NOVA RELIGIO

The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions

VOLUME 1

NUMBER 2

APRIL 1998

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PUBLISHED BY SEVEN BRIDGES PRESS
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Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions (ISSN 1092-6690) is published twice a year in April and October by Seven Bridges Press, LLC., P. O. Box 958, Chappaqua, New York 10514-0958. Subscription rates for the United States: individuals, $25, institutions and libraries, $58; Canada: individuals, $36 U.S., institutions and libraries, $77 U.S.; International subscribers: individuals, $50 U.S., institutions and libraries, $95 U.S. Single copy rates: institutions $30, individuals $15. Please make all remittances payable to Seven Bridges Press, LLC, P. O. Box 958, Chappaqua, NY 10514-0958, in United States currency or its equivalent by postal or express money order or bank draft. FAX: 1-914-923-2580. Web site: www.novareligio.com.

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Articles are indexed in *Religion Index One: Periodicals.* Book reviews are indexed in *Book Review Index* and *Index to Book Reviews in Religion.*

ISSN: 1092-6690
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The Turner Diaries and Cosmotheism: William Pierce's Theology of Revolution

Brad Whitsel

ABSTRACT: The 19 April 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City brought media attention to bear on a violent, futuristic novel that had been widely circulated in the radical right political subculture for nearly two decades prior to the disaster. Although the media would not explore the connection between William Pierce's novel, *The Turner Diaries*, and the bombing until weeks after it occurred, the book had incited violence before and was used earlier as a blueprint for launching a revolution against the federal government. In recent days, *The Turner Diaries* has received growing attention as a racist, anti-government tract. However, what remains unexplored about the book is its millenarian message and the apocalyptic theology that motivates its reclusive author. Pierce, who is the director of National Alliance, a neo-Nazi group headquartered in West Virginia, embraces a worldview shaped by a philosophy he refers to as "Cosmotheism." This syncretic belief combines scientific evolutionary theory with racial mysticism in its construction of reality. Cosmotheism, like all millennial beliefs of a catastrophic nature, mandates the destruction of the present order of earthly existence before a new era of redemption and bliss for the community of the chosen can unfold.

Although the evidence is still inconclusive, it appears as if William Pierce's pseudonymously authored 1978 novel, *The Turner Diaries*, may have been used as a blueprint for the 19 April 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Sources close to Timothy McVeigh, who was found guilty in June 1997 of the murder of the 168 people who died in the blast, revealed that the Gulf War veteran was utterly absorbed with the book's violent message.[1] While the media devoted much attention to the eerie similarities between the novel's plotline and the circumstances of the bombing, this possible linkage was pursued superficially. As a consequence of the shallow treatment of the novel and its author by the media, the religious vision of *The Turner Diaries* remains underexplored both by academic and law enforcement groups.

Unfortunately, a consensus has emerged which narrowly places *Turner* in the literary genre of "terrorist literature." This categorization, while

partially accurate, fails to perceive the book in terms other than a "how-to" manual designed to enlighten its readers concerning the tactics of urban guerrilla warfare. Curiously, the renewed interest in *Turner* following the Oklahoma City bombing has not extended to consideration of the book's chiliastic dream for the future. This oversight is strange since once before the novel's apocalyptic message may well have served as the springboard for acts of domestic terrorism. Robert Mathews, a martyred hero to many on the radical right fringe, almost certainly regarded *Turner* as a canonical text. A one-time associate of William Pierce, Mathews used *Turner* as a guide to organize his own terrorist secret society (the Order) and followed aspects of the novel's plot in his group's use of rituals and tactics.[2]

From 1983 to 1984 the members of the Order conducted a two-year campaign of counterfeiting and robbery to finance a racial revolution in America. The objective for Mathews' organization was to trigger a rebellion of the white population against the forces of ZOG, the Zionist Occupation Government of the United States, which was believed to be engineering the destruction of the white race and its Aryan heritage.[3] For Mathews, this insurrectionary goal was driven by a divine imperative which ran far deeper than political concerns. Having become captivated with the spiritual aspects of racialism,[4] Mathews heard in Pierce's fantasy novel a call for a holy war and the promise of a new dawn for those committed to the Aryan ideal of life.

Although *Turner* has often been referred to as the "white supremacist bible" by the media, more attention has been given to its tactical and strategic plans for domestic terrorism than to the book's unusual spiritual impulse.[5] What has been lacking thus far in the examination of the novel is a careful scrutiny of its millenarian overtones and an assessment of its implications for holy terrorism. I suggest that *Turner* should be viewed as a theological statement, marked by a vision of divine transformation and a sense of ultimacy derived from a fusion of racial and spiritual ideas. By examining the novel through this conceptual lens, our understanding of the strange appeal of *Turner* to a potentially violent faction of the antigovernment subculture may be substantially broadened.

PIERCE AND THE COSMOTHEIST WORLDVIEW

The Turner Diaries is the first and better known of two novels written by William Pierce, a figure generally viewed as an intellectual leader of the American far right. Having sold nearly 200,000 copies,[6] *Turner* has been remarkably well-received for a book with an obvious fringe theme.

The futuristic story unfolds in the 1990s and recounts the experiences of Earl Turner, a leader of an underground guerrilla force (the Organization) that engages in a campaign of terrorism against a Jewish-controlled American government. Turner's group of devoted revolutionaries succeeds in carrying out a series of sabotage operations, bombings, and assassinations which result in the occurrence of an all-out race war and the eventual violent dissolution of the central government.

The novel concludes with an apocalyptic vision of the future in which the Organization, having established a separate "white territory" in California, initiates a global nuclear war. The nuclear strikes carry strange symbolic connotations, both for their timing and for their intended consequences. Undertaken in the late 1990s, the worldwide nuclear apocalypse occurs just prior to the arrival of the new millennium, the dawn of a pristine era promising glory and fulfillment for the Organization and its racial kinsmen. Equally chiliastic is the totality of destruction wrought by the weapons themselves and the metaphorical "cleansing" effect they seem to possess. By unleashing the forces of mass destruction against its enemies, the terrorists erase from the face of the earth the impure "alien hordes" who have long impeded the evolution of a new species—the rejuvenated white race.[7]

The millennial subcurrents of *Turner* convey a deeper message than that which is often associated with the book. While Pierce intended for this fictional work to promote the ideas of his racialist organization (the National Alliance) to a wider readership, *Turner* also reflects the author's observance of a belief system steeped in conceptions of ultimate things.[8] Strangely, this central feature of Pierce's worldview has gone essentially unnoticed despite his occasional statements and writings suggesting his adherence to a divine cosmology.

Pierce's gravitation toward extremism appears to have begun during his days at Oregon State University in the early 1960s. While employed there as an assistant professor of physics (1962-65), Pierce became increasingly preoccupied with what he saw as the "racial erosion" of American society.[9] Convinced that the university environment fostered a "politically correct atmosphere" which prevented an honest dialogue on race from taking place, Pierce gave up on an academic career and shortly thereafter immersed himself completely in a quest for radical solutions to America's "race problem."[10]

Following a short association with George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party (ANP) in Arlington, Virginia, Pierce continued his work as a racial activist with a number of ANP successor organizations. By 1974, after having worked in high-ranking positions for a number of groups in the neo-Nazi orbit, he founded the National Alliance, an Arlington-based group devoted to promoting the progress of the white race.[11] In 1985, Pierce relocated his organizational headquarters to a

300-acre property in a remote portion of southeastern West Virginia. At this site, Pierce and a few members of his group run the organization's day-to-day operations, which involve the printing and distribution of racial separatist propaganda through the National Alliance's literature-selling arm, National Vanguard Books.

From the time of its inception, the National Alliance has separated itself from other neo-Nazi groups by its adoption of a distinctive and highly literate organizational rhetoric and a guiding philosophy that invokes sacred themes. Although the disparate ranks of the American neo-Nazi circle have commonly shared ideals loosely based on "Blood and Soil" mythology and Nordic lore, this general movement has tended to be more ideological than spiritual. In marked contrast to these "Hitler cults" which emerged in the wake of the post-Rockwell Nazi movement, Pierce's National Alliance sought to establish itself as a community of the Elect galvanized by a common belief in racial destiny and the Aryan path to godhood.

In order to understand Pierce's millenarian worldview, it is necessary briefly to explore the racially rooted theology upon which his organization is based. This philosophy, which Pierce calls "Cosmotheism," resonates in his literary work, particularly in *Turner*, and provides adherents with a totalistic logic explaining the order of the universe.[12] Blending Darwinian evolutionary theory with ideas from ancient Teutonic legend, Cosmotheism synthesizes the scientific with the mystical in its construction of reality. While the empirical and otherworldly components of this belief system might initially appear incompatible, in a strange sense each reinforces the other in an all-encompassing concept for human evolutionary development.[13]

Pierce perceives the world in terms of separate, biologically differentiated evolutions of racial groups. Reflecting strong traces of the theories of scientific racism he read while at Oregon State University,[14] Pierce's conception of racial progress would seem, at first glance, to be merely an extension of the early twentieth century's "racial anthropology" literature. Here it is important to see that Pierce's system of thought diverges significantly from the purely scientific structure adopted by early racial theorists. In the Cosmotheist thoughtworld, evolution takes on a spiritual meaning as mankind follows predetermined courses of racial destiny. Pierce has described this process as an "upward path" with its end point leading to the goal of "oneness with the Creator."[15] This ultimate Cosmotheist objective, the white race's realization of godhood, is viewed as a genetically wired certainty. According to Pierce, who has lectured on the subject to small gatherings of National Alliance members, the race's "divine spark" has propelled it to greatness throughout history and separates it from all other forms of life.[16]

The concept of a unique Aryan path to godhood has parallels with the "secret wisdom" beliefs found in ancient Gnosticism. Although

lacking the racial mystique that would come to preoccupy some of its distant offshoots, Gnosticism established an early foundation for alternative expressions of salvationism. Embracing a mysterious and syncretic belief system borrowed from Platonism, oriental religions, Judaism, and Christianity, Gnosticism flourished in the first few centuries C.E. in the Mediterranean Basin as a counter religious movement to orthodox Christianity.[17] The importance of Gnosticism as a forebearer of other elite, alternative theological systems is found in its dualistic interpretation of reality. Perceiving in themselves a divine spark that differentiated those within the sect from outsiders, the early Gnostics held that the realization of spiritual unity with God could be achieved through secret revelation and initiation into the group's esoteric tradition.[18] This knowledge, which was deemed unavailable to group outsiders, permitted the "release" of one's godly potential, and thus facilitated the "insider's" personal path to divinity.

