conflicts between actual or putative states which focused international attention. The assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India in October 1984 followed "Operation Bluestar", an assault by Indian security agents and the army to end the occupation of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, by the Sikh extremist, Jernail Singh Bhindranwale and a large number of his followers. In the process more than 2, 000 people were killed. This catastrophic event focused attention on Sikh designs for an independent state, Khalistan. Over time, Sikh unity fractured among a number of competing groups, ranging along a spectrum from "extremist", using terrorism in pursuit of political aims, to "moderates", whose chief tactic was negotiation. Although the Sikhs failed in the short-term to gain their state, their exemplary opposition to what they perceived as "Hinduization" of India helped to stimulate other religio-ethnic separatist movements in the country. Some of these, like Muslim radicals in the state of Jammu-Kashmir, used appeals to religious solidarity to focus opposition to the central government.

The defensive nature of the Jammu and Kashmiri Muslim or Sikh mobilizing ideology is a common feature of cultural groups who perceive themselves under threat from hostile forces. In this respect, the emergence of putative unitary states in the Third World as a result of decolonization after the Second World War is closely linked to the process of modernization which implies, among other things, the development of strongly centralized government, often along the lines bequeathed by former colonial administrations. Since then, as the examples included here relating to India, China, Sudan and Tibet demonstrate, the development of a centralized government, often dominated by ethnic, cultural, religious or other particularistic groups, often exacerbates previously latent tensions into overt conflict. Modernization — implying urbanization, perhaps industrialization, and above all the development of a singular "nation" to replace former congeries of groups inhabiting a polity — is regarded as a threat to culturalist and religious differentiation.

In the Sudan, southern Sudanese Christian peoples, including the Dinka and the Nuer, have fought a long civil war against northern Sudanese Muslims — aided by Iran — who wish to establish an Islamic state throughout the country. Even though northern Sudanese leaders claimed that Islamic (i.e., *sharia*) law would not be introduced in non-Muslim areas of the country, it became clear that their aim, involving forced conversion of Christians and pagans to Islam, was eventually to "Arabize" the entire country in a form of "ethnic cleansing". Obviously, culturally and often religiously distinct southern Sudanese would regard such an objective as tantamount to an assault upon their way of life, even their very survival.

It is not only the case that religious and cultural conflict arose as a result of decolonization; modernization — as a series of processes of economic, social and cultural change — affects all communities in the current era to a quantifiable degree. China was of course never formally colonized by European powers. Nevertheless, the development of a Chinese unitary state was by no means well advanced by the time of the triumph of the Communists in the civil war against Nationalist forces in 1949. One of the foremost aims of the new Chinese government was to extend its writ throughout all the lands claimed to be integral parts of the country — including those with distinctive cultural and religious attributes. In Tibet, the western-most outpost of the Chinese state, a Buddhist theocracy had developed over the centuries while central control was sundered. Tibet was ruled by a religio-political figure — the Dalai Lama, endlessly reincarnated to ensure continuity of rule — until the Chinese invasion in 1952. After a period of relative equanimity which extended into the 1960s, Vajrayana Buddhist monks led increasingly stiff resistance to enforced cultural change at the hands of the dominant Han Chinese. The latter sought to turn Tibet into a province of China, a process of enforced modernization which resulted in a serious diminution of Tibetan culture involving an influx of settlers from outside the area. Serious outbreaks of anti-Chinese resistance occurred during the 1980s and early 1990s. Tibet, home to less than 10 million people, contributed more political prisoners than the rest of China's provinces combined. More than 100 Tibetans were arrested and detained in 1993 for political reasons relating to cultural autonomy. Political unrest also increased in other "national minority" areas of the country. What the authorities referred to as "gang fighting" (almost certainly with a religious and culturalist component) broke out in 1993 in the remote, largely Muslim, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (Asia Watch, 1994).

Attempts forcibly to engineer mass cultural and/or religions change also characterized Indonesian aggression in East Timor. Once again the aim was to modernize a newly acquired portion of territory, to diminish the cultural and religious distinctiveness of an area in the pursuit of a unitary state. (The fact that the unitary state was Indonesia — itself one of the most ethnically fragmented, culturally diverse and religiously variegated

of countries — underlined the importance to the leaders of "new" states of the goal of modernization — perceived as essential in an increasingly competitive international economic system.) Invaded in 1975, following the desultory end of Portuguese colonialism and a short-lived civil war won by the main liberation movement, Fretilin (Frente Revolucionario de Timor Leste Independente), Indonesia spent the next 20 years trying to crush a low-profile resistance movement as well as to change East Timor from a culturally distinct nation to a province of Indonesia conforming to that country's religious (Islamic) and linguistic (Indonesian) norms. Rather than engendering mass conversion to Indonesia's dominant religion, Islam, military efforts resulted in the East Timorese moving *en masse* to Roman Catholicism: in 1975 there were 250,000 Catholics in the country, by 1994 there were nearly 700,000 — almost three times as many — with Portuguese ironically the language of revolt.

It should not be assumed from the above examples that it is only in the Third World that ethnic solidarity takes a religious and culturalist form. Apart from the tragic example of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where religious conflict engendered the chill euphemism "ethnic cleansing", there were radical culturalist groups among disadvantaged black Americans and within Britain's culturally distinct Muslim communities. In the British case, the endemic racism of British society led to the growth of such organizations as the Young Muslims, Al Muntada al Islami, Muslim Welfare House, and Hizb ut Tahrir (Liberation Party) whose activists preached separation from western society and hatred of Jews. In the United States, Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, based in Chicago, emerged in the 1980s as an important focus of alienated African-Americans. Preaching a virulent mixture of anti-Semitism, anti-corruption, pro-community, self-help and black separatism, Farrakhan sought to focus African-Americans' frustrations. Estimates of the number of members of the Nation of Islam range between 10,000-30,000, with up to 500,000 additional "sympathizers" (Fletcher, 1994). Farrakhan's idea is for black people to work together in common pursuit of group self-interest and solidarity. The Nation of Islam organizes welfare agencies and a number of successful businesses in pursuit of the goal of black emancipation.

