

When faiths collide: the case of fundamentalism – Roger W. Stump (*Geography*), State University of New York (USA)

Religious knowledge is generally rooted in two systems of meaning: a world view and an ethos. The world view of a religion encompasses a cosmological understanding of the nature of reality, including conceptions of causation and agency and their relation to superhuman or supernatural forces and processes. A religion's ethos in turn defines the relationships of human thought and behaviour to the reality defined in its world view, typically by articulating basic norms, structures of daily life, and emotional patterns. Within a larger tradition such as Christianity or Islam, religious innovations develop in specific spatial contexts through the transformation of a broader world view and ethos by adherents into more local expressions. These innovations take a variety of forms, from unreflexive patterns of incremental change to more explicit manifestations of schism and sectarianism. Fundamentalism represents a distinctive form of religious innovation in the modern era, characterized by particular types of alterations in adherents' world view and ethos. Fundamentalist movements tend to be highly selective in defining the central elements of their world view, drawing on a usually literalist interpretation of orthodoxy but emphasizing some aspects of orthodoxy over others. The fundamentalist world view thus represents neither a complete rejection nor a precise recreation of earlier forms of orthodoxy. The selectivity of fundamentalist world views derives most directly from a sense of threat. Adherents emphasize elements within their world view that provide the most effective response to that threat. Fundamentalist world views therefore tend to focus on the legitimate sources of truth and authority, producing a system of knowledge based on both faith and certainty. In turn, fundamentalist movements define their ethos in relation to the system of knowledge of their world view. The articulation of that system of knowledge becomes a primary objective of most fundamentalist groups, often leading to significant confrontations both with others within the same religious traditions and with those outside it as well. Within this context, a fundamentalist movement's ethos is particularly likely to emphasize two issues: the conformity of social and cultural structures to the faith and certainty of movement's world view; and the polarizing of clashes

with other systems of knowledge through the identification of criteria of thought and behavior that separate the true believers of the movement from outsiders.