The Gnostic gravitation toward dualism and group secrecy was continued by a host of esoteric orders in the Western world. In particular, notions of occult revelations resonated with many of the secret societies which drew their inspiration from the Gnostic worldview. It is interesting to note that the uniquely German permutations of Gnostic belief, which in the nineteenth century combined Volkish nationalism with the mysticism of legendary secret societies, became the prime expositors of a "revolutionary gnosis" that possessed both a racial basis and a political agenda.[19] The best-known of these relatively obscure ideas was Ariosophy, an Aryan variant of the era's widely popular Theosophy. Blending German nationalistic sentiments, occultism, and Teutonic belief, Ariosophy emerged as a "crisis cult" in response to its adherents' sense of dislocation within late nineteenth-century German society and the disunified nature of the German state.[20]

Pierce has consistently displayed a fascination with various figures who are commonly associated with the Western esoteric tradition. Throughout his writing career, Pierce has admired the metaphysical ideas of mystical philosophers such as Meister Eckhart (1260-1327 C.E.) and Giordano Bruno (1548-1600 C.E.).[21] Scholars have generally located Eckhart and Bruno in the lineage of esotericists whose brand of mysticism incorporated Gnostic and Neoplationist themes.[22] For Pierce, these theological scholars provided their race with a glimpse of the Divine in man's soul. Inspired by similar views about the innate urge to achieve union with a higher nature, Eckhart and Bruno observed cosmologies which, while subtly differentiated, stressed the possibility of the soul's perfectibility.[23] It was, in fact, the mystical reference to this divine spark, a point of central important in Eckhart's philosophy,[24] which Pierce integrated into his own racially based cosmology. In a 1978 essay entitled "The Faustian Spirit," Pierce employs the Gnostic understanding of the soul's upward path in his racially deterministic framework of thought:

> The race which is the bearer of this spirit must, therefore, be doubly careful that its genetic basis is preserved—that it does not become a race solely of lawyers, clerks, laborers, and merchants but remains a race also of philosophers, explorers, poets, and inventors: of seekers of ultimate knowledge, of strivers toward the perfection which is Godhood.[25]

Cosmotheism appears to be philosophically related to this ancient esoteric tradition in some important ways. First, Cosmotheism can be viewed as an extension of the same type of protest subculture which organized around groups in the Gnostic constellation. Galvanized by the feeling that society was flawed and on the wrong course of development, these groups turned inward, away from the surrounding social system, and sought security in a group-specific, utopian image of the world. Second, despite the chronological gap between the emergence of the Gnostic outlook and that of Cosmotheism, there are similarities in their respective uses of dualism. Employed by each as a means to divide society into camps comprised of the "enlightened" and the "unknowing," these philosophies provide believers with a neat, systematized way of differentiating between insider and outsider. Such an outlook provides the group with a sense of unity and a means to coalesce around shared ideals which are held to be superior to those of the outside culture.[26]

DESTRUCTION AND REBIRTH

Cosmotheism is partly differentiated from what some scholars of radical mass movements have termed the "reconstructed tradition," which defines the outlook of groups seeking to return society to a past golden age.[27] Finding the dominant culture unsatisfying and threatening, separatist movements of this type are mobilized around inspirational themes taken from a putatively untarnished past. Despite sharing this tendency to look backward through history—particularly to Viking lore and classical antiquity—for models of an earlier, glorified existence, Cosmotheism possesses an inherently forward-looking character which extends from its emphasis on evolutionary development. In this respect, the Cosmotheist vision for the future is presented as a linear path of racial progress, with each forward step taking the race closer to the threshold of divinity. Whereas other factions in the radical right constellation (such as the Christian Identity fold and the various Klan organizations) perceive in bygone eras a purity of life to which they long to return,[28] the National Alliance uses utopian imagery drawn from

both the past and the future. It is the more forward-looking component of Pierce's philosophy which carries revolutionary implications.

Like all millennial beliefs, Cosmotheism is a salvific philosophy that anticipates the dissolution of an existing world order and the eventual realization of a new and perfect society. Its bio-racial underpinnings reflect a deterministic view of history in which the anticipated age of ultimate renewal is arrived at through evolutionary means. This process of "racial advancement," as Pierce sees it, is preordained, and thus part of a cosmic plan for universal order.[29] The connotations of logical progress in Cosmotheism, albeit disturbing, convey optimism about the future, an attitude which is linked to an underlying faith in racial destiny. But unlike those "progressive" millenarians whose beliefs are anchored in a view of history defined by constant improvement,[30] Pierce and his adherents envision the secular world in an eroded and decaying condition.

The conviction that the entire social system is headed for destruction is actually a key source of faith for millenarians whose dreams of renewal are contingent upon the realization of a sweeping disaster period. This system of thought, which religion scholar Catherine Wessinger has termed "catastrophic millennialism," is predicated upon a group's belief that the imminent destruction of the existing order must first take place before the perfect age, the new millennium, is brought about.[31] From the perspective of the believer, the catastrophe initiates the process whereby the forces of total worldly transformation are set in motion. In this vision, hope for the future is inextricably tied to the catastrophic event which alone has the power to recast an impure environment in a more hallowed form.

The redemptive quality of the apocalyptic vision for world transformation is understood in two ways by catastrophic millenarians. At one level, the disaster completely eradicates the past, giving birth to the new order in which life starts in a pristine form. The second level at which redemption occurs takes place within the community, which sees itself as benefitting from the destruction of the old way of life. As Norman Cohn observed, for revolutionary chiliasts the meaning of the Heavenly City on earth is inherently exclusive. Salvation is reserved for the "chosen people" who will reap the reward for their faith when history is brought to its consummation.[32]

Catastrophic millennial theory provides us with a starting point from which to gauge the connection between disaster and salvation, but it fails to elaborate on an important aspect of this nexus. What is left undeveloped is the notion that disaster assumes a role in the renewal process that carries with it a faith-sustaining power. When considered from this vantage point, catastrophic events designed to bring down the decayed order of things perform a critical function in the totalistic

mindset of those engaged in "the final struggle." This function, as Michael Barkun notes, is illusory and gives catastrophically inclined millenarians the appearance that the ultimate dream for change is unfolding.[33] Thus, for the believer, the disaster may be seen to be as much an act of self-confirmation, or reassurance, as it is part of the transformative cycle. At this point we begin to encounter the strong possibility that disaster is itself part of the millennial dream and not merely a precursor to it or a separate time on the millennial clock. The result is that whereas disaster and the era of perfection might, in other situations, be viewed as distinct epochs of history, here they are joined together in a synthesis of revolutionary change.

Pierce's conception of total change from the degraded state of present affairs to a sublime future has as its major obstacle the societal institutions which are believed to be responsible for the decline of white America. Presented in National Alliance literature in pathological terms, the government, courts, media, universities, and all other vestiges of the modern democratic social system are considered sick and inherently corrupted.[34] Comprising the core of this societal power structure are the same groups Pierce portrayed in *Turner* as "unassimiliable," especially Jews and non-whites.[35] These groups, along with the government and its supporters, are seen as the promoters of a subversive "diversity" agenda which has as its goal the disintegration of white culture. There is, however, a strong hint of hopefulness to be found in the National Alliance's appraisal of America's diseased condition. As Pierce points out in a recent article he wrote outlining the future strategy of his organization, the nation's advanced state of social decay represents the beginning of the end for the old Order:

> The situation in America is no longer quasi-static, as it was during most of the 1970s and 1980s. During that earlier period the Jewish media were able to keep nearly all of the public hypnotized, to provide a false reality for them in the place of the real world around them. . . . Now the process of decay and disintegration has accelerated; now the hypnosis is beginning to wear off as reality becomes too harsh to ignore. This process will continue to accelerate in the future.[36]

TAPPING INTO THE MILLENNIAL OUTLOOK

The theme of "rebirth" undergrids all expressions of millennialism; but when catastrophe is eagerly anticipated as a precondition for earthly bliss, critical questions should be asked about the implications of the group's beliefs. Above all, it is necessary to consider whether the group's vision of disaster promotes action on the part of adherents to "trigger"

the events leading to the perfect age. It is this specific behavior, the act of forcing the millennium through human effort, which may place the group on a collision course with society. The distinction between the passive expectation and active promotion of catastrophe is important because it effectively separates disaster-prone millennialism into either nonviolent or potentially violent types. When we turn our attention to the Cosmotheist impulse which informs Pierce's literary work, it becomes clear that the doctrine legitimizes violence as a tool for implementing its program for change.

The Turner Diaries' fictionalized route to racial Armageddon provides us with a glimpse of Cosmotheism's track of logic. Presented in the novel in its most highly distilled form, the philosophy mandates the complete eradication of enemies who are portrayed as subhuman. Only by purging the world of their degenerate and impure society can a new system—an Aryan order of life—be created. The pure vs. impure dynamic in *Turner* does not lend itself to strategies of change which are less than total. This interpretive framework is ultimately reductionistic. Absolute distinctions drawn between "the righteous" and "the alien" take the form of a timeless truth and propel the believer on a course running counter to the interests and values of the larger society.

With these insights in mind, we can begin to see how Pierce's Cosmotheist beliefs, if followed to their logical ends, may activate the revolutionary forces needed to overthrow the opposing power structure. As the designs for an Aryan society are increasingly thwarted by the despised regime, some members of the faith may take it upon themselves to "make history." Although Pierce has been quick to dismiss as "impulsive and overzealous" the perpetrators of the Oklahoma City bombing,[37] his early writings reveal an entirely different perspective on the use of terrorism to further organizational goals. In a 1971 essay, Pierce minces no words about the resolve necessary to do battle with the "system":

> We do not need to reason with the monster; we need to put a bullet into its brain and hammer a stake through its heart. If that means blood and chaos and battling the alien enemy from house to house in burning cities throughout our land—then, by God, it is better that we get on with it now than later.[38]

While *Turner*'s call for anti-government mobilization appears in the shape of a religious imperative, the novel's millennial hopes depend on the psychology of its readers. Touching upon the same general themes normally found in the discourse of the far right, particularly alienation and nativism, *Turner*'s threatening motif is peculiarly well-suited to appeal to a Manichaean mindset. In this sense, Pierce's work does not so much reorient the beliefs of readers, but rather taps into the psychological

outlook of those already inclined to see the world in apocalyptic and conspiratorial terms.[39] Here, *Turner*'s versatility as an instigator for anti-system activism merits special attention. Depending upon the convictions of the reader, the "enemy" may assume a number of forms, all of which become psychologically reconstituted as part of the larger New World Order. This does not suggest, however, that all those finding confirmation of their beliefs in *Turner* are blind to its sanction for religious warfare. One case, of course, stands out. Robert Mathews' close association with William Pierce, described by some as a student-mentor relationship,[40] points to the probability that he was a Cosmotheist believer.[41]

It is likely that the evolutionary basis of Pierce's syncretic Aryan theology lacks the explosive dynamism required to mobilize legions of religiously inspired terrorists. But, when dealing with issues of faith, the numerical size of an extremist millenarian movement may have little bearing on its ability to conduct sacred warfare. Visualizing themselves as participants in a cosmic-level battle with the forces of evil, religious terrorists are moved by a desire to reshape the existing order in accordance with the divine will. This source of inspiration is fueled by the group's profound sense of alienation and a certainty that its way of life is imperiled.[42]

Pierce's 1989 novel, *Hunter*, may provide us with some perspective on the author's maturation as a revolutionary prophet. Eschewing the fanciful strategic guerrilla war theme laid out in *Turner* for a more realistic plot,[43] Pierce focuses on the activities of a lone terrorist (the fictional Oscar Yeager) in his second novel. Yeager, a self-employed engineer and contractor in the Washington, D.C. area, comes to the realization that his one-man attempts at striking out against the government by random assassinations will not bring about its demise. However, the central character comes to see that by creating an environment in which such acts trigger exponentially greater effects, the isolated terrorist incident can be useful as a revolutionary tactic. Joining forces with the National League, a small band of like-minded revolutionaries, Yeager and the group undertake a calculated campaign aimed at inciting a nationwide backlash against Jews. Using a media propaganda strategy to win the allegiance of disaffected whites opposing the Jewish domination of America, the National League succeeds in fomenting a state of racial discord across the country. As tensions rise, American cities are reduced to combat zones where armed conflicts take place between minorities and whites. Like *Turner*, the novel ends on an apocalyptic note as America dissolves along racial lines and an all-out race war seems an inevitability.[44]

Pierce's apparent advocacy of a new strategy for insurrection, that of the small propaganda-utilizing cadre, would seem tailor-made for

contemporary times when the far right's activities are being increasingly scrutinized by law enforcement organizations. Prefiguring the general strategy of "leaderless resistance" outlined in 1992 by Christian Identity figure Louis Beam,[45] the protagonists of *Hunter* make use of the media to mobilize individuals or small groups in support of a racial cause. Such a plan improved upon the dated tactics of *Turner* for two reasons: leaderless terrorists are difficult for the state to monitor and control, and, lacking central direction, the "cells" or individuals engaging in illegal activity provide the inciting policy with a high degree of plausible deniability from the actor's endeavors.

CONCLUSION

Although Pierce's perception of the best-suited strategy for revolutionary violence may have changed from the time he wrote *Turner*, the same Cosmotheist ideals still influence his work. While the golden age vision in *Hunter* is presented in a less obvious manner than in the clearly millennial context of *Turner*, a Cosmotheist impulse also provides *Hunter*'s protagonists with their sense of racial duty. At a primordial level of understanding, the "heroes" in *Hunter* know that an integrated, multi-racial world is unnatural. By instigating racial unrest, the major characters in the novel set the stage for the unfolding forces of racial evolution to purge the country of its alien presence.