The relationship of Islam as a set of religious precepts to the rationale of the Nation of Islam is perhaps rather tenuous. The group's ideology reflects a dissatisfaction with mainstream white-dominated American culture rather than reflecting adherence to the idea of building an Islamic state. The choice of a name redolent of religious symbolism — the Nation of Islam — reflects the emergence of fundamentalist Islam in the Third World as a potent symbol of anti-Westernism and anti-Americanism.

The main argument of this section has been that groups which perceive themselves to be distinct in some cultural or religious way may, under certain circumstances, rise up against those groups which are perceived as oppressors. Frequently such a process is exacerbated by the apparent dominance of the machinery of state by one specific group — in India, by the Hindus; in Sudan, by the northern Arab Muslims; in Tibet, by the Han Chinese; and so on. The development is most common to the Third World where the process of building a unitary state is still continuing, although recent developments, in Bosnia and Herzegovina for example, suggest that it is not the, as it were, "Third-Worldness" of states which is the chief cause of religious, ethnic and cultural rivalry but rather the incomplete nature of state formation and modernization which should be regarded as the chief cause. In more historically centralized states — such as Britain and the United States — groups which perceive themselves as ignored or, worse, threatened by the state will seek to highlight their cultural and religious singularities in order to increase solidarity among them. The process of modernization is once again a contributing factor in that the development of industrialized, urbanized polities is seen by many as anathema.

Religious "Fundamentalism" and the Search for Social Identity and Political Expression

It was widely believed after the Second World War that modernization would inevitably and naturally lead to the growth of secular societies, as apparently had happened in Western Europe over the period since the sixteenth century. This was accompanied by the idea that technological development and the application of science to overcome perennial social problems of poverty, environmental degradation, hunger and disease would result in long-term, sustained progress for all. Yet what became clear was that technological development and other aspects of modernization left many people with a feeling of loss rather than achievement, even if they personally benefited from change. Others, of course, did not benefit from the presumed fruits of modernization and development. The result of what might be termed alienation was a wave of popular religiosity with political ramifications.

Religious fundamentalism is by no means always politically (as opposed to socially) conservative. Radical Islamist groups seek an overthrow of the current socio-economic and political order, either by the use of violent tactics, by incremental reform or by electoral victory. Christian fundamentalists in the United States and Judaist fundamentalists in Israel, on the other hand, are closely linked to conservative political forces who seek to roll back what they perceive as an unwelcome liberalization and relaxation of social and moral mores.

The term "fundamentalism" has been commonly employed since the 1970s by the mass media to "describe and explain a host of apparently disparate religious and political developments in various parts of the world" (Caplan, 1987:1). The label "fundamentalist" was first applied to conservative evangelicals inside the mainstream Protestant denominations in the early years of the twentieth century. As a generic term, however, it is now applied additionally to a multitude of groups outside the corpus of Christianity, and especially to Judaist and Islamist entities.

The term religious "fundamentalism", according to some accounts, can only be properly applied to the Abrahamic "religions of the book". Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Each takes as its defining dogma what are believed to be God's own words as written in a holy book. In other words, singular scriptural revelations are central to each fundamentalist dogma. Neither Hinduism nor Buddhism have central tenets of political, social and moral import conveniently accessible. This is not to suggest that there are not movements within both Hinduism and Buddhism which may be labelled "fundamentalist", but these are not defined by their absolutist insistence upon the veracity of God's revealed will; rather they are defined by their desire to recapture a national identity which has been (perhaps irredeemably) lost by dint of cultural dilution or mixing (Ram-Prasad, 1993:288).

Of perhaps most general political salience in the modern era have been those groups associated with Islamic fundamentalism. Modern Islamic resurgence dates from the inter-war period when one of the ramifications of the political upheavals associated with the First World War was the granting of sovereign statehood to a number of Middle Eastern polities. The point of contention at that time was how far these predominantly Muslim states should employ the tenets of *sharia* law in their legal systems. This example of a desire to Islamicize polities has a number of precedents: successive anti-imperialist, anti-pagan and anti-Western/Christian movements (*jihads*) have erupted periodically since the late nineteenth century, especially in parts of West Africa and East Asia, where the conflict between tradition and modernization, and between Islam and Christianity, was most acute.

Contemporary religious militancy ("fundamentalism") is rooted in the failed promise of modernity, invariably reactive against unwelcome manifestations of modernization, such as poverty, marginalization, insecurity and so on. The current era is to many people one where God was in danger of being superseded by a gospel of technical progress accompanying socio-economic changes redolent of modernization. The pace of change this century, since the Second World War especially, has been very swift: traditional habits, beliefs and cultures everywhere are under considerable pressure to adapt. In an increasingly materialistic world, one's individual worth tends to be measured according to standards of wealth and status, and power is often a function of material standing. Religious attributes are often ignored or belittled. Cultural and economic change and an accompanying loss of religious potency are the fertile seed bed for the growth of religious militancy. These broad developments account in general terms for the growth of religious fundamentalism in recent times.

