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**Book Review**

***Fundamentalism and American Culture, George Marsden***

**Courtney D. Lawton**

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George Marsden cross-examines the state of Christian fundamentalism in his third edition of *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. This edition is noteworthy for its updated content, which includes new research, interviews, and insights into the current state of American fundamentalism. The author highlights the fundamentalist movement's evolving perspectives on issues related to politics, culture, and science, demonstrating its ongoing relevance in contemporary society. He shows how broader cultural and social trends, such as the rise of consumerism and the influence of mass media, have shaped Fundamentalism. His work offers a rigorous historical analysis of the intersection between conservative Protestantism and American culture, dissecting the cultural, social, and religious factors that contributed to the rise of this often-misunderstood movement, from its early stirrings in the late 19th century to its influence on politics and society in the 20th century. Marsden's explications shed light on a crucial chapter in American religious history, making this a must-read for scholars and readers interested in theology and politics.

Marsden's work stands out for its thorough analysis of the historical circumstances that led to the rise of Fundamentalism. In his meticulous account, Marsden traces the emergence of Fundamentalism to the depths of the late 19th century, revealing its roots and gradual evolution. By delving deep into the historical underpinnings of this enigmatic movement and examining its longstanding impact, Marsden illuminates its significance and relevance in modern times. He shows how the movement was shaped by a myriad of factors, including the rise of biblical interpretation and criticism, the impact of the Scopes trial, the changing political and social landscape of America, and a strong emphasis on personal salvation and evangelism. Marsden shows how contemporary cultural and social trends, such as the rise of consumerism and the influence of mass media, have shaped Fundamentalism. He notes that the rise of digital media has provided new opportunities for fundamentalist groups to disseminate their message and build support.

However, as digital media continues to expand its reach, it has ushered in new challenges for fundamentalists. The abundance of online information has presented difficulties in maintaining consistency and cohesiveness of identity in the face of diverse perspectives and interpretations of religious doctrine. Yet, as Marsden notes, the impact of digital media is not entirely negative for the fundamentalist movement. The opportunities presented by digital media offer possibilities for growth and development. Adapting to social and technological changes is nothing new to the fundamentalist movement, with a rich history of evolution and adaptation. Moving forward, fundamentalists will likely continue to navigate the new digital waters with tenacity and resilience.

Marsden dives deep into fundamentalism's past, meticulously scrutinizing a range of primary sources such as pamphlets, sermons and other writings to uncover the movement's history. He also draws on secondary sources, including other scholarly works on American religious history and cultural studies. One of the strengths of Marsden's methodology is his careful attention to nuance and complexity in his analysis. Rather than presenting a one-dimensional or simplistic portrayal of fundamentalism, he acknowledges the diversity of perspectives within the movement and how fundamentalists have adapted to changing social and cultural circumstances. Overall, Marsden's methodology is rigorous and well-grounded in primary and secondary sources. His careful analysis and attention to detail lend credibility to his arguments and provide readers with a thorough understanding of the fundamentalist movement and its impact on American culture.

In the larger context of theological and cultural studies, Marsden's book unapologetically focuses on the fundamentalist movement and its impact on American society. In some ways, this conceptual approach is a comparison to literature like *The Myth of Christian America: What You Need to Know About the Separation of Church and State* by Mark Weldon Whitten (2020) and *With God on our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* by William Martin (2005), both of which explore the history and influence of evangelicalism and fundamentalism on American culture and politics and offer various perspectives and analyses of the movement. They also highlight the diverse experiences and beliefs of those involved in the movement and address contemporary issues and debates related to religion and politics in the United States. It is also quite different from a growing wealth of literature criticizing fundamentalism, such as *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* by Kristin Kobes Du Mez (2021). Du Mez explores how a particular version of masculinity has become central to white evangelical identity, which has fueled political divisions in America. *In Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* by Molly Worthen (2016), Worthen argues that American evangelicalism has always been characterized by a tension between reason and emotion, which complicates the picture of fundamentalism as purely anti-modern.

Marsden's book explores the intricacies of fundamentalism, giving a comprehensive look at some highly contested areas. His insights are valuable to researchers, educators, and scholars of various disciplines, including sociology, theology, history, and cultural studies. Lay readers curious about fundamentalism will find this book fascinating. However, they may struggle with some of the more scholarly aspects of the text. Even though the writing style is lucid and engaging, and the author's passion for the subject is evident throughout, one of the book's drawbacks is its length. The substantial detail and analysis Marsden provides may be overwhelming for readers without a background in the subject. What's more, while Marsden presents a relatively objective analysis, he does not shy away from expressing his opinions or taking sides in some of the debates surrounding fundamentalism. Notwithstanding, Marsden's book is a compelling read for anyone interested in gaining insight into this complex and often controversial topic. His work has already significantly impacted the study of fundamentalism, and his well-crafted arguments and engaging writing style continue to make this book a key reference in the field.

### References

- Marsden, G. (2022). [Review of the book *Fundamentalism and American Culture*]. (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press. pp. 468.

**Bio-note**

Courtney is a skilled technical writer and information architect. She has built an impressive career helping clients achieve their documentation goals with cutting-edge technologies and best practices for success. Her expertise extends from document authoring software to powerful collaboration tools that help engineering and software development teams optimize their information systems. Throughout her career, Courtney has collaborated with a myriad of clients and organizations across diverse industries, bringing an unwavering commitment to quality and industry-leading practices to every project. Currently, she is a doctoral candidate at Regent University, focusing on communication research in religious contexts.

Email Id: [courlaw@mail.regent.edu](mailto:courlaw@mail.regent.edu)

Orcid Id: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9873-0965>