Pierce is not alone in his role as the far right's expositor of millennial violence. In recent days, other writers on America's rightward fringe have succeeded in attracting a limited following of sympathizers and in captivating the attention of media, law enforcement, and various interest groups. Of these, two stand out. The first is Richard Kelly Hoskins, whose 1990 book, *Vigilantes of Christendom*, tells the story of the Phineas Priesthood. Although Hoskins has been writing in the racialist genre since the late 1950s, his *Vigilantes of Christendom* appears to have gained the reclusive author a significant measure of recent notoriety. Tracing the existence of a divinely ordained group of zealots from the biblical stories of Phineas, Hoskins maintains that individuals from this special priesthood have appeared throughout history whenever God's Law was broken.[46] According to Hoskins, the Phineans act as agents of God's wrath and, in accordance with their holy duty, "execute judgment" against those held responsible for the corruption of Christian society.[47] Hoskins, whose theological justifications for violence seem based in a Christian Identity worldview, has either intentionally or unintentionally had his beliefs operationalized. Not unlike *Turner*, which has at least once incited

a receptive mind to violence, *Vigilantes of Christendom* has already motivated a handful of sympathizers to place themselves in the self-perceived role of the Phineas Priest.[48]

Less well-known than Hoskins' *Vigilantes of Christendom* is another violent work of growing fringe popularity with roots in the Odinist tradition. Written under the pen name O.T. Gunnarsson, the anonymous 1993 novel *Hear the Cradle Song* mimicks *Turner*'s race war theme, but sets the futuristic action in a localized area (southern California) and substitutes an Odinist cosmology for the implicit Cosmotheism in Pierce's first book, after which Gunnarsson's saga is clearly modeled. The novel's protagonists, a contingent of Odinists who heroically defend a white community in coastal southern California against invasion by Hispanic and Chinese armies, rely on their bravery and cunning to defeat the numerically superior racial outsiders in an America torn apart by economic turmoil and social chaos. The millennial subcurrents of *Hear the Cradle Song* surface conspicuously at the novel's conclusion when, following the final victory over the invaders, the white community purges itself of troublesome Jews and homosexuals and begins a new future as a racially pure, orderly utopia.[49] Gunnarsson's novel is a modern-day extension of the Golden Age ideology embraced by the youthful Odinist subculture of Weimar-era Germany. Turning to the legendary Teutonic gods for inspiration during the darkest days of the interwar period, disillusioned German youth revived pagan deities as a means of reconstructing a time of imagined greatness.[50]

Both *Vigilantes of Christendom* and *Hear the Cradle Song* cater to an audience attracted to a reconstructed vision of a fanciful past and in search of a decisive plan for instituting order in a world perceived as having gone awry. However, despite their innate differences with the predominantly forward-looking nature of Cosmotheism, all share a common trait: each emphasize the use of "purifying" violence enmeshed within a philosophy of the divine. That such works are gaining increasing attention in the far right subculture at this moment in time may not be surprising. Countercultural ideas of an intellectual and quasi-religious character have flourished during previous fin de siècle periods, and the arrival of the new millennium conveys images of a historical slate wiped clean of the past.[51] At a sociopsychological level, this turn of the cosmic clock has contributed to a pervasive mood of anticipation. For millennialists within this protest movement, however, the hopes associated with the new dawn of time involve the utter destruction of the old order of things before utopia can be achieved. It is this concept—the notion of eradicating a corrupted and decayed realm of life—which carries serious implications for public order. The potential consequences of such outbreaks of catastrophic millennial activism oblige scholars and police agencies to expand their efforts at understanding the beliefs of those willing to use violence to usher in the perfect age.

ENDNOTES

[1] Mark Hamm, *Apocalypse in Oklahoma: Waco and Ruby Ridge Revisited* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 144-45.

[2] Kevin Flynn and Gary Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood: Inside America's Racist Underground* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 140.

[3] Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 11.

[4] Flynn and Gerhardt, 121-22.

[5] "Links of Anti-Semitic Bank Provokes 6-State Parley," *New York Times*, 27 December 1984, B7.

[6] This figure is cited on the inside cover of *The Turner Diaries* (Hillsboro, West Virginia: National Vanguard Books, 1978). Scholars have generally accepted this sales figure as accurate. See, for example, Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post, *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 206.

[7] Ibid., 210.

[8] I base this impression upon my personal interview with William Pierce conducted at his West Virginia Cosmotheist Community on 5 January 1993. This interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. Pierce proved willing to answer all of my questions concerning Cosmotheism, his writing career, and his views on the current social and political condition of America. However, he refused to divulge any information regarding the numerical size of the National Alliance.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] William Pierce, *Human Dignity: A Racial Ethic* (Hillsboro, West Virginia: National Vanguard Books, 1978). This is a recorded speech given by Pierce at Arlington, Virginia before a small audience of National Alliance members.

[12] While Cosmotheist beliefs are most clearly evident in Pierce's first novel, the same conception of ultimate truth also informs his second novel, *Hunter* (Hillsboro, West Virginia: National Vanguard Books, 1989). Pierce has been a relatively prolific writer. In addition to his novels, he has written many editorials and essays for the publications with which he has been associated over the years. For a good understanding of the Cosmotheistic impulses which move Pierce, see his "The Radicalizing of an American," in *The Best of Attack! and National Vanguard Tabloid* (Hillsboro, WV: National Vanguard Books, 1989), 124-26. The article is one of many written by Pierce found in this compendium of essays marketed by National Vanguard Books.

[13] See Brad Whitsel, "Aryan Visions for the Future in the West Virginia Mountains," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7, no. 4 (1995): 129.

[14] Pierce, interview with author.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] John Saliba, *Understanding New Religious Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdman Publishing Co., 1985), 39.

[18] Ibid., 39.

[19] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazi Ideology* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 31.

[20] Ibid., 29.

[21] William Pierce, *Cosmotheism: Wave of the Future*, audiotape of lecture by William Pierce at Arlington, Virginia (Hillsboro, WV: National Vanguard Books, 1977). In this address, Pierce pays tribute to Meister Eckhart for his visionary ideas about human perfectibility. Also see William Pierce, "Giordano Bruno: Visionary and Martyr," in *The Best of Attack! and National Vanguard Tabloid*, 165.

[22] Emily Sellon and Renée Weber, "Theosophy and the Theosophical Society," *Modern Esoteric Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, eds. Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1992), 311.

[23] Antoine Faivre, "Ancient and Medieval Sources of Modern Esoteric Movements," in *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, eds. Faivre and Needleman, 7.

[24] Oliver Davies, ed., *The Rhineland Mystics: Writings of Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, and Jan van Ruusbroec and Selections from the "Theologica Germanica" and the "Book of Spiritual Poverty"* (New York: Crossroad, 1980), 30-34.

[25] William Pierce, "The Faustian Spirit," in *The Best of Attack! and National Vanguard Tabloid*, 145.

[26] Philip J. Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1987), 33.

[27] Jeffrey Kaplan, "Right Wing Violence in North America," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7, no. 1 (1995): 57-58.

[28] Michael Barkun, "Religion and Violence in the Christian Identity Movement" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 3 September 1993).

[29] Pierce, *Cosmotheism.*

[30] For an understanding of the distinctions between catastrophic and progressive millennial thought, see Catherine Wessinger, "Millennialism With and Without the Mayhem," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, eds. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 49-51.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 308.

[33] Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 210.

[34] *What is the National Alliance?: Ideology and Program of the National Alliance* (Hillsboro, WV: National Vanguard Books, 1993). This pamphlet describes the beliefs of National Alliance members.

[35] It should be noted that in *The Turner Diaries* other groups, including feminists, liberal Christians, and conservatives, are also viewed as "obstacles" to the goals of the Organization.

[36] *What is the National Alliance?*, 6.

[37] William Pierce, "OKC Bombing and America's Future" (address given 29 April 1995 on the radio program *American Dissident Voices*). This is a weekly, short-wave program broadcasted from WRNO Radio, New Orleans.

[38] William Pierce, "Why Revolution?," in *The Best of Attack! and National Vanguard Tabloid*, 9.

[39] Michael Barkun, "Religion, Militias, and Oklahoma City: The Mind of Conspiratorialists," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 8, no. 1 (1996): 59.

[40] Flynn and Gerhardt, 271.

[41] Ibid., 96. It is also known that Mathews studied Odinism. In some respects, Odinism and Cosmotheism are quite similar. However, as a reconstructed belief, Odinism lacks the forward-looking, evolutionary character of Cosmotheism.

[42] Bruce Hoffman, "Holy Terror: The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 18 (1996): 273.

[43] Pierce, interview with author.

[44] William Pierce [Andrew MacDonald, pseud.], *Hunter* (Hillsboro, WV: National Vanguard Books, 1989), 259.

[45] Barkun, *Religion and The Racist Right*, 280. It bears attention that Pierce's new strategy for civil insurrection, as laid out in *Hunter*, preceded Beam's 1992 essay "Leaderless Resistance," which was included in the program of Rev. Pete Peters' Estes Park Conference of the same year.

[46] Richard Kelly Hoskins, *Vigilantes of Christendom* (Lynchburg, VA: The Virginia Publishing Company, 1990), 23. The tale of Phineas is taken from Psalms 106: "Then stood up Phineas, and executed judgment, and so the plague was stayed."

[47] Ibid., 26.

[48] "Possible Lead in Bomb Blast at Olympics," *New York Times*, 27 January 1997, A-3. Federal law enforcement officials reported that three men with ties to the Phineas Priesthood were considered suspects in the Olympic Park Bombing.

[49] O.T. Gunnarsson, *Hear the Cradle Song* (self-published, 1993). Marketed by the Institute for Historical Review, Newport Beach, CA.

[50] Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America: Millennarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 15.

[51] Walter Laqueur, "Once More with Feeling," *Society* 33, no. 1 (Nov./Dec. 1995): 16.

Goddess Religion, Postmodern Jewish Feminism, and the Complexity of Alternative Religious Identities

Melissa Raphael

ABSTRACT: This paper argues that Jewish Goddess feminism illustrates the complexity of alternative religious identities and their fluid, ambiguous, and sometimes intimate historical, cultural, and religious connections to mainstream religious identities.[1] While Jewish Goddess feminists find contemporary Judaism theologically and politically problematic, thealogy (feminist discourse on the Goddess and the divinity of femaleness) can offer them precisely the sacralization of female generativity that mainstream Judaism cannot. And yet the distinctions between present/former, alternative/mainstream religious identities are surely ambiguous where the celebration of the Goddess can at once reconstruct Jewish identity and deconstruct the notion of religious identity as a single or successive affiliation. It would seem that Jewish Goddess feminism epitomizes how late or postmodern religious identity may be plural and inclusive, shifting according to the subject's context and mood and according to the ideological perspective of the observer.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary Goddess movement comprises a spectrum of people committed to the celebration of female divinity and includes Pagans, those on the fringes of Judaism and Christianity, those using the Goddess as a symbol of women's liberation, and free spirits who celebrate the Goddess in ways peculiar to themselves. Most, but not all, in the Goddess movement are self-identified feminists.

This paper focuses on two distinct but related types of Jewish feminists in the Goddess movement.[2] Before describing these two types, however, it is important to state that both have repudiated patriarchal Judaism and celebrate the ancient Near Eastern goddesses once worshipped by syncretistic Israelites and the goddesses that have emerged in the Jewish mystical and esoteric traditions.[3] Together these constitute an authentic

Jewish heritage of women's religion that is available for feminist re-reading and reclaiming. Both types of Jewish Goddess feminists may also celebrate the goddesses of other religious traditions while continuing to acknowledge and even celebrate their ethnic and cultural identities—especially the traditional Jewish struggle for social justice and Judaism's this-worldly, non-ascetic quality, and rootedness in the seasonal cycle. Many Jewish Goddess feminists are reminded of their Jewishness by the anti-Semitism within the secular women's movement and the Goddess movement and remain as scarred as any Jew (survivor or otherwise) by the collective trauma of the Holocaust. But many of the traditional elements of Judaism have been jettisoned by Jewish Goddess feminists—namely, the strictly monotheistic worship of the one and only God (who—as King, Father and Lord—is masculine in character), the observance of Jewish law *as* law, and biblically-based Zionism.