This is not to suggest that religious fundamentalism was necessarily unimportant in the past; the growth of Christian fundamentalism in the United States over the last eighty or ninety years or the emergence of successive waves of Islamic reform over the last few centuries in parts of West Africa and elsewhere would belie that argument. What I am proposing is that the number, range and overtly politicized goals of the different types of fundamentalist movements should be understood in relation to the general process of modernization and the more specific accretion of power which the modern state seeks to achieve. What was once the realm of religion and religious leaders, in a number of social and moral areas, has increasingly become the domain of government. What has happened is that those in some way dissatisfied with the effects of modernization have become receptive to the arguments of religious figures who have seen their own power and influence diminish over time in relation to the rise of the secular state and the official downgrading of religion. In many Third World urban centres the existence of extensive shantytowns testifies to the vast numbers of people who cling to the margins of the modern economy in a tenuous fashion. Such people may be, but are not necessarily, the natural constituency of fundamentalist groups. In the United States, for example, Christian fundamentalists may well be found among the most affluent, successful members of the society. Clearly, it would be absurd to argue that "alienation" explains the existence of such groups in the United States. The position may be quite different in Third World urban societies, where traditional communal ties are sundered and new occupational, community and often religious ones created. Urban religious movements have formed the majority of "fundamentalist" movements in both Third World and non-Third World contexts; it is they which have chiefly interacted, jousted (and at times, competed) with government. It is they which have set the agenda of religious discourse in a political, social and often moral context.

Since the beginning of Islam over 1,300 years ago, religious critics of the *status quo* have periodically emerged in opposition to what they perceive as unjust rule. Contemporary Islamic fundamentalists are the most recent example, characterizing themselves as the "just" involved in struggle against the "unjust". The dichotomy between "just" and "unjust" in the promotion of social change throughout Islamic history parallels the tension in the West between "state" and "civil society". In other words, "just" and "unjust", as with "state" and "civil society", are mutually exclusive concepts where a strengthening of one necessarily implies a weakening of the other. The implication is that the "unjust" inhabit the state while the "just" look in from the outside, aching to reform the corrupt, anti-democratic system. The Islamic "just" strive to achieve their goal of a form of direct democracy under the auspices of *sharia* law. The ruler uses his wisdom to settle disputes brought before him by his loyal subjects. The Islamic concept of *shura* (consultation) does not by any means necessarily imply popular sovereignty — that is with God alone; "rather it is a means of obtaining unanimity from the community of

believers, which allows for no legitimate minority position" (Dorr, 1993:151-152). The goal of the "just" is an Islamically-based society; Islamic fundamentalist groups are the vehicle to achieve this end. To some Muslims, liberal democracy is fatally flawed and compromised, a concept of relevance only to secular, Western(ized) societies which often appear to many Muslims as unacceptably morally deficient. As a young Algerian graduate of the Islamic Science Institute of Algiers averred: "The modern world is going through a major moral crisis which can be very confusing to young people. Just look at what is happening in Russia. Personally I have found many of the answers and solutions in Islam" (quoted in Ibrahim, 1992).

The global Muslim community, the *umma*, is a good example of a transnational civil society (the Roman Catholic church is another), which contains the seeds of both domination and dissent. Shared beliefs, relating especially to culture, sentiments and identity, link Muslims. Generally, international manifestations of Islamic resurgence appeared after the humbling defeat of Arab Muslims by Israeli Jews in the Six Day War of June 1967. Since then, a combination of poor government, growing unemployment and generalized social crisis together have produced Islamic fundamentalist movements throughout the Muslim world. These developments have also been the result of a failed modernization: Political rulers have generally been content to gain rents accrued from their control of the sale of oil resources for hard currency. Little has been done to develop democratic polities, plan successfully for the future, or seek means to reduce un- and underemployment among their people. There has been a skewed modernization: urbanization and the development of strong, centralized states has proceeded at the same time as people have become increasingly dissatisfied with the way that their rulers rule.

In December 1991 Algeria held a first round of legislative elections — which were won convincingly by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) — which most independent observers characterized as among the freest ever held in North Africa or the Arab Middle East. The following January, however, Algeria's armed forces seized power to prevent the second round of elections which would almost certainly have given the FIS a mandate to form the next government. The assumption was that if the FIS achieved power it would summarily close down Algeria's newly refreshed democratic institutions and political system. Such an assumption was not necessarily warranted. Islamist groups, whether in Algeria or elsewhere, have multiple goals involving social, political, and economic change towards an Islamic society. For example, in Algeria, FIS's main religio-political rival, Hamas, aspires to change society in an Islamist direction by a process of incrementalism over time. In addition, the FIS has both "moderate" and "radical" wings. The "moderate" faction believes in gradual evolution towards an Islamic state, rather like Hamas; while the "radicals" favour its creation as soon as possible by any means necessary. Among the most "radical" of Islamist groups is Egypt's al-Gama'a al-Islamiya, whose programme of action involves murdering foreign tourists, suppliers of a significant proportion of Egypt's foreign exchange, as well as state representatives, in order to stimulate both economic and political crisis which would facilitate the gaining of power by Islamists.

Christianity, usually regarded in the modern era in much of the West as non-political or apolitical, became a legitimate vehicle there for political ideas and platforms in the 1960s. (Less legitimate manifestations of what purported to be religiously-inspired groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, arose from the time of the American Civil War [1861-1865] but they were hardly a part of the political mainstream except in areas of the southern United States where white Protestant ["WASP"] hostility to Jews, Catholics and Black Americans surfaced after the First World War.) There are an estimated 60 million followers of conservative evangelistic Christianity in the United States out of a total population of about 250 million. Such people provided the core support for the

