

1.

Modernity is not the same as contemporary or being technologically advanced and does not necessarily mean that the modern way of life is better and that the old tribal ways are obsolete. Rather modernity is a social movement towards individuality and making decisions based on personal beliefs and experiences rather than on the legends and traditions of the tribe. This call for individualism calls for questioning of practices and not necessarily for a person to rely on their elders or a divine being to help make decisions, but rather calls for the person to just rely on themselves and what their life has taught them.

Mythological worldviews which have been held by tribes for centuries do not fit into the definition of modern. Many old cosmological views have been debunked as science has progressed, such as the beliefs of the Earth being flat and the center of the universe, of a heaven literally above in the sky and a pit of flames under the Earth, and finally the most controversial story of Evolution occurring rather than God literally molding people from clay. These worldviews cannot be modern because logic and science tell us that these supernatural things did not occur. People in the modern age ~~and~~ can see with their own eyes the roundness of the earth, space being a vast and empty land lacking a majestic God sitting on a throne, and the genetic and even physical similarities between human beings and the other Great Apes of the world. Since these things can be looked at as having natural explanations the mythology of relying on the supernatural becomes nearly obsolete.

Our societies' shift towards modernity has created many problems in the areas of religion, social organization, and mythological world views. These three things are intertwined because in the tribal days there was not so much religion for people, but rather a way of life. In a tribal life there is no separation of church and state, but rather religious and spiritual matters are something taken into account by tribal elders. The rules of God are the rules of the tribe and remained unquestioned because to defy the laws were to defy God. The myths of tribes were used to explain origins, how people are to behave, and in general how the world works. The dependence in tribal society is on

the supernatural and its influence on everyday life, explanations for things that could not be explained were contributed to the will of the supernatural.

Today however the modern push for individuality has pushed people away from living tribal lives and towards living as nation states in more democratic run societies. These societies have geographic boundaries and the people living in those areas may not necessarily be descended from the previous inhabitants. ~~With~~ Modern science has become a main way to explain what occurs in our world rather than relying on myths, legends and the supernatural. Explanations now focus on logic, reasoning, and natural ways things occurred without some kind of divine intervention. Religion and everyday life no longer have to be interlinked, but rather modern society has divided into a secular and religious sector, so that choices people make or their understanding of the world does not necessarily rely on their experiences or tales of the divine.

To many religious leaders the secularism from modernity is the ultimate problem and downfall. Religion and God has taken a backseat to sports, television, and immoral behavior. People are questioning the validity of mythological religion in everyday modern life and have begun to pull away; seeking to find a way of life they are comfortable with. The decline in organized religion is apparent everywhere where what religion a person is has become not so much a practice of faith in God but a label they have picked up along the way. Modernity has forced people to become divided in religious beliefs, with some giving up entirely and just becoming secular, some becoming fundamentalist and fighting back against what they believe to be the evils of modernity, traditionalists who combine modernity and tradition in a way that simply works for them without delving too much into controversial details, and liberals who work to reform religion to make it work in the modern age without mythology and just the moral truths.

2)

US Protestant activist fundamentalist and separatist fundamentalists share a core of beliefs that make each group fundamentalists in their own respective right; they differ, however, on the way they share those views with the world around them and how they respond to conflicting viewpoints. Fundamentalists, in general, see Christianity as based on certain 'fundamentals'—specific beliefs about the divine and rules from the divine on how to worship the divine and how to be a 'good' believer. They believe the Bible to be the inerrant word of God and read and interpret it literally. Fundamentalists see these elements as being the heart of their religion, and anyone who lives differently is seen as "unfaithful" or as "unbelievers" (Machina, *Some Ways that Religion Interacts with Modernity: Christian Fundamentalism vs. Traditionalism*). These groups see modernity as an ever-present threat to the religion spouted from cultural ways of living; these threats are seen as impacting the world in the here-and-now and need to be fought back against. It is important to realize that fundamentalists are not necessarily in opposition to modernity as a whole but to those parts of modernity they say as being a threat to their religion.