What, then, are the two distinct types of Jewish Goddess feminism? First, there are what I would call "Jewish Goddess religionists" who, like the American witch Starhawk (Miriam Simos), value their Jewish cultural and religious heritage and accommodate elements of it within their new, predominantly Pagan identity. Jewish Goddess religionists are distinct from other Jewish Goddess feminists in that they invoke the names of the Jewish/Canaanite goddesses (among others) as aspects of the Goddess, rather than God. There are also Goddess religionists who are Jewish by birth but who consider themselves Pagan and are hostile or indifferent to Judaism.[4] The present article is not concerned with this type of Goddess religionist.

Second, there are "postmodern" Jewish feminists (as Nurit Zaidman would call them)[5] who celebrate the Goddess within the alternative Jewish community. Generally speaking, for them, the Goddess is a suppressed aspect of God, though often the terms are used interchangeably. Judaism continues to be relevant to postmodern Jewish feminists as both a political and emotional problem and (where it supplies evidence of female divinity and of justice-seeking) a spiritual and political resource. Postmodern Jewish feminists would not wish to make an absolute distinction between Jewish and Goddess spirituality; they inhabit the fuzzy middle between the two. The Goddess or goddesses associated with the Jewish tradition are integrated within an eclectic and nonsystematic notion of Judaism. Postmodern Jewish feminists argue that "there is evidence of an unbroken [Goddess] cult . . . from the time of the monarchy to the destruction of the second temple (c. 1000 B.C.E. - 70 C.E.)."[6] The goddesses the Hebrew Bible records as having been worshipped by syncretistic Israelites "can be used as a warrant to reintroduce Goddess worship and even polytheism into contemporary Jewish practice." Orthodoxy's views on the Goddess are considered no more authoritative than its position on women's religious leadership.[7] These women take what they perceive to be nourishing from the tradition and blend that with those sexual-

political and ecological qualities of feminist spirituality in which Judaism is believed to be deficient.[8] In practice this can mean that postmodern Jewish feminists customize what remains comfortable, meaningful, and useful from the tradition of their foremothers and fathers. It is in this way, and for these women, that thealogy—which elaborates on women's experience of the divinity of women as Goddess and on the political and ecological ramifications of that experience—can become something of a Jewish conversation with Judaism.[9]

Postmodern Jewish feminists' celebration of the Goddess does not, then, constitute a new or emergent religion.[10] Jenny Goodman makes her claim to a postmodern Jewish identity quite clear: "We read in the Torah stories of a holy war against the Goddess—and the woman in us screams in pain. How do we live with this tension. . . ? My answer—very Jewishly—is *we grapple with it.*" Goodman "raises her voice" against Jewish misogyny, speaks out for the Goddess, *and* holds on to her Jewish identity by arguing that Abraham's original mystical vision of the interconnectedness and Oneness of God must include the Goddess.[11]

It must be stressed, however, that it is not always possible to make a clear practical or theoretical distinction between Jewish Goddess religionists and postmodern Jewish feminists; each category can shade into the other. For this reason, I have not put my discussion of the two categories in separate sections, and, where no distinction need or can be made, both categories are referred to inclusively as "Jewish Goddess feminists."

The phenomenon of contemporary Jewish women celebrating the Goddess is not only an ironic twist in the history of Judaism; it also raises the wider question of whether Goddess religion is typical of the way in which new religious identities are critical responses to old ones and therefore intimately related to, even dependent upon, the old for their very meaning.

THE FEMINIST PAGANIZATION OF JEWISHNESS

Although Jewish Goddess feminists often claim that the Goddess is a legitimate but suppressed element of their own tradition, there is no doubt that, for the mainstream community, Goddess worship or celebration is associated with Paganism. For example, Asphodel Long, one of Britain's best-known Goddess feminists, gave up Jewish observance at the age of sixteen but firmly identifies herself as a Jew. For her, Goddess feminism need not, and perhaps should not, constitute a religion in itself. Nonetheless, she admitted in conversation with me that most Jews would categorize her with the hostile, pejorative term "Pagan," that is, as belonging to a separate religion.

But because some Pagan women simplistically blame Judaism for the introduction of patriarchy and the destruction of ancient Goddess religion,[12] Jewish women who are otherwise sympathetic to Paganism may feel unwilling to assume an identity that seems hostile to Judaism. For these women, Judaism may well continue to command an emotional loyalty in which the guilt of "apostasy" often plays no small part.[13] Non-Jewish Goddess feminists are not always sensitive to the post-Holocaust traumatization of all Jews, including those who were neither in the camps, nor the children of survivors. For instance, during a racism/poverty awareness and web-weaving workshop at the "End of Patriarchy" Goddess feminist gathering in Bristol, England, in May 1993, a Jewish woman attempted to weave her pain over the Holocaust and the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe into the group's web. Another woman participating in the ritual immediately accused her of "trying to create a hierarchy of oppression. No one said anything, including me [the writer of the letter]." Once home, the Jewish woman was "distraught and crying for some hours."[14]

More basically though, the Jewish identity of those who decide not to practice Judaism is not equivalent to the post-Christian identity of those who leave Christianity. There is no such thing as a truly post-Jewish Jew. Traditionally, Jewishness is ineradicable because a Jew is one who was born of a Jewish mother. And Jewishness is not a matter of the assent of faith or intellect, but of culture, history, and above all, soul. Alicia Ostriker, a feminist literary critic whose biblical exegesis borders on the thealogical,[15] writes of her feelings of ineradicable Jewishness: "Can't be anything else, though. Can't be a Buddhist like Allen Ginsberg (who anyway gets more and more rabbinical), or a Sufi like Doris Lessing. It would be a joke . . . "[16]

Moreover, not all Judaisms would compel a woman to choose between Judaism and Paganism.[17] The alternative Judaism of, say, the Tikkun Chavurah groups with their nontraditional, nonheterosexist, relational, ecological, and egalitarian emphases may offer a tolerably hospitable environment for those on the left of the Jewish feminist movement who wish to celebrate the Goddess and retain a Jewish identity. In Humanistic, Polydox, and Open Judaisms, a Jew is simply one who chooses to identify herself with the Jewish people, regardless of ancestry or belief.[18] Such progressive approaches mean that Jewish women such as Jenny Goodman who celebrate the Goddess need not suffer a problematized identity. For her, Judaism is all-encompassing: "Jewish practice could be defined simply as what Jews practice. If I do it in good faith and from my heart, it is authentic."[19]

To be a paganized Jew or a Pagan Jew is not necessarily a contradiction in terms. Judaism has always been porous (up to a point) and has had syncretistic tendencies from its earliest days. Whether one thinks of

Israelite religion's popular accommodation to Canaanite religion, the Hellenization of Judaism between 323 and 62 B.C.E., or the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century *Haskalah* and its accommodation to Enlightenment values, it is clear that Judaism, like all religions, exists to varying degrees in a dialogical relationship with its environments. The turn of Jewish feminists from a religion of history to a religion of nature itself has precedents in the post-Holocaust era. For example, roughly contemporary with Raphael Patai's resurrection of the Hebrew goddesses and preceding the emergence of contemporary Goddess religion by only about ten years, Richard Rubenstein was proclaiming the post-Holocaust death of God and of historical religion, turning instead to a Jewish Paganism which celebrated embodiment and a return to the soil and its rhythms of cyclic repetition.[20]

On a similar intellectual trajectory, after reading Raphael Patai's *The Hebrew Goddess* (1967), Alix Pirani began to practice a paganized Judaism, retrieving Asherah, Shekhinah, Hochmah, Lilith, Matronit, and others from the Kabbalah and the biblical texts.[21] Indeed, this process of reclamation brought Pirani closer to the Judaism that she had rejected at the age of 21: "My efforts to return to the Jewish community, religion, synagogue, then became identified with Her return."[22] Similarly, Gloria Orenstein describes feeling "both guilty for being obsessed by my search for the Goddess, and simultaneously ecstatic about discovering that our most ancient matriarch [Sarah] may even have revered Her."[23]

At a greater distance from both the mainstream and alternative Jewish communities are self-identified Jewish Pagans and Jewitches.[24] Starhawk is a notable example of a Wiccan Jew who is increasingly happy to retain Jewish traditions within her Paganism, claiming that as she grows older both her Jewish and her Pagan identities have strengthened. Acknowledging that this might seem contradictory, she writes, "I am comfortable being both Jew and Pagan, celebrating Chanukah and the Winter Solstice."[25] Starhawk acknowledges that many aspects of her work—particularly its this-worldliness—are "very Jewish in a real gut-level and intuitive way."[26] Naomi Goldenberg, who describes the complex integration of her identities as Jew, feminist, atheist, and Goddess woman in her collection of essays, *Resurrecting the Body*, finds that the Jewish practice of social criticism gives her a tradition in which to participate.[27] Asphodel Long also perceives herself as participant in a perennial Jewish tradition of justice-seeking. For Long (and she is not alone in this), reclaiming and reinstating the female divinities and the divinity of femaleness in Jewish and other traditions is a primary act of justice. Given that Judaism is the "mother" of Western monotheistic religions and societies, the reinstatement of female divinity within Judaism prefigures and is the precondition of all other egalitarian social re-patternings.[28]

Yet neither Orthodox Jews nor most liberal Jews would accept that Goddess religion is in any way Jewish.[29] Moreover, there is a point at which Jews who are otherwise sympathetic to feminism and to the "greening of religion" reject any postmodern blurring of Goddess-talk and God-talk. For instance, at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Wyncote, Pennsylvania, there was a controversy between 1986 and 1993 over its more radical women students casting circles and using images of the Canaanite goddess Asherah, with the ruling body declaring such ritual practices wholly illegitimate.[30] Ancient Israel's destruction of the cult of the goddess Asherah within its territories was, after all, a central means of distinguishing itself as the religion of a holy people separated from its profane neighbors by its covenantal relationship to Yahweh alone. In the words of a well-known (nonorthodox) Jewish feminist, any attempt to integrate the Goddess into Judaism is a "preposterous" act which "slanders and sullies monotheism."[31] One senses that for many different sorts of Jews, belief in the Goddess is far less acceptable than not believing in God.

TURNING TO THE GODDESS FROM THE FAILED/ABUSING GOD OF ISRAEL

Jewish feminists may turn to the Goddess as a straightforward sexual-political protest against the social inequalities produced by the worship of an exclusively male God and the legal formulation and transmission of Torah by men.[32] In 1979, when radical feminist religion was beginning to gain momentum, Naomi Goldenberg published her seminal thealogical work, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions*, which, while urging feminists to derive political power by recovering the archetypal power of the Goddess from the subconscious, also presents a fierce criticism of biblical religion. Goldenberg's book was written, incidentally, in the Jewish style of confronting and challenging God that is perhaps Judaism at its best.[33]

But religious identity is not only a matter of political conviction, and Jewish Goddess feminists may also reject patriarchal Judaism for theo/alogical reasons as well. Today's Jewish Goddess feminists are of the Holocaust generation, or they are the daughters and granddaughters of the Holocaust generation. They are, to whatever degree, witnesses to the partial collapse of traditional, providential, patriarchal Jewish models of God as Father, King, *Rebono shel olam* (Master of the World)—a God who, after the Holocaust, has shown himself incapable of doing the sort of jobs God might reasonably be expected to do. For many, the God imaged in metaphors of masculine supremacy has been unmanned by twentieth-century men and proven unable to protect his own children

and subjects. Or, more terrifyingly, he remains the all-powerful author of good and evil but appears to be a neglectful—even abusive—Father, whom his victims must continue to love regardless of what he chooses to inflict upon them.[34]

Few Jewish women over the age of thirty could have reached maturity without being to some degree emotionally preoccupied by the Holocaust.[35] It is arguable that for those women of the Holocaust and post-Holocaust generation who began writing thealogy in the mid-to-late 1970s (when Western theology was still reeling from the failure of the biblical God to defend the innocent), the traditional model of God has failed less as a representative of divine might or supremacy than of divine care and protection of the type patriarchal religion promises to women in return for their submission to husbands and fathers.[36]

For a number of Jewish women, then, thealogy may—in part at least—be read and formulated in the light of their anger at and disappointment in a God who has remained silent in the face of human sufferings and has failed to honor his contractual obligations. And it is not only the Holocaust which has severely tested Jewish Goddess women's loyalty to the God of Jewish tradition. Whereas the failures of God were once balanced by the hope symbolized in the phrase, "Next year in Jerusalem," the moral and political failures of Zionism's actual "this year" in Jerusalem have, for many on the religious feminist left, effected a closure of the Jewish justice-seeking tradition.[37]

Thealogy is much more than simply a by-product of the Jewish criticism of Judaism.[38] *Jewish* Goddess feminists, however, embrace thealogy for specific reasons that have to do with their reaction to the God of post-Holocaust Judaism. In the Goddess we find a model of divinity whose Pagan nature is such that she is identical with the natural process and of whom, therefore, no world-historical intervention or eschatological vindication of the morally good might be expected. Paganism has no need of a salvation history because it does not believe that there is any inherent wrongness in humanity beyond its faithlessness to its own naturalness. The Goddess promises no eternal blessing and, conversely, humanity has no obligation to her beyond that of the ecological obligation of tending her body and the health of the plants, fish, animals and birds who live on, in, or above it.