"televangelist" Pat Robertson's unsuccessful 1988 presidential campaign, and for Pat Buchanan's in 1992. The growth of evangelistic Christianity has also been clearly manifested in Latin America, where hundreds of thousands convert from Roman Catholicism each year. The Christian fundamentalist view of the Bible is like that of the Islamic view of the Koran: it is the locus of the essence of tradition. Christian fundamentalists, like their Muslim counterparts, wish to return to the fundamentals of their tradition which they regard as revealed in their holy book. In the United States, Christian fundamentalists are politically active in attempting to uphold "traditional values". They are against manifestations of what they see as over-liberalism: abortion-on-demand; the absence of prayer in schools; and forms of science teaching which adopt a rationalist perspective. In Latin America, on the other hand, the diminution in the numbers of Roman Catholics in favour of burgeoning Protestant evangelistic sects was not symptomatic of political conservatism. Rather, it reflected the failure of the traditional Roman Catholic culture to respond to the combined pressures of modernization, Americanization and urbanization. The Church failed to satisfy growing populations enmeshed ever deeper in stultifying poverty and political inconsequence. The Protestant sects offered a new form of community, new and satisfying religious services, and the possibility, once "born again", of starting afresh. Such was the symbol of hope which the Protestant sects represented that in Guatemala two recent presidents — General Efrain Rios Mott and Jorge Serrano Elias — both actively stressed their state of being "born again" as symptomatic of the new energy and hope which they would bring to the country's political and economic development.

The third "religion of the book", Judaism, also has its religious fundamentalists. Politically speaking, the most significant groups are those which use religious ideology in their conflicts with Arabs. For example, Gush Emunim, a militant, conservative religious movement, was founded after the 1978 Camp David agreement between Israel and Egypt which resulted in the handing back of the Sinai desert to the latter country. Gush Emunim and other groups — such as the late Rabbi Meir Kahane's organization, Kach — argued on religious grounds against giving back territory to Egypt. The biblical entity, Eretz Israel, they argued, was significantly larger than today's Israeli state. To hand back any territory to Arabs, non-Jews, was tantamount to going against God's will as revealed in the Bible. Simmering religious opposition to the peace plan with the Palestine Liberation Organization, involving giving autonomy to the Gaza Strip and to an area around Jericho, reached tragic levels in February 1994 when a religious zealot, Baruch Goldstein, who had links with militants of both Kach ("Thus") and Kahane Chai ("Kahane Lives"), murdered at least 30 people (the number rises to about 50 if associated Palestinian deaths at the hands of Israeli security services as a result of street protests against the Goldstein killings are taken into account) during a dawn attack on a mosque in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron. After the massacre both Kach and Kahane Chai were banned by the Israeli government, a sign of its commitment to crush religious extremist groups which systematically used violence to gain their ends.

Hindu and Buddhist "fundamentalisms" (implying cultural chauvinism rather than close adherence to religious texts) are linked inextricably to nationalist goals, rather than to the revealed words of God as a set of socio-political aspirations and goals. Contemporary Hindu radicalism is by no means *sui generis*. Mahatma Gandhi, the great Indian nationalist, a committed Hindu, was assassinated by a Hindu extremist in 1948 for the "crime" of appearing to condone the creation of a bifurcated homeland for India's Muslims, East and West Pakistan. More recently, Hindu-Muslim suspicion was exacerbated by the dramatic incident at the mosque at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh which was built, according to some Hindus, on the birthplace of the god of war, Rama. Militant Hindus have long sought to build a Hindu temple in place of the mosque. As long ago as 1950, the mosque was closed down by the Indian government. In 1992 it was destroyed

by Hindu fanatics. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi paid with her life in 1984 by appealing to Hindu militancy to take on Sikh militancy in the Punjab. Her son, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was probably assassinated by a Tamil Hindu in 1991 because of his sending Indian troops to try to resolve the civil conflict in Sri Lanka between Tamil Hindus and Buddhist Sinhalese.

In Thailand, a new Buddhist movement, Santi Asoke, made a unilateral declaration of independence from the orthodox Thai *sangha* (body of monks) in 1975. One of its most prominent followers, a former governor in Bangkok, Major-General Chamlong Srimaung, formed a political party in the late 1980s, the Palang Tham Party: *tham* means both "moral" and "*dhamma*": the teachings of Buddhism. Some have perceived Palang Tham's ultimate goal as the creation of a radical Buddhist state in Thailand (McCargo, 1992). What this would entail, it appears, is a corruption-free political environment with the role of the military down-played and with state ideology relating to the ideals of the Buddha. Despite some political successes, involving the winning of 14 parliamentary seats in the 1988 elections, Palang Tham's message of "Buddhist fundamentalism" failed to excite the voters. In another context — the civil war in Sri Lanka involving Buddhist Sinhalese and Tamil Hindus — Buddhism became the icon of Sinhalese chauvinism. Ethnic, linguistic, economic and political frictions were expressed in religious form, involving a lionising of Sri Lanka's Buddhist history in relation to the Hindu culture of immigrant Tamils.

In sum, religious fundamentalism may be divided into two categories: that which pertains to "religions of the book", where scriptural revelations relating to political, moral and social issues form the corpus of fundamentalist demands. Sometimes this acts as a *de facto* programme of political action (as with the Islamists); sometimes it forms an essentially moralistic blueprint for social change (Protestant evangelicals in Latin America). Hindu and Buddhist "fundamentalism" comprise the second category. The absence of a definitive set of scriptural norms and goals allows religious dogma to assume nationalist dimensions in which religious revivalism pertains to the re-birth of national identity and vigour denied in the past by unwelcome cultural dilution.