Activist fundamentalists, such as Fallwell, demand a "revival of this country," and the revival should begin with a God-fearing moral government. So long as the Bible is the foundation of government, read in his way, Fallwell states that, "doctrinal difference is a distinctive feature" of modern culture, and that we, as part of the modern culture, have "the privilege and the luxury of theological disagreement" (Fallwell, *Listen America!*), which does not leave much room for discussion. Activist fundamentalists often publicly scandalize their viewpoints, taking a stand against a modern 'evil' all the while knowing that they will offend

other Christians (this is done to bring attention to the issue). Activist fundamentalists organized political groups such as the Moral Majority and the Religious Roundtable to try to influence American law. Currently, many activist fundamentalists groups focus their missions locally and state-wide. Activist fundamentalists may or may not work within the confines of the law. For example, a group headed by Randall Terry would stand on the steps outside an abortion clinic blocking the entrance with signs in order to portray the message that abortions are inherently wrong. This group wants to change the world to help the Lord by "clearing a threshing floor before he [makes] his triumphant return" (Marty & Appleby, *The Glory and the Power*). They speak out against and challenge what they believe to be ungodly.

Separatist fundamentalists, in contrast, don't believe that any human efforts, including Terry's works, "will hasten Jesus' coming". This group tries to avoid anyone who is not a Christian. They see aspects of modernity's influence on the world as Satan's work and see involvement with politics as leading to the defeat of fundamentalism because of such a view. Separatist fundamentalists withdraw from the world and establish their own institutions based on fundamental biblical principles. They evangelize to others and are sure to remain righteous as they do so since they are working with those who have rejected Jesus. They do not want to compromise their souls or become corrupt in dealing with society. Bob Jones Jr., a separatist fundamentalist, said that fundamentalists need to believe, proclaim, defend, and obey the word of God (Marty & Appleby, *The Glory and the Power*). All in all, fundamentalists hold a common set of viewpoints, but diverge on how they go about *making disciples of all nations*.

### QUESTION 3:

The Gush Emunim is a Jewish Religious group. They look for signs of faith by drawing information from the Bible. They use the Bible as evidence of the importance of reclaiming the

land that belonged to Abraham in the Holy Bible. They believe that this land was promised to them by God in the Bible. They are fighting back to regain a physical lost territory. They also want to return to the Golden age before the Romans took over and Israel belonged to the Jews. They believe this period demonstrates the importance of having an Judaic state, and want to reclaim what belonged to them.

*Some of their men*  
The Haredim is another Judaic religious group. They discuss the Jewish Bible, the Torah, for 18 hours a day. This is how they scandalize. Scandalizing is choosing specific issues on to make a stand, knowing that these issues will offend and wake up others. They are making a stand that nothing is more important than studying and discussing the word of God. They differ from the Gush in the sense that they think Zionism, the reclaiming of Palestine, is a distraction. They consider the Gush to be trying to do God's work for him. If the Jews were meant to have Palestine, God will give it to them and they do not have to fight so hard for a state. They aim at returning to a different Golden age than the Gush, the age of the European Ghettos. They dress in traditional clothing to make a statement and get noticed. They believe this period is when pure Jewish faith and commitment existed. Everyone was confined together and had to work together to help each other.

Even though the Gush and the Haredim may seem quite different they are both considered religious fundamentalist. As mentioned above, the Gush and Haredim both want to return to a Golden age. The Gush's Golden age is before the Roman Empire took over their land and the Haredim's is during the Jewish Ghettos, when the Jews were all united even without material items. Both the Gush and Haredim believe in taking a literal interpretation of the Bible. The Gush believes the Bible has proven to them that Israel is the land of the Jews, and the Haredim believe that the Bible hold all the answers and that is why they discuss it all day.

Similar to fundamentalism, both the Gush and the Haredim believe in scandalizing. They want to make a stand about what is right for their religions and are not worried about making a scene. The Gush will protest till they get their promise land, and the Haredim will ignore typical social norms; such as work and typical clothing, until others begin to take notice and interest in their beliefs.

#### Question #4

Whenever there is any discussion about the word “liberal” in general, one will probably hear the word “change” in the very next sentence. The religious definition of liberal is rather compatible with the general one. “There is something wrong with the tradition and we need to change it.” Most followers of the religious Liberal Reform would agree with this statement. The core of any religious Liberal Reform is the

introduction of a new idea, but in the way that is not intended reverse the clock. It is essentially forward-looking, always open for new ideas and more modern outlooks.