Perhaps then, it is precisely *because* the Goddess cannot fail us—because she cannot disappoint—that she is attractive to some Jewish women. This model of female divinity does not promise to inaugurate the historical or post-historical reign of justice, peace, and the cessation of suffering referred to by Jews and Christians as the Kingdom of God. Broadly speaking, the Triple Goddess whom many Goddess women celebrate is not a deity who even tries—she simply *is*. In her three aspects as Virgin, Mother, and Crone,[39] the Goddess encompasses the potential for life, the giving of life, and the taking of life. She represents the

immanent dynamics or vitality of the life cycle, and she hypostasizes female spiritual/political becoming insofar as the attainment of a fully realized, individuated self is possible within the limitations of an organicist philosophy of existence characterized by flux and the essential equivalence of all life forms. Moreover, there is the relief of religious tension in a divinity who does not promise to be anything other than what she is. Holocausts of whatever kind may or may not occur, but their occurrence is not incompatible with any kind of thealogical truth-claims, implied or explicit, because those truth claims function within an ontology of nature in which *all* living things have an equivalent worth and meaning in the Goddess. The vicissitudes of human existence are only to be understood within those of the natural whole. Thealogical truth claims are not tested against the particularities of human experience or any "grand narrative" of the meaning and purpose of human history.[40]

The Goddess is able to transcend the particularities of the historical process by virtue, paradoxically, of her absolute immanence. That is, the Goddess's ecological being and time overrides the historical process—a social process driven for the last four thousand years or so by the masculine will, but one which she will erode, unravel, or wash away by her own continuous, biological, "female" process. For Jewish Goddess religionists in particular, the ecological transcendence (and obliteration) of history is a liberation of sorts. Those for whom history (and therefore, perhaps, historical religions) have become uninhabitable and for whom the notion of history's having an eschatological telos has become incredible have at least the bleak consolation of knowing that historical particularity is always subsumed within the indifference of nature. Jewish Goddess religionists are relieved of the need to make an emotional and religious investment in a historical process that has yielded so little to the well-being of subjected men, children, and women themselves.

Having said that, I would not wish to reinforce the common but erroneous impression that Goddess religion is apolitical in character. While Goddess religionists would not imagine divine justice through traditional Western juridical and eschatological metaphors, this is not to say that they abdicate all responsibility for social justice insofar as it can be achieved through direct action and the creative processes of thealogical discourse itself.

Rather, for Goddess religionists, the Goddess does not offer immediate and particular historical intervention in the manner of traditional models of God. Instead, she shifts the larger and longer process of the liberation of women and the Earth from patriarchy into a nonlinear, post-patriarchal dimension that might fairly be termed post-historical. Indeed, it is in the primal and post-historical dimensions (the two are, in a sense, identical) that the Goddess is (unpredictably) active. The Goddess, unlike one of her meeker Jewish derivations, the

Sabbath Bride, manifests at no set hour. For Goddess religionists, the sacred is ecological in character and is manifest in the transformative cycles of life which include not only birth, but, in the form of the Crone, the changes wrought by disease, death, and decay. Yet, where the Jewish maintenance of the purity of the sacred works precisely against these processes of organic change, the Goddess can manifest herself in the mixing, muddying, and decaying of the orthodox system that seeks to constrain her.

In this, the Goddess can be experienced as the suppressed antitype of the Jewish sacred. Her self-revelation in the late twentieth century marks not only the return of Yahweh's spurned, vengeful wife,[41] but also the resurgence of the blemished, seething, scaly, clawed, seeping female—the great heaving, churning Goddess *Tehom* (the Deep, the Void, or the "personified womb")—whose being is that of primal formlessness and whose body Goddess feminists accuse God of having split in two when he created the first cosmic divisions of light and dark, heaven and earth (Gen. 1:2).[42] It is little wonder that patriarchal Judaism is as hostile to the Goddess as it is. Thealogy, at its most eco-apocalyptic, conjures an image of the Great Mother, squatting swollen as a full moon over the Jewish tradition, her womb waters threatening to break over Torah and submerge and wash away its papery tradition of inked words on her incoming tide. It is, perhaps, this unacknowledged power of the Mother/Crone Goddess suspended over the future of all patriarchal tradition—the continuity of predictable systems—that makes her as compelling to some Jewish feminists as she is repulsive to Jewish orthodoxy.

THE AFFECTIVE FUNCTIONS OF GODDESS RELIGION FOR JEWISH WOMEN

I have argued that thealogy may liberate Jewish Goddess religionists from commitment to Judaism's historical revelation, which they judge to be politically and theologically unsatisfactory. But thealogy may have further affective functions for Jewish women, two of which can be mentioned here.

In contemporary thealogy, the Goddess may be variously experienced as a divinity independently subsisting in her own right, as a symbol of female spiritual/political self-realization, or as a combination of both. But the empowerment experienced by Goddess religionists through ritual, ritualized direct action, the self-defined exercise of female sacredness, and, above all, the validation of their own religious experience appears to occur regardless of the precise ontological status accorded to the Goddess. In thealogy, rightly or wrongly, the experiential is deemed prior to and more important than the conceptual. For Jewish

women the experiential dimension of existential becoming in the Goddess meets a religio-emotional need that Judaism (as opposed to ancient Israelite religion, possibly) cannot. That is, thealogy's first affective function for Jewish Goddess women is in the provision of the female numinous—a sense of the nonrational sacred power that women can embody *as* women. The numinosity of femaleness is singularly lacking in Judaism—at least outside its marginal esoteric and folk traditions. In Jewish folk traditions, women's private prayers, incantations, and rituals were sometimes credited with magico-religious power.[43] Generally speaking, however, the female sacred has been less a feature of Judaism than it has of most other world religions. Besides being without acknowledged goddesses or female saints, Judaism has had no parallel institutions to those of, for example, the Christian convent or the Buddhist *sangha* for nuns. Nor have there been the female mystics that were an aspect of medieval Christianity and Islam. Female sanctity in Judaism entails that femaleness is safely contained within a set of wholly marital, maternal, and domestic virtues.

In Goddess religion, by contrast, to be female is also to be Goddess and therefore to be, in Rudolf Otto's formulation of the sacred, *mysterium, tremendum et fascinans*, awesome and "wholly other" rather than virtuous. If, in *The Idea of the Holy*,[44] Otto was right that the essence of religiosity is not praise of the moral worth of divinity, but awe at its numinosity, then the Triple Goddess who is awesome, terrible, erotic, but not morally super-excellent is doing what religion essentially demands: as Virgin, Mother, and Crone she incarnates and satisfies the sense of the numinous (here a remarkably pure form of the undomesticated holy). And this wholly/holy Other is precisely what Jewish Goddess religionists experience and become when they celebrate the Goddess over and against the Jewish and Protestant God whose holiness *for women* merely sanctifies the ordering of the home and other patriarchal institutions. Goddess feminism moves Jewish women not merely from the private sphere into the public sphere but, more excitingly, into the spiraling realms of explosive energy that move the cosmos itself.[45]

Moreover, although Goddess religion is grounded in the materiality of the world, it is not heavy with law and custom; rather, it has the roominess or weightlessness of a religion which, in its present form, is less than three decades old. Goddess religion goes, in all senses, with the flow. By contrast, ultra-orthodox halakhic observance can be likened to the behavior of a gifted autistic child that involves obsessive, hyperfocused, repetitive, minute, and obscurely logical ordering of the world and "a selectivity of attention so intense that it could create a world of its own, a place of calm and order in the chaos and tumult."[46] This world is fixed by its internal logic, but always under threat from the outside. Judaism is a religion of fences and divisions protecting minutely specified prohibitions and prescriptions, and protecting the sacred from

all eventualities, including contact with menstrual blood.[47] To a Goddess religionist, however, religious prescription of the halakhic type represents the polar opposite of the spontaneous, unbounded, self-authored, self-authenticating, organicist religious experience offered by celebration of the Goddess.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN JUDAISM AND GODDESS FEMINISM FOR JEWISH WOMEN

Even though the move from domestic to cosmic sacrality quite clearly differentiates traditional Jewish women from Jewish Goddess religionists, it seems to me that cultural and symbolic, as well as theo/alogical connections persist between Jewish Goddess feminists and their Jewishness and, furthermore, that in some senses their feeling of Jewishness is intensified by their heresies, not diminished.

Jewish-Pagan women carry the burdens of two persecuted minorities. While European and American Jewish Goddess religionists are not physically persecuted, they are, nonetheless, marginal or Other as both Jew and Pagan. A Jewish Goddess feminist is likely to feel ambivalent about her Otherness. To define oneself as Other is to make a claim to moral and spiritual distinction—even superiority. But to be made to feel Other by a hostile majority can engender a painful sense of loss and unjust rejection. Any Jewish woman celebrating the Goddess, especially if she is also a feminist witch, is liable to be demonized as religiously Other twice over.

For Goddess religionists, much of their dual tradition is experienced as a way of life lost forever, whether this way of life is conceived in terms of the Great Mother destroyed by patriarchal religionists, the wise women destroyed by the late medieval and early modern Church, or the Jewish women and men destroyed by the Nazis in this century. In this, Jewish Goddess religionists find themselves wandering on something of a spiritual plain, a displaced place of memory and imagination deforested and littered with remains but also, on that account, radically open to the reconstruction of spiritual and political possibilities.

The Jewish Goddess religionist embodies a complex cluster of antitypes and countertraditions that connect her, even if negatively, to the tradition of her birth. For example, most Jewish feminists identify closely with Lilith, whom Jewish legend describes as the first woman, created at the same time as Adam. Lilith is possessed of sacred knowledge (she knows how to pronounce the ineffable name of God), and, in her quest for equality with Adam, she defies both God and Adam and suffers the punishment of exile and the death of one hundred of her children a day.[48] As one who invokes and embodies the power of Lilith, the Jewish

Goddess religionist is the antitype of the *eshet chayil*, the paragon of God-fearing, hardworking Jewish womanhood praised in Proverbs 31:10-31 (a text traditionally recited to Jewish wives by their husbands at the commencement of Shabbat) and later incarnated in the image of the yiddishe mama, the self-denying guarantor of *shalom bayit* (peace in the home).