Religious Syncretism and Politics

All religions are more or less syncretistic. The "pure" religion of the faith's founder, whether Jesus Christ, Gautama Buddha, Moses, or Muhammad, gradually evolves as a result of time passing and as a function of the geographical distance that it travels. Interaction between the original doctrine and the differing social, political and economic realities it encounters over time and space results in a religion with some characteristics different from the "pure" foundations. For this reason different interpretations of religious doctrine (such as between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims or between Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians) may instil in separate groups — ostensibly following the same religious guidance — conflicting versions of received spiritual teachings. Three examples help bring this out more clearly. First, the local Christianity of Galilee — the teachings of Jesus, a social radical — became the religion of the city-state of Rome, which by imperial extension and demographic expansion became the Christianity of North Africa, Western Europe and, later, the Americas, the Pacific rim and the Pacific islands. Second, Muhammad's divinely inspired teachings involved not only the dissemination of a sacred message but also, more prosaicly, the political standing of the Quraysh lineage in Mecca. His religious teachings later spread and in the process adapted to local conditions as Islam evolved from the Arabic world to Africa and to Asia. Finally, the philosophy of Prince Gautama (the Buddha), moulded by the social, political and economic conditions

of northern India of 2,500 years ago, underwent change during its spread to Tibet, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Mongolia, Japan, the Koreas, Cambodia, Viet Nam, China and beyond. What these examples suggest is that whatever the religion, the founder's pure doctrine will be changed both by time and by expansion to new cultural areas. The more "successful" a religion is, in terms of numbers of converts, the more its original precepts will be transformed.

Arab and later European imperialism regarded dissemination of religious beliefs as integral to political and cultural domination. In north and sub-Saharan Africa, there evolved more or less syncretistic versions of Islam — melding traditional religious beliefs with Islamic norms — called sufism. One of the features of the contemporary Islamic reformism in Africa has been the systematic undermining and belittling of sufist beliefs by Arabized Islamic élites (led by members of the corpus of religio-legal scholars, the *ulama*) and their secular political allies in, for example, Morocco, Algeria, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Libya. Away from North Africa and the fringes of the Sahara desert, the spread of Christianity was made possible by European colonialism, a major socio-political and economic force for a century beginning around 1860. Because conversion to Christianity was seen by many Africans as a necessary step to acquire the material advantages which the Europeans enjoyed — principally education, scientific and medical aid, and jobs in the modern sector — many ethnic groups converted *en masse*. Centres of missionary activity offered these desirable goods as inducement to convert. Thus conversion was often predominantly an instrumental step, rather than involving spiritual transformation from traditional to European religious beliefs. When the Europeans began to dismantle their structures of colonial domination in Africa after the Second World War, some of the ethnic groups which had formally converted to Christianity without severing their ties with traditional beliefs found themselves in positions of relative disadvantage in the new political arrangements which marked the post-colonial era.

It was principally in certain rural areas that entire groups of people — who believed in their alleged common origins, i.e., "tribes" — had "semi-converted" corporately to Christianity during European colonialism. They sometimes found themselves victimized or ignored in post-colonial political arrangements. The Lumpa Church of northern Zambia, the Holy Spirit Church among the Acholi of northern Uganda, the Napramas led by Manual Antonio in north-east Mozambique, the Ovimbundu Church of Christ in the Bush in southern Angola, and Dini ya Msambwa among the Bukusu of western Kenya are all examples of syncretistic religious entities, rooted partially in Christian beliefs, which found most of their adherents among discrete ethnic groups or within specific regions in the post-colonial period in opposition to governing régimes.

It is wrong to assume that rural Africans (or other Third World people, for that matter) are politically quiescent. During the colonial era, anti-colonial religio-political movements flourished in the rural areas. After independence, anti-régime movements appeared for similar reasons; clearly their existence could not be explained by the social stresses and strains linked to colonial rule alone. Beliefs associated with syncretistic religions should be located within a general background of upheaval which occurred as a result of the circumstances of colonial rule. They can be explained as a response to extreme social trauma, or as a manifestation of collective despair at an unwelcome political outcome — such as more or less authoritarian rule by outsiders.

Alice Lenshina's Lumpa Church was established among the northern Bemba people of Zambia around the time of independence in 1964. In the absence of opposition political parties — the post-colonial United National Independence Party government banned

them in the name of unity — it functioned as a *de facto* vehicle of opposition to the rule of a government which the Bemba largely regarded as rule by outsiders.

More recently, the 25,000 strong Napramas ("spirit warriors") militia was formed in 1990 among the Makua people of the Zambesia and Nampula provinces of north-eastern Mozambique. The Napramas were led by a young man, Manual Antonio, until his death at the hands of RENAMO (Mozambique National Resistance) guerrillas in 1992. Antonio claimed to have died at the age of 12 years and then been resurrected in order to end the civil war between RENAMO and the government. Antonio "vaccinated" his followers against RENAMO bullets by use of the ash of a sacred bush, which led them to often foolhardy feats of courage in the face of RENAMO firepower. Many RENAMO soldiers came from the Ndau-speaking people of central Mozambique. Initially, many ran from the Napramas, believing that they were imbued with immense spiritual power. Later, as a result of their own "vaccination" by their spirit mediums against the Napramas, they began to confront them more readily. Antonio's killing in early 1992 led to the swift collapse of the "spirit warriors" militia.

Another example of African syncretistic politico-religious groups is the Holy Spirit movement of Alice Lakwena in Uganda. While strongest among the Acholi, its appeal also spanned the Lango and Teso peoples. In the mid-1980s, troops led by Lakwena and magically protected by "medicine", engaged the dominant National Resistance Army (NRA) in a series of battles. Many of Lakwena's followers were former Acholi soldiers of the ex-Prime Minister Milton Obote's Uganda National Liberation Army. In a bid to gain the upper hand against the NRA, Obote's defeated troops desperately sought a religious messiah who might be able to dispense "magic medicine" to aid them in their fighting. Eventually, Lakwena's followers were heavily defeated by the NRA. Lakwena fled to Kenya where she lived for several years. She later returned to Uganda, apparently no longer possessed, where she eked out a living as a petty trader.