Liberal Reform in Christianity complies with the general characteristics of religious liberal reform. The main religious idea promoted by Christian Liberal reform movement could be the change of the tradition. In difference to Christian (Protestant) Fundamentalists, liberals do not seek to regain any “territory that has been lost to the evil aspects of modernity.” Rather, most of them are in favor of dramatic change that would reshape the religious traditions to make them fit well into today’s modern world. Matching very well with the big and dramatic change, the idea of “demythologizing” is also very popular among the liberals. This idea was introduced by Rudolf Bulltman, the professor of New Testament at Marburg University, who believed that blind acceptance of mythology would be completely irrational.

Christian fundamentalists read mythological stories very literally, while liberals believe that these stories have metaphorical meaning. Not reading the Bible in the literal sense influenced Marcus Borg, the Christian theologian, to propose the idea that “the Bible is not wholly word of God.” Nevertheless, this is tremendously different compared to the fundamentalist view of the Bible. Another aspect that distinguishes the liberal reform from fundamentalism in Christianity is the acceptance of modernity, in particular, the theory of evolution. Liberals that include Marcus Borg, Thomas Troger and Robert Brown are accepting the fact that we are living in the world that is a lot more modern compared to the early ages. They recognized the theory of evolution as valid, while the fundamentalists still refer to it as “bad science” or not a science at all.

Similar to the liberal reform in Christianity, Reform Judaism also fits the general description of religious liberalism discussed in the first paragraph of this section. The same way one can see it within Christianity, Jewish liberals and fundamentalists sharply disagree when it comes to change and tradition. Orthodox Jews firmly oppose radical change, while the Reform Judaism essentially wants dynamic changes and innovations. It came along with believers who picked the option of “modernizing” in order to save Judaism. The first big change of Judaism had to do with the worship traditions. Jewish Reformists abandoned prayers for the coming of a personal Messiah. One could ask,

“Why?” and the answer is simple, “Because they are giving up on mythology!” This is the exact same as the concepts of “demythologizing” in Christian Liberal Reform.

Reform Judaism also went away from Hebrew by becoming “vernacular,” meaning that they started to read the Torah in their own languages. These couple of new ideas led to Progressive Revelation: a set of new ideas that came from no one else but God himself. The central feature of Progressive Revelation is that God continues to reveal the truth and to speak to people. Particularly in the United States, the Reform called for liturgical revisions and emphasized the “never-ending” task of moral improvement.

#5

Part 1

This first statement is only slightly accurate. Christian and Judaic fundamentalists do not reject modernity as a whole, but they do reject certain aspects of modernity, such as scientific discoveries like the theory of evolution. They reject these certain aspects because they conflict with their religious beliefs. These fundamentalists do look to the past and wish to return to a society in which Christian teachings are practiced by all of society and laws are based on Christian principles, but they do not wish this to be a pre-modern society. Fundamentalist are accepting of most of modernity, so they do not wish to return to a time before telephones or computers, nor do they wish to give up things like their cars, but they do wish to return to a more "true Christian" society.

Part 2

This second statement contains very little truth. Most Christian and Judaic traditionalists do not reject modernity, but they tend to be less aware of the pressures that it has brought upon religion. They are generally accepting of modernity so they accept most modern science but they believe that science and religion can co-exist in today's modern world. Traditionalists emphasize the old traditions of their religions but they do not necessarily claim that everything in the Bible is literally true. Christian traditionalist believe in Jesus and follow his teachings, but they do not get caught up in having to believe everything as literally true, they stress important religious beliefs like "love thy neighbor".

### Part 3

This final statement is once again partially true but not entirely. It is very true that Christian and Judaic liberal reformers do accept modernity but it is completely false to say that they reject the value of religious traditions. Liberal reformers may not believe some of the mythological or outdated religious beliefs to be literally true but they do believe they are metaphorically true and that there is value in continuing to teach them. They do not reject these religious traditions, but they want to alter them so that they can make sense and be applied in the new modern world that has emerged and is continuing to change.