As Lilith and as the Strange Woman (or Folly, the antitype of Hochmah/Wisdom who seduces men and disorders their minds), Jewish Goddess feminists confirm Judaism's worst fears about women. In Judaism there is a popular notion that it is Jewish women who are most prone to disloyalty to God.[49] For the prophets, Israel's disloyalty to the covenant makes her a harlot, an adulterous wife.[50] By ritually weeping for the annual death of the Babylonian god Tammuz, the son of the goddess Ishtar (Ezek. 8:14), baking cakes for the Queen of heaven (Jer. 7:17-18; 44:15-9), and weaving hangings for Asherah (2 Kings 23:7), Hebrew women were, metaphorically, found guilty of taking lovers from among the deities of other nations. In Jewish Goddess women's re-presentation of their ancient foremothers' infidelities to Yahweh, Jewish history (which intends to be linear) comes full circle. Furthermore, Jewish Goddess religionists, like all in the Goddess movement, sacramentalize the menstrual blood that traditional Judaism views as a central source of impurity.[51] Perhaps only a woman growing up with, or even conscious of the laws of *Taharas Mispachah* (menstrual purity) in Judaism could so flamboyantly transgress them. So much of the *point* of that, so much of the sacral and liberative charge or *mana* of Goddess feminism, is in its refusal and profanization of the patriarchal sacred marked out in Judaism by the absence of female blood.

The Jewish Goddess feminist—especially if she is also a witch—is also an incarnation of Otherness to Christian culture and an outsider even to the Jewish outsiders. As Alicia Ostriker puts it, "To the rest of the world the Jew is marginal. But to Judaism I am marginal. Am woman, unclean. Am Eve. Or worse, am Lilith."[52] The Jewish Goddess feminist is deicidal twice over. From the traditional Christian perspective, as a Jew she has betrayed the son of God to his death on the cross; from the Jewish perspective, as a Goddess celebrant she not only betrays the God of Israel but also helps to destroy his people. For by mourning the destruction of Goddess worshipping culture she further reinforces the association of Judaism and deicide. This puts the Jewish Goddess feminist both doubly in the wrong and yet, from her own perspective, prophetically in the right. Indeed, her right(eous)ness is almost the mirror image of that of the Hebrew prophets. In the radical feminist history of religions the Goddess has been betrayed—and her functions misappropriated—by all the patriarchal religions. There is, therefore, a heroic courage in calling the Jewish people back to their goddesses even at the cost of exile or, in the biblical idiom, being cut off from that

people (a punishment first executed upon Lilith.) And yet, as the exiled of the exiled, one might say that the Jewish Goddess feminist feels, culturally at least, *paradigmatically* Jewish.

CONCLUSION

It is hardly surprising to find some kind of conversation going on between biblical and post-biblical religions and spiritualities, albeit one that is often acrimonious and one-sided. Religious ideas do not emerge in a vacuum, that much is obvious. It seems that for postmodern Jewish feminists the membrane between alternative Judaism and Goddess religion can be a permeable one, and sometimes there is no membrane at all: the spirituality of the one informs or is continuous with the other. Nonetheless, postmodern Jewish feminists remain a very small minority within Judaism as a whole. And integrating Jewish Goddess feminism into mainstream, nonorthodox Judaism will take "many decades of dreaming, studying, and talking together."[53] No one commits themselves to a timetable for reconciliation. As Nurit Zaidman puts it,

> Postmodern [Jewish] feminism is considered to be as radical as was modern feminism twenty-five years ago. The question remains: twenty-five years from now, is postmodern feminism going to be part of the life of the nonorthodox Jewish denominations, or is it going to remain a phenomenon on the periphery?[54]

Zaidman does not answer her own question. But perhaps it is not a question many postmodern feminists would want to ask. Naomi Goldenberg is right, I think, to question the notion of a single, fixed religious identity. For Goldenberg, the creation of watertight religious categories is complicit with the masculinist creation of territories defended by potentially violent tribal loyalties to a single divine or human power and authority. By contrast, feminism is about the need to feel the "empathy, involvement, and identity beyond our particular tribe" that is essential to global peace. Feminism can "transform the human community by questioning the established social groupings and by encouraging us all to realize how much we are implicated in the fate of one another." Tribalism is threatened by those who enjoy multiple identities and thus by "the female sense of diversity within selfhood." For this reason, Goldenberg argues that "the world is in need of people who can feel several loyalties, several affinities, several identities."[55]

For Jewish Goddess religionists, contemporary Paganism offers scope for the kind of complex religious identities Goldenberg suggests. Paganism does not always consist of fully discrete religions, and it is not, in any case, a set of religions which proselytize or into which one formally converts. And for postmodern Jewish feminists, there is no need to

choose between one identity and another; they neither can be said to have joined a new Pagan religion nor to have remained within the normal boundaries of the old one. For those who look towards the coming of postmodernity, the interplay of Jewish Goddess feminist identities may be a foretaste of the gradual collapse of intolerant fundamentalisms within the world's religions. Perhaps, in the light of Goldenberg's remarks, it is a case of the more unstable the religious identity, the more stable the global situation.

But it is one thing to observe religion and another to live it. Perhaps, for Jewish Goddess religionists, there are only emergent patternings, signs of the absorption and rupturing of Jewish tradition—one which, far from subduing the Goddess, might still be held within her. For, to them, she is the earth, water, and air in which *all* traditions are born, feed, bloom, wither, and are dispersed. As Goddess religion (in America at least) continues to organize itself, setting up training programs for priestesses and other such institutions,[56] the seeds of this new religion may blow ever further from their roots. For postmodern Jewish feminists, however, new branches, fruits, and flowers will continue to grow from the trunk of the old tree of Jewish tradition.

ENDNOTES

[1] I appreciate that defining the parameters of the "alternative" and "mainstream" can be subjective and context-dependent. I make no pretense to use these terms other than approximately.

[2] For accounts of the place of Jewish Goddess feminism within the three main types of Jewish feminism, see Susannah Heschel, "Current Issues in Jewish Feminist Theology," *Christian-Jewish Relations: A Documentary Survey* 19 (1986): pt. 2, 27-31; Nurit Zaidman, "Variations of Jewish Feminism: The Traditional, Modern and Postmodern Approaches," *Modern Judaism* 16 (1996): 47-65. Also see Samuel Dresner, "Goddess Feminism," *Conservative Judaism* 46 (1993): 3-23.

[3] It is worth noting that in patriarchal Hasidism and Kabbalah, Shekhinah and the feminine *sefirot* are always subservient to male divine attributes.

[4] For example, the British priestess Naomi Ozaniec's Jewish background does not appear to inform her writing, practice, or religious identity.

[5] "Variations of Jewish Feminism," 48-59.

[6] Asphodel Long, *In a Chariot Drawn by Lions: The Search for the Female in Deity* (London: The Women's Press, 1992), 119.

[7] Carol P. Christ, *Laughter of Aphrodite* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 14.

[8] Judith Plaskow exemplifies a kind of postmodern Jewish feminism in arguing that the names of Canaanite goddesses are invoked in the interests of enriching Jewish theology's imaginal stock and in promoting a properly "inclusive monotheism that is not yet real when God incorporates the characteristics of the male deities of Canaan but excludes the qualities of the goddesses." (*Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* [New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990], 150, 152-53). See also, Helen Freeman,

"Chochmah and Wholeness: Retrieving the Feminine in Judaism," in *Hear Our Voice: Women Rabbis Tell Their Stories*, ed. Sybil Sheridan (London: SCM Press, 1994), 179-89; Rabbi Leah Novick, "Encountering the Schechinah, the Jewish Goddess," in *The Goddess Reawakening*, ed. S. Nicholson (New York: Theosophical Publications, 1989), 204-14.

[9] Some Goddess women would distrust the concept of thealogy as they feel that the celebration of the Goddess is too plural and nonrational to be systematized in a quasi-doctrinal manner by an intellectual feminist elite. Others, such as Carol Christ, Naomi Goldenberg, Barbara Mor, and Monica Sjöö would agree that no thealogy can claim normative status. However, they regard thealogy as implicit in what Goddess women do and say; thus theodicy can be usefully disseminated in the form of textual analysis and elaboration.

[10] For discussion of Goddess feminism as a distinct new/old religion, see Cynthia Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess: The Feminist Spirituality Movement in America* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 39; Donate Pahnke, "Religion and Magic in the Modern Cults of the Great Goddess," in *Religion and Gender*, ed. Ursula King (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995), 167-72.

[11] "Sex, Symbols and the Unity of God," in *The Absent Mother: Restoring the Goddess to Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Alix Pirani (London: Mandala, 1991), 94-5.

[12] See Asphodel Long, "Anti-Judaism in Britain," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 7 (1991): 130-31.

[13] See Starhawk's fictional (or perhaps semi-autobiographical) account of a Jewish witch's emotional ties to Judaism in *Walking to Mercury* (London: Thorsons, 1997), e.g. 76-77, 130-31, 417-20.

[14] Ros (no surname given), letter to the editors, *From the Flames* 10 (1993): 26. Web-weaving—whether with words or by threading actual lengths of wool or thread around a given space—is a common ritual practice in the feminist spirituality movement. Web-weaving enacts the interconnectedness of specific instances of the oppression of women under patriarchy, which is seen as an all-encompassing structure and worldview. As importantly, spiritual feminist creativity, relationality, and healing are considered to have the character of a spun or mended web whose strength relies on mutuality and each part of the web taking responsibility for the well-being of the other. For discussion of anti-Semitism in the women's movement see e.g., Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, "To Be a Radical Jew in the Late Twentieth Century," in *The Tribe of Dina: A Jewish Women's Anthology*, eds. Kaye/Kantrowitz and I. Klepfisz (Montpelier, VT: Sinister Wisdom, 1986), 249; Sheila Saunders, "That's Funny. You Don't Look Anti-Semitic," in *Sweeping Statements: Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*, eds. Hannah Kanter *et al.* (London: The Women's Press, 1984), 99-101; "Special Section on Feminist Anti-Judaism," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 7 (1991): 95-124. It is arguable that anti-Semitism in the women's movement was more marked in the early 1980s than it is at present. At that time the political left was inclined to equate Zionism (and, by implication, the Jewish faith) with racism, but a recent degree of *rapprochement* between the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel has reduced tension between Zionists and anti-Zionists. It should also be noted that many Jewish feminists have strong reservations about the Zionist project, and some do not support it at all.

[15] Cf. *Feminist Revision and the Bible* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), 34-37, 47.

[16] "Entering the Tents," *Feminist Studies* 15 (1989): 541.

[17] As Dan Cohn-Sherbok points out in *The Future of Judaism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994, 181, 189-90), since the Enlightenment, Jewry has lost its religious consensus and has fragmented into a large number of subgroups, each with their own understanding of the nature and activity of God. Cohn-Sherbock's own interpretation of Judaism, which he calls "Open Judaism," is one in which Jews accept the subjectivity of religious belief and the freedom that allows them to select meaningful elements from the tradition without rabbinical jurisdiction.

[18] For definitions of these types of liberal Judaism, see Cohn-Sherbok, *The Future of Judaism*, 192-93.

[19] "Sex, Symbols and the Unity of God," 98.

[20] *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1966), 135 ff.

[21] Pirani, Introduction to *The Absent Mother*, xi-xii. Although postmodern Jewish feminism has wanted to establish Shekhinah and Hochmah as goddesses in their own right, Shekhinah and Hochmah are understood in traditional Judaism to represent respectively the presence and wisdom or Torah of God. Judaism regards these as "feminine" attributes of God, not female divinities as such. Even where the Kabbalah seems to personify them, Shekhinah and Hochmah are still always subordinated to masculine elements of deity. Matronit is the Queen element of the divine in kabbalistic systems; she is the consort of the King and contains a number of significant divine energies. Jewish feminists accord her at least equal homage to that of the King. In folk tradition, Lilith has always been cast as Adam's first (discarded) wife, a rebel against God and a demoness. Jewish feminists have reclaimed her as a symbol of female power and independence—the "first" Jewish feminist.

[22] "Creations of the Goddess," in *The Absent Mother*, 166-67.

[23] "Gender Politics and the Soul: A Jewish Feminist Journey," in *The Absent Mother*, 217-18. Orenstein is referring to the thesis of Savina Teubal's *Sarah the Priestess: The First Matriarch of Genesis* (Athens, Ohio: First Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1984).

[24] See Aiden Kelly, "An Update on Neopagan Witchcraft in America," in *Perspectives on the New Age* , eds. James Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 145-46, cited in Graham Harvey, *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism* (London: Hurst & Co., 1997), 223.