What these three examples of African syncretistic religio-political movements have in common is that each had a role as mediator between local communities and the state or other power during a period of rapid and uneven socio-political transformation. During the colonial period, religio-political movements were regarded with a high degree of suspicion by colonial administrators; some viewed them as allies of Islam, others as revolutionary groups using religion as a mask. In the post-colonial period, official comprehension of such movements did not advance much: A senior figure in the National Resistance Movement, the political wing of the NRA and currently in government, called Alice Lakwena: a "lunatic prostitute of Gulu town [her home area] turned witch" (Behrend, 1991:162). What seems clear, however, is that movements such as Lakwena's are not aberrations led by maladjusted individuals. Rather, they form in response to unwelcome socio-political developments during times of rapid change. Many have been concerned with cultural, regional, ethnic, political and economic tensions which existed before colonialism, and which resurfaced in the independence era when one ethnic or regional group sought to achieve hegemony over others. Peoples who resort to religious symbolism as political ideology of resistance are generally those who have not only been mistreated or abandoned by government, but have also traditionally been marginalized by both colonial and post-colonial political and economic structures and processes. Although the movements described above have been in response to the formation of the post-colonial state, their opposition has been in the form of a cultural metaphor which has clear historical roots.

Issues of domination and hegemony also helped forge the ideological rationale for other anti-centre groups in parts of Latin America. In this context, both Sendero Luminoso ("Shining Path") of Peru and the Olivorismo cult of the Dominican Republic merit

mention. Sendero first appeared in 1980, coinciding with the reformation of democracy in Peru, a military dictatorship since 1968. It was founded by Abimayel Guzman, a university professor, who disappeared from public view in 1974 until his arrest by state authorities in 1992. Sendero Luminoso's leadership and most committed cadres, it is generally agreed, are principally motivated ideologically by a local variant of Maoism. There is less consensus about the nature of Sendero's appeal to rural people, who are unlikely necessarily to be motivated by clear-cut class issues alone. As Degregori (1993:51) notes, the main core of Sendero's original support was located within the ranks of the "petit-bourgeoisie (sic) provincial *mestizo* intellectuals". Such people were animated by the appeal of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, yet the "further we go from the leadership, the more the motivations and modes of action (of Sendero's supporters) varies" (Degregori 1993:53-54). Peasant followers of Sendero may have been galvanized more by a form of pseudo-religious syncretistic ideology which in effect melded Maoism with a form of Andean millenarianism.

Many among Peru's Indian population, nominally Roman Catholic, retain strong beliefs grounded in the pre-Christian folk religions of the locale. The political and religious cleavage in Peruvian society cuts through the Catholic church, dividing the Indians from the *mestizos* and the light-skinned élite. Ayacucho, one of the poorest areas of Peru, was the birthplace of Sendero Luminoso, where Sendero's ideological appeal was oriented to local conditions and perspectives: there a mixture of revolutionary communism, mysticism and anti-Spanish nationalism found a strong resonance among many local people (Dietz, 1990). Exhibiting the eclecticism which characterizes Africa's syncretistic rural religious movements in its appeal to poor rural dwellers, Sendero Luminoso sought to synthesize a Maoist variant of Marxism-Leninism with the traditional image of a mythic Indian past in order to forge an ideology of opposition among Peru's disadvantaged Indian population. Opinion differs as to whether Sendero's continuing presence among the inhabitants of Ayacucho is due to fear or support from the local people. While a full account of Sendero's ideology, development and aims is beyond the scope of this paper, its presence in Ayacucho (even after the imprisonment of Guzman) is testament to the unequal distribution of power in Peru and to the abiding significance of syncretistic and traditional religious beliefs to many politically powerless people.

Whereas Sendero's motivation is one of revolutionary communism which, for some, includes a millenarian dimension, Olivorismo in the Dominican Republic is a class-based movement which uses the memory of a charismatic individual, Olivorio Mateo, to forge an emblematic syncretism which melds elements of Christianity and of local folk religion into an important vehicle of opposition to the dominant politico-economic élite in the country (Lundahl and Lundius, 1991).

Olivorio Mateo achieved fame in the San Juan valley in 1908 when it emerged that he had apparently inexplicable powers of healing. He quickly built up a core of followers who were persecuted by the authorities because they were regarded as decidedly "unprogressive" at a time when the country's modernizers — businessmen, law and order authorities — were attempting to develop the country economically. Mateo's message of salvation included the revolutionary idea that land and food should be apportioned to people in accordance with their needs rather than their ability to pay. Following the American occupation of the Dominican Republic in 1916, Olivorio Mateo was increasingly hounded because of what he appeared to represent: a champion of the "little man" against the forces of capitalism, occupation and repression. Six years later — in 1922 — he was shot dead in an ambush. This might have led to the end of Olivorismo, yet over the next decades the cult continued to survive in the San Juan valley, a symbol of popular opposition to the direction of socio-economic development where increasing levels of wealth and power were in fewer and fewer hands. By 1971, 71 per cent of the

valley's arable land was owned by just 21 per cent of the farms (Lundahl and Lundius, 1991:229). Impoverished peasants, on the other hand, continued their belief in the redemptive values of Olivorismo, hoping and praying that one day their champion would return to liberate them from oppression. The continuing appeal of Olivorismo — a kind of syncretistic redemptive ideology of hope — to poor people of the San Juan valley suggests that an ideology of liberation is most likely to be successful where it appeals to people's cultural roots.