[25] "Preface to the New Edition," *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics* (London: Mandala, 1990), xi. See also her fictional account of a Seder meal that fuses Goddess feminist and Jewish elements in *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (New York: Bantam, 1994), 213-16.

[26] Cited in Harvey, *Listening People, Speaking Earth*, 224.

[27] "The Tribe and I: Thoughts on Identity from a Jewish Feminist Atheist," in *Resurrecting the Body: Feminism, Religion, and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 60. For those who, like Goldenberg, see the Goddess as a liberating psychological and political archetype, but not as a deity existing in her own right, it is possible to be both an atheist and a Goddess feminist.

[28] I have elaborated this point on the basis of conversation with Long. See also Long, *In a Chariot Drawn by Lions*, 14, and Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai*, 223.

[29] See Orenstein, "Gender Politics and the Soul," 219; Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai*, 147-50.

[30] Zaidman, "Variations of Jewish Feminism," 58-59.

[31] Cynthia Ozick, "Notes Towards Finding the Right Question," in *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), 121.

[32] This argument applies even where communities ordain women as rabbis. Goddess feminists welcome this, but given the patriarchal nature of Torah, the ordination of women is not, on its own, felt to be a sufficient condition for the transformation of Judaism.

[33] Naomi Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

[34] David Blumenthal recently formulated a Jewish theology of the Holocaust that is premised on this assumption. See his *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

[35] See Kaye/Kantrowitz, "To Be a Radical Jew in the Late Twentieth Century," 247. Speaking as a postmodern Jewish theo/alogian myself, reflection on the Holocaust was central to the formation of my childhood and teenage spiritual identity in the 1970s and, in its challenge to theology, has been a powerful determinant in my theo/alogical understanding. See in particular, Melissa Raphael, "'Cover not our blood with thy silence': Sadism,

Eschatological Justice and Female Images of the Divine," *Feminist Theology* 8 (1995): 85-105 and "Thealogy, Redemption and the Call of the Wild," *Feminist Theology* 15 (1997): 55-72.

[36] The early work of one of Goddess religion's first and most influential thealogians, Carol Christ, exemplifies this profound disillusionment with the God of the Hebrew Bible. Christ reached maturity in the post-Holocaust period, and she devoted about half of her book *Laughter of Aphrodite* to a dialogue with the God of the Hebrew Bible and with the twentieth-century Jewish theologies of Martin Buber, Abraham Heschel, Richard Rubenstein, and Elie Wiesel. Christ left the church, not least because "Confronting the holocaust shattered the faith [she] had in the God of the Jewish and Christian people, the God of history. . . . With Wiesel, [she] was angry with God for abandoning his promises to the Jewish people." Although she recognizes, as Wiesel does, that her anger signified a continuing relationship with God, she says that this was a god in whom she could no longer trust (*Laughter of Aphrodite*, 6-7). It was Wiesel's searing confrontation with the absence of God in the flames of Auschwitz that gave Christ the courage to confront God: "If I had not confronted him directly, I might never have heard the still small voice that came to me in the night, when I discovered the female God as a living presence in my life" (*Laughter of Aphrodite*, 11-12).

[37] Asphodel Long made this point to me in conversation at the "Ambivalent Goddesses" Goddess Studies Colloquium, King Alfred's College of Higher Education, Winchester, England, 25-27 March 1997, where a different version of this paper was delivered. See also, Adrienne Baker, *The Jewish Woman in Contemporary Society* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 209-11.

[38] Thealogy has its roots, not in Judaism, but in Enlightenment individualism and the criticism of religion, radical feminism, deep ecology, Jungian psychotherapies, the hippie counterculture, the Peace movement, the Pagan revival, and late or postmodern suspicions about the ideological nature of authoritative traditions.

[39] There are numerous thealogies of the Triple Goddess. See, for example, Deanna J. Conway, *Maiden, Mother, Crone: The Myth and Reality of the Triple Goddess* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1994) and Teresa Moorey, *The Goddess: A Beginner's Guide* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997), 28-40.

[40] See Melissa Raphael, "Truth in Flux: Goddess Feminism as a Late Modern Religion," *Religion* 26 (1996): 207-10.

[41] I refer to the archaeological evidence of the popular ancient Israelite belief in Asherah as Yahweh's consort or wife. For references to this research see Long, *In a Chariot Drawn by Lions*, 128-29.

[42] See Barbara Walker, *The Woman's Encyclopaedia of Myths and Secrets* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1983), 998 and Long, *In a Chariot Drawn by Lions*, 104-6.

[43] Heschel, "Current Issues in Jewish Feminist Theology," 30.

[44] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 12-40.

[45] See Melissa Raphael, *Thealogy and Embodiment: The Post-Patriarchal Reconstruction of Female Sacrality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 220-61.

[46] Oliver Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars* (London: Picador, 1995), 243; see also 241.

[47] On the *halachos* pertaining to separation while a woman is menstruating, see Rabbi Moshe Morgan, *Guide to the Laws of Nidah* (New York: M. Morgan, 1983), 89-102.

[48] Aviva Cantor, "The Lilith Question," in *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, 40-41. See also, Barbara Koltuv, *The Book of Lilith* (York Beach, ME: Nicolas-Hays, 1986).

[49] In fairness, it should be noted that there is a rabbinic tradition which maintains that women did not contribute their gold earrings to the making of the Golden Calf of Exodus 32, for which they were to be rewarded with the establishment of Rosh Chodesh (the new moon) as a women's holiday. See Amanda Golby, "Women and the New Moon," in *Hear Our Voice*, 120.

[50] For example, Isa. 1:21, 3:16-26.

[51] See Raphael, *Thealogy and Embodiment*, 167-219.

[52] "Entering the Tents," 542.

[53] Goodman, "Sex, Symbols and the Unity of God," 98.

[54] "Variations of Jewish Feminism," 62.

[55] Goldenberg, *Resurrecting the Body*, 64-67.

[56] For example, The Re-Formed Congregation of the Goddess, based in Madison, but working throughout the United States and Canada. C.O.G. runs a Women's Thealogical Institute and Cella Training Program, completion of which grants the priestess legal ministerial credentials. See Jade (no surname given), "The Six Paths of the Inner Mysteries: A Spiritual Leadership Program for Women," *Woman of Power* 24 (1995): 82.

Exit Cost Analysis: A New Approach to the Scientific Study of Brainwashing[1]

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ABSTRACT: This is the second part of a two-part article about brainwashing. In the first part, published in the premier issue of this jounal, I discussed the history of this much maligned concept and attempted to rescue it from the fruitless culture wars in which it has become entangled. I offered a limited and precise definition of brainwashing with the goal of making it a useful concept in the social-psychological study of disaffiliation from religious movements. In this second installment, I attempt to complete the rehabilitation of brainwashing, transforming it from an ideological shibboleth to a carefully defined, limited, and useful sociological concept. The first step in this process is to reframe the concept as a tool for studying the neglected problem of religious disaffiliation. This involves theoretical reframing within the context of rational action theory and substantive reframing within the context of the investigation of external and internal costs of leaving a religious community. In contrast to some of the more grandiose claims sometimes made for brainwashing as the sole explanation of cult movement behavior, I argue instead that brainwashing is only one of the factors that needs to be examined in order to understand the more general phenomenon of exit costs as a barrier to free religious choice. Reframed in this manner, I then go on to establish the scientific validity of this reframed concept. But a concept may be valid and still not be very useful if it refers to events that occur only rarely. Therefore I next go on to present evidence that there are events which occur fairly frequently in cult movements for which the brainwashing conjecture offers one plausible explanation. Next, I discuss four alternative conjectures that purport to explain much the same phenomena and demonstrate that the brainwashing conjecture holds its own with any of them. In the final section of this paper, I speculate about ways of going beyond mere conjectural plausibility to the development of a testable theory. I point to some directions for future research that may eventually allow us to identify the actual processes by which brainwashing brings about a significant and, at times, overwhelming increase in the costs of disaffiliating from religious communities.

Brainwashing is a social-psychological concept of great potential importance.[2] The word "brainwashing" is, as Joseph Agassi has noted, "a very strong metaphor" for a very powerful kind of interpersonal influence.[3] It is generally assumed within the rational choice paradigm that individual preferences are formed during childhood socialization and thereafter change only slowly if at all. Interpersonal influence is assumed to leave the underlying preference structure of the individual unchanged, altering only attitudes derived from these preferences. Brainwashing is a theoretically important exception to that rule in that it alleges the possibility of a kind of influence that goes to the root of identity and changes preference structure itself.

Many scholars deny that brainwashing even exists and consider its use as a social science concept to be epistemologically fraudulent.[4] Others make grandiose claims for the brainwashing conjecture, often using it to account for virtually everything about human behavior in high-demand religious organizations.[5] Neither of these approaches is helpful. We need to rescue a precise and limited concept of brainwashing from these two extremes because the idea has theoretical importance both for understanding cults and for a general theory of the self and human socialization and resocialization.[6] Therefore, it is important that research on the brainwashing conjecture be given time to develop and that the academic audience remain critical but open-minded.

In this paper, I attempt to build a foundation for brainwashing as a limited and well-defined social-scientific concept. To do so, I need first to make three simplifying assumptions. These assumptions will restrict the domain of the phenomena I will be considering in a way that will lend clarity to my exposition.

First, I will limit my discussion of brainwashing to religious groups. This is not, of course, because I believe brainwashing to be an intrinsically religious phenomenon. But I want to stay close to what I have seen with my own eyes. My field research has been primarily with cult movements and my personal motivation for writing this paper stems from curiosity about a startling homology between influence practices that I observed in a number of contemporary cult movements and influence processes in the Chinese "re-education centers" described by Robert Lifton.[7] I do not mean to imply that there is anything about religion *per se* that is especially conducive to brainwashing or that brainwashing is not also to be found in political, psychotherapeutic, military, and other totalist collectivities.

My second simplifying assumption has to do with charisma. Although brainwashing seems to me to be clearly associated with the exercise of charismatic authority, this association is tricky and complex. The mechanisms by which brainwashing is accomplished will be different depending on whether there is a direct face-to-face relationship with a charismatic leader, a relationship to an absentee charismatic leader, or

a relationship to some sort of charisma of lineage or charisma of office. These distinctions are important, but I cannot do justice to them within the scope of this paper. Therefore I am going to limit my discussion to the simplest charismatic situations. These happen also to be the ones I know most about. These are situations in which there is a face-to-face relationship between the subject and a living charismatic leader. The task of generalizing this discussion to more complex charismatic situations will be left to future work.

My third simplifying assumption will be to define brainwashing, in Steve Kent's useful phrase, "as a technique for *retaining* members not for *obtaining* members."[8] Metaphorically speaking, we may think of a cult as potentially having three distinct tools for personnel management. There is a magnet for attracting recruits and drawing them into the life (the obtaining function). There is a screwdriver for insinuating each member snugly but firmly into an intended niche (the retaining function). And there is a hammer for pounding any member whose niche has become threadbare back into his or her place (what we might call the restraining function).[9] In practice, the boundaries separating these functions are fuzzy. For example, part of the obtaining function may be to begin to discuss possible niches with the prospective member. And part of the restraining function may be to threaten a member who has become recalcitrant with disclosure of secrets recorded during the confessions that are obtained as part of the retaining function. Nevertheless, there can be no scientific value in confusing these three tools or functions. This paper will therefore ignore the magnet and the hammer in order to concentrate fully on the screwdriver.

REFRAMING THE CONCEPT IN TERMS OF EXIT COSTS

Affiliation and Disaffiliation

Rational choice theory has made significant contributions to our understanding of the dynamics of religious affiliation under societal conditions allowing for freedom of religious choice. Religious markets are modeled as settings in which religious entrepreneurs (churches, sect movements, cult movements, denominations, and individual charismatic preachers) compete for the affiliation of religious "consumers." James Coleman's discussion of the social construction of zeal[10] and Lawrence Iannaccone's modeling of religion as "a club good that displays positive returns to 'participatory crowding'"[11] are two major examples of theoretical advances made in this field.