Community-Oriented Religious Movements

A notable feature of the development of religious praxis over the last three decades has been the emergence of a popularly driven, community religiosity. Especially visible among poor Third World Roman Catholics, among Eastern European Christians before the fall of communism, and within urban Islamic communities in a number of countries, the development of sets of community-oriented religious beliefs has been a mobilizing ideology of opposition and development of self-expression. Christian (especially Roman Catholic) liberation theology is often associated with socially progressive ideas, while "fundamentalist" Islam is often perceived as a thoroughly conservative, even atavistic, ideology. In fact they have much in common: a disaffection with the established, hierarchical, institutionalized religious bodies; a desire to find God through personal searching rather than through the mediation of institutions; and a focus on communities' ability to make beneficial changes to members' lives through the application of group effort.

The emergence of community-oriented religious movements was particularly associated with the profound social and economic changes associated with modernization. For example, the proportion of Christians in the Republic of Korea grew from about one per cent of the population after the Second World War to about a quarter by the 1980s (Huntington, 1991:73). Christian converts were primarily "young, urban and middle class. For the millions who poured into the cities, and for many who stayed behind in the altered countryside, the quiescent Buddhism of Korea's agrarian age lost its appeal. Christianity with its message of personal salvation and individual destiny offered a surer comfort in a time of confusion and change" (Huntington, 1991:73-74). Opposition politicians such as Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam, together with church figures like Rev. Moon Ik Hwan and Cardinal Kim Sou Hwan, led attacks against repressive military government beginning in the 1970s. By the early 1980s church activists were in the forefront of the growing opposition to military rule.

A second religious development which resulted in the emergence of community-oriented religious movements involved a series of changes in the political alignment and popular involvement of some officials of the Roman Catholic Church. Three developments were significant: the Second Vatican Council (Vatican 2; which met from 1959-1965) with its stress on a more restricted spiritual guidance programme and a general liturgical sobriety; the development of local theologies of liberation; and a challenge to the Church from Protestant evangelical churches, especially in South America and sub-Saharan Africa (Haynes, 1993; forthcoming). The Church found itself dragged into political controversy because of two issues: human rights and freedom of worship. The push from below from younger, radicalized priests engendered a degree of opposition to governmental authoritarianism and negation of human rights from senior echelons of the Church hierarchy. Nowhere was this development more apparent than in Eastern Europe during the 1980s as the contradictions of communist rule became increasingly clear. Due to the repression and totalitarian tactics of the communist régime in Poland which, like its

counterpart in the Soviet Union, sought to crush organized religion, there developed a theology of resistance, a grassroots politicization of the Catholic church. Young, combative priests strongly identified with society's aspirations towards the achievement of basic political and social freedoms, and took the leading role in the creation and consolidation of representative social movements. The visit of the Pope to Poland in 1979 coincided with the emergence of Catholic grassroots organizations, whose activists received a great fillip to their efforts towards fundamental social and political reforms. The formation of the Solidarity movement in 1980 was strongly influenced by the Pope's visit; trade union militants became the focal point for opposition as the Polish Church, led by Cardinal Josef Glemp, played a cautious role of mediator between government and opposition, rather than throwing its corporate weight behind the reformists (Huntington, 1991:82).

In the German Democratic Republic (GDR; former East Germany), "autonomous groups played a very uneven role in the sudden changes that occurred in 1989" (Sadowski, 1993:187). A combination of activists' emigration to the West and a policy of expulsion by the régime of such people diminished the ability of opposition groups to establish a network of autonomous groups. Nevertheless, the Evangelical Church in the heavily Protestant GDR did come to play a "major organizational role in the massive changes" that occurred in society in 1989 and 1990. During the initial period of mobilization and mass public demonstrations that preceded the downfall of the leader of the GDR, Erich Honecker, a number of Protestant churches in Leipzig, already renowned for their championing of human rights and peace issues, actively involved themselves in the organization of public protests. Churches throughout the country became the principal forum for opposition meetings. The political influence of grassroots priests was further exemplified following the parliamentary elections of March 1990 which resulted in the election of 14 clergymen to the 400-strong legislature. Four serving or former priests were members of the short-lived Lothar de Maiziere government.

It was an essentially biblical radicalism, often melded with facets of Marxism-Leninism, which stimulated a number of Catholic priests to champion the concerns of the poor in Latin America from the 1960s. Basic Christian Communities (BCCs; Spanish: *communidades eclesiales de base*; French: *communautés ecclésiales vivantes*) represented the most concrete sign of the significance of liberation theology. BCCs proliferated in many Latin American countries (especially Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Haiti) and elsewhere in the Third World, such as the Philippines and in parts of Africa. What these and non-Catholic countries — e.g. Kenya, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, India and Indonesia — had in common was that local self-help groups formed to improve qualitatively communities' lives at a time when central and local government was unable to satisfy popular (and rapidly growing, demographically-driven) developmental needs. In effect, it was not necessarily Catholicism *per se* which formed the core of the ideology of the BCCs; as with other non-Catholic groups it was the palpable inability of the authorities to deal with entrenched socio-economic problems which led communities to attempt to deal with problems themselves utilizing their own cultural referents.

In both Haiti and the Philippines, BCC-style community groups grew swiftly in the context of repressive dictatorships. Many were founded in the 1970s, and carried out a wide range of local community action programmes. In Haiti local groups formed to help poor, rural Haitians to improve their living conditions by, for example, developing small-scale development projects. Beyond the control of local conservative Catholic bishops, as in Latin America, they were organized and supported by the more militant local priests.

**Liberation theology and the emergence of
religious radicalism in Latin America**

First articulated in Brazil in the early 1960s, liberation theology became a widespread feature of socio-political division and struggle within the Catholic Third World. Liberation theology is an intensely political phenomenon, a response to the appalling social and political conditions widely found throughout the Third World. Central to the concept is the notion of dependence and underdevelopment; the use of a class struggle perspective to explain social conflict and justify political action; and the exercise of a political role to achieve both religious and political goals.

Liberation theology concerns split the Catholic Church in Latin America and elsewhere, perhaps irrevocably. Contentions between the Vatican and Ernesto Cardenal (a prominent member of Nicaragua's Sandinista government until its electoral defeat in February 1990) and the Brazilian Leonardo Boff (who resigned from the priesthood in July 1992) symbolized the rift between progressive theologians and the Pope. In addition, liberation theology was regarded by powerful conservatives, within governments and without, as something to fear. Prominent liberation theologians were assassinated, including the Brazilian Camilo Torres in 1965, and Archbishop Romero of El Salvador, gunned down in his own church in 1980. The murder of six Jesuit priests in 1989 in El Salvador by members of the military underlined the political and social divisions inherent in Latin American societies. To understand why liberation theology developed in Latin America in the 1960s, we need first to examine the cultural legacy of Spain and Portugal.

Latin America was (and still is largely) Catholic. This was a direct result of the first wave of European imperial expansion led by Spain and Portugal beginning in the fifteenth century. In contrast, the Christian churches in both Africa and Asia derive mostly from the second wave of European expansion in the nineteenth century. This later evangelical wave involved a greater degree of differentiation between imperialistic (political) and missionary (religious) penetration than was the case with the earlier imperialism. The important social and political result in Latin America was that in Spanish and Portuguese colonies Roman Catholicism created a world view marked by a particular perspective on ordinary people. The later emphasis on liberation centred on the claim that it was first necessary to be "humanized" (i.e. released from degradation and poverty) before becoming a religious Christian. Since such a process involved the comprehension of the conditions which historically created the phenomenon of "the man who is not a man" (to use the phrase of liberation theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez) that process could not be simply one of spiritualization, but had also to involve a socio-political "conscientization". Reflecting prevailing social conditions, liberation theology was a manifestation of new religious values and activity which not surprisingly stimulated friction both within and between societies and the Church hierarchy.

Summary and Conclusion

Over the last 20 years or so religion has had considerable impact upon politics in many regions of the world. Confidence that the growth and spread of urbanization, education, economic development, scientific rationality and social mobility would combine to diminish significantly the socio-political position of religion was not well founded. Two broad trends have been observable: religion used as a vehicle of opposition or as an ideology of community self-interest. In the first category are the culturalist, fundamentalist and, in part, the syncretistic, religious entities. Threats emanating either from powerful outsider groups or from unwelcome symptoms of modernization (breakdown of moral behaviour, over-liberalization in education and social habits) galvanize religious reactions. Second, the failure of governments to push through their programmes of social improvement has led to the founding of local community groups that have developed a religious ideology of solidarity and development often without much help from religious professionals.

The developments described above suggest that one of the most resilient ideas about societal development after the Second World War — that nations would inevitably secularize as they modernized — was misplaced. It was understood that modernization —

including rationalization of "irrational" views such as religion — would lead to the development of a new kind of society. But it has become clear that technological development and other aspects of modernization have left many people with a feeling of loss rather than achievement. One result has been a wave of popular religiosity which has often had political ramifications.

To analyse and explain what has become a virtually global development, this paper has looked at different manifestations of burgeoning religiosity. Religion has been of particular importance in understanding political and social developments in relation to issues of ethnicity and to the growth of religious fundamentalisms. These essentially oppositional manifestations have been complemented by the emergence of both community-oriented religious groups and of religious syncretism. While it has been suggested that syncretism is a common factor in virtually all organized religions, the growth of religious syncretism in the Third World in the post-colonial era was related to failures of central governments to oversee local communities' protection, economic development and social cohesion.

When such a loss of faith in central government was writ large — i.e., when it galvanized large portions of discrete culturalist groups — religion has often become a main tenet of anti-centre opposition. Hopes of ethnic co-operation have at times given way to fears of endemic ethnic conflict, as one of the features of the modern era has been the apparent fracturing of the state system which appeared solid until the demise of the Cold War led to a plethora of inter-nation conflicts within states.

Religious fundamentalism may be divided into two categories: "religions of the book" and nationalist-oriented derivatives of Hinduism and Buddhism. Scriptural revelations relating to political, moral and social issues form the corpus of fundamentalist demands. Sometimes these are deeply conservative (American Protestant evangelicals), sometimes they are reformist or revolutionary (many Islamist groups), sometimes they offer an essentially moralistic blueprint for social change (Protestant evangelicals in Latin America), and sometimes they are xenophobic, racist, and reactionary (Jewish groups, now banned, such as Kach and Kahane Chai). Hindu and Buddhist "fundamentalisms", in the absence of a definitive set of scriptural norms and hence goals, assume nationalist dimensions when religious revivalism pertains to the re-birth of national identity and vigour denied in the past, zealots consider, by unwelcome cultural dilution.

A notable feature of the development of religious praxis since the early 1960s has been the emergence of popularly driven, community religiosity, which has been either conservative or reformist in thrust. Religious professionals of such groups were respected but were not assumed to have the final word on religious praxis. The development of sets of community-oriented religious beliefs helped to develop mobilizing ideologies of opposition and self-expression. The groups examined in this paper have in common a disaffection and dissatisfaction with established, hierarchical, institutionalized religious bodies; a desire to find God through personal searching rather than through the mediation of institutions; and a focus on communities' ability to make beneficial changes to members' lives through the application of group effort. This desire to "go it alone", not to be beholden to "superior" bodies, marks above all the relationship of religion and politics in the 1990s. The demise of communism as a mobilizing ideology leaves the ideological cupboard rather bare. Religion in all its flexibility offers an alternative to those for whom modernization has either failed or is in some way unattractive. Its interaction with political issues over the medium-term is likely to be of especial importance, carrying a serious and seminal message of societal resurgence and regeneration in relation to both political leaders and economic élites.

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