Surprisingly, however, little comparable attention has been paid to rational choice modeling of disaffiliation from religious groups. In their

pathbreaking general theory of religion, it is interesting to note that Stark and Bainbridge hardly mention the issue of disaffiliation from religious groups.[12] This is surprising because the same deductive process that leads us to predict that religious groups will compete fiercely for valued consumers also leads us to predict that they will struggle fiercely to hold the loyalties of consumers once they have been captured. Although the ability to prevent disaffiliation is sharply curtailed by law and custom in a free religious marketplace, this ability is by no means nonexistent. Studies of the religious behavior of Black Americans in the rural south have shown the extent to which social constraints can limit freedom of individual choice even under formally free religious market conditions.[13] These studies do not deal directly with switching out of religious collectivities. However, one may assume that the same constraints sometimes apply to switching. With respect to totalistic religious groups, because of their relational isolation and the intense psychological investments sometimes required, I am hypothesizing that exit costs in these groups may sometimes be quite high.

Religious Switching, Exit Costs, and Manipulative Exit Costs

The work of Jack Shand and others has shown that religious switching is the exception rather than the rule and that religious beliefs, practices, and loyalties are remarkably stable over the life course, especially after the late teen years.[14] Moreover, most switching, when it does occur, has little to do with the struggle for souls. As Hoge, Hadaway and Roof, and others have shown, mundane issues like intermarriage, neighborhood stability, and geographical mobility explain most of the cases of religious switching.[15] However, rational choice models have had a fair degree of success in accounting for that portion of religious switching that is conviction driven. Human capital and resource mobilization models have shown great success in applying market concepts to the explanation of affiliation decisions and their effect on the competition of religious bodies for market share.[16]

But more recent research on constraints has demonstrated that these models need to be corrected since they are based on the naive assumption that consumers of religion go into the market with no constraints other than their own wishes and longings.[17] Relational networks and dependence upon specific religions as life support systems both work powerfully to limit freedom of choice in switching decisions. In this paper, I build on the formulations of Ellison and Sherkat but take the investigation in a different direction by focusing on disaffiliation rather than private religious behavior.

Exit cost analysis may be defined as the systematic study of all disincentives for leaving voluntary collectivities. Clearly there are many

types of exit costs ranging from financial penalties, to relational commitments, to various sorts of cognitive and emotional dependencies. It is important to emphasize that exit cost analysis is not particularly concerned with *the exit process* or with the later stages of a person's involvement with a religious collectivity. On the contrary, exit cost analysis is primarily concerned with the paradox of feeling trapped in what is nominally a voluntary association. It asks not, "Why did they leave?" but rather, "What prevents them from leaving?"

My ultimate aim is to identify all of the various types of exit costs imposed by religious collectivities on members who might otherwise choose to leave. However, I focus in this paper on one particular type of exit cost. This is the type that results from the deliberate manipulation of members by charismatic leaders. The brainwashing conjecture argues that there are conditions under which members of a religious organization may be systematically resocialized to become deployable agents of that organization with strong internalized disincentives for leaving.

VALIDITY OF THE CONCEPT

What Facts Need to Be Explained?

Much of the acrimony surrounding the debate over the validity of brainwashing as a scientific concept is traceable to the fact that many who have argued about the concept have done so using culturally based definitions rather than definitions tied directly to attempts to explain observable behaviors.[18] Such moves are counterproductive. Without agreement on the behaviors for which explanation is sought, how can we ever find criteria for determining objectively which concepts are useful in building explanations? Fortunately (and surprisingly, in light of how much controversy surrounds the subject of brainwashing), a great degree of consensus among scholars exists at this elementary level of behavioral description.[19]

Let us start, therefore, by specifying just what puzzling behavioral facts need to be explained. These behavioral facts comprise a sequence of events often spread over a considerable number of years. This visible and relatively unambiguous sequence consists of up to five steps: (1) affiliation, (2) lifestyle modification, (3) disaffiliation, (4) disenchantment, and (5) temporal (in)consistency. People are observed to affiliate with certain high-demand religious groups. Affiliation is soon followed by a sharp and sudden rejection of prior roles and relationships and a substitution of new roles and relationships prescribed by the group. This

rejection is manifested in dramatic lifestyle modification that is often labeled deviant by people outside the group. Persons may stay affiliated with such groups for widely varying lengths of time ranging from an entire lifetime to less than twenty-four hours. After a while (for some but not all) disaffiliation from the group occurs. Among those that disaffiliate, a certain percentage eventually begin to complain that actions taken while associated with the group have come to be perceived as ego-dystonic (that is to say, highly alien to the person's own current values and to the values held prior to affiliation as they are now recollected). Without making any value judgments as to the veracity of these complaints, let us refer to this step in the behavioral process as disenchantment. It should be noted that such disenchantment sometimes comes before disaffiliation rather than afterwards. Some of those who express disenchantment blame it on manipulation by the religious collectivity. And, finally, some who do blame it on the collectivity continue to do so consistently throughout their lives whereas it is at least a logical possibility that others, if observed for a sufficient period of time, will recant (exhibit inconsistency). Here I define recant to signify the denial of brainwashing by a person who had previously claimed to be brainwashed.

For the purposes of this paper, I will assume that we all agree that these are the behavioral facts that need to be explained. In order to establish a level playing field in all that follows I will evaluate brainwashing as well as its rival conjectures solely in terms of their ability to account for these behaviors that we all agree occur and are in need of explanation.

A Definition of Brainwashing

Brainwashing may be defined as a set of transactions between a charismatically led collectivity and an isolated agent of the collectivity with the goal of transforming the agent into a deployable agent. In the terminology I am using here, there exist three levels of affiliation in such collectivities: recruits, agents, and deployable agents. A recruit is a person who is considering membership in the group and perhaps is also being courted by the group. An agent is a person who has already made the commitment to become a member of the group and accept its goals. A deployable agent is a person who has internalized the group's goals to such an extent that he or she can be counted on with high probability to act so as to implement those goals even when free of direct surveillance and even when those goals run counter to the individual's personal goals.

The target of brainwashing is always an individual who has already joined the group. The brainwashing concept is not useful in explaining how recruits are transformed into ordinary members. Moreover, the

target of influence is always an isolated individual. Even when a closely bonded married couple joins a cult movement as a family, the brainwashing process at some point separates the two people from each other, psychologically if not always physically. Each individual is taken separately through a process of preference modification supported by a charismatically legitimated and internally consistent view of the world.

Some people may be more susceptible to brainwashing than others (and a given person may be more susceptible at certain times of life than others). However, the brainwashing model does not focus primarily on characteristics of the subject. The assumption is that many different kinds of people can, with enough effort, be brainwashed.

Since brainwashing is a result of social-psychological influences, a fuller definition of the term must include a description of the prerequisite structural conditions under which it can occur, the interaction process that actually produces the influence, and the effects that the influence has on both the individual subject and the collectivity.

Structural Prerequisites

Brainwashing has always been a statistically rare phenomenon because most social situations are not conducive to its occurrence. The brainwashing model, as developed by Robert Lifton, requires that it take place within a complex and costly structure of social control. This system exhibits eight observable characteristics of totalism.[20] These are milieu control, mystical manipulation, the demand for purity, the cult of confession, the sacred science, loading the language, doctrine over person, and the dispensing of existence.

Ideological totalism is an efficient breeding ground for deployable agents. What makes it so is the absence of external frames of reference with which to evaluate critically the outcomes of charismatic influence.[21] Totalism is not a dysfunctional by-product of rigid minds. It can be a rationally optimal way to structure beliefs to make charismatic compliance, once achieved, something close to an absorbing personal status. Distinguishing features of ideological totalism are (1) an absence of even the smallest areas of personal privacy exempt from ideological evaluation and (2) an absence of peccadilloes, such that every sin becomes a cardinal sin. These features, while at first sight bizarre, serve a clear function in reducing defections among deployable agents.

It is probably not necessary to have every one of Lifton's eight structural characteristics of ideological totalism in place for brainwashing to occur. However, the closer a religious collectivity comes to embodying a system of social control characterized by these eight structural elements, the easier it is for brainwashing to occur.

Interaction Process

Within the context of such a totalistic social system, an influence process is necessary for these modifications to be brought about. This influence process is a manipulative sequence of orchestrated events featuring the alternation of psychological assault and leniency over a prolonged period; periodic cycles of confession, rejection of confession, and reconfession; and ritualized rehearsals of taboo activities meant to desensitize the subject to their actual importance.[22] The process takes the subject through three sequential stages: (1) the stripping process, in which the old preference and value structures are removed; (2) identification, in which the subject attempts to become as much like the other cult members as possible; and (3) symbolic death and rebirth, in which the subject internalizes the new structure of preferences and values.[23] Lifton has argued that, throughout these stages, resocialization is energized primarily by the constant fluctuation between assault and leniency and repeated cycles of confession, reeducation, and refinement of confession.[24]

Effects

The result of this process, when successful, is to make the individual a deployable agent of the charismatic authority. This is not merely commitment but a form of commitment that does not depend on continuous surveillance by the group. A rational choice perspective on the brainwashing model conceives of this process as a fundamental restructuring of self through a reorganization of preferences. We are talking about change on a deep although not necessarily permanent level. Lifton offers the hypothesis that, in cult movements, "Intense milieu control can contribute to a dramatic change of identity which I call 'doubling': the formation of a second self which lives side by side with the former one, often for a considerable time."[25] This "doubling" or creation of a shadow self is something that I have often observed but cannot pretend to understand on more than a metaphoric level. The problem of learning what exactly happens to the individual under these conditions is one of the major challenges for future research on brainwashing. I will offer my own speculative theory on this question in the last section of this paper.

The Epistemological Validity of the Concept

Not all concepts that can be defined are scientifically valid. For a concept to be valid, it should additionally meet the following three

criteria. Its use in theory building must be to derive propositions about observable behavior that are potentially falsifiable. It will hopefully converge with similar concepts currently in use within other areas of sociology and behavioral science. And finally, there must be means for discriminating between it and other concepts that derive from competing theories. To what extent does the concept of brainwashing meet these criteria?

Falsifiability

Like many scientific concepts, brainwashing is not a process that is directly observable. One cannot observe deployability. One cannot observe a preference. Therefore, we may conclude that brainwashing does not meet the core standard of logical positivist epistemology, "the verifiability criterion of meaning."[26] However, this holds for most concepts used within the social sciences today. Even in the physical sciences, it is fair to assume that nobody has ever observed gravity or a quantum of energy. Nevertheless, these concepts are considered valid by virtue of the predictions they allow us to make about the future state of observables. If the observed values do not match those predicted by theory, the theory is considered indirectly falsified in this way.

The empirical propositions implied by the brainwashing conjecture certainly do meet this more general criterion of falsifiability. To take the simplest one first, if no significant number of apostates ever complained about brainwashing, this, in itself, would be a sufficient reason for considering the conjecture proven false. The same would be the case if all or almost all who complained later recanted. At the macro level, the brainwashing conjecture implies the existence of certain socialization procedures (forced confessions and alternating periods of leniency and severity, for example). Although the observation of these procedures in religious groups is certainly not proof of the existence of brainwashing, the failure to observe such procedures in *any* religious collectivity again would be a sufficient condition for declaring the conjecture false. Since the current state of evidence allows us to test the brainwashing conjecture by virtue of either of these criteria, we may conclude that it meets at least this basic epistemological requirement—the potential of falsifiability.

Convergent Validity

Religious movements are not the only social context in which manipulative deep resocialization can take place. Prisons, mental hospitals, political re-education institutes, concentration camps, hostage

situations, abusive marriages, and even certain laboratory situations share these characteristics. It is reasonable to ask to what extent brainwashing in religious institutions converges with concepts used to explain behavioral changes that occur in these other contexts. The demonstration of such convergence does not in itself demonstrate the truth of any of these theories. False theories can also converge. Convergence merely demonstrates that a number of theoretical explanations drawn from a number of different disciplines are all barking up the same tree regardless of whether that tree ultimately turns out to be fruit bearing.

An examination of the literature in criminology, mental health, sociology of the family, memory research, and experimental social psychology provides evidence that theories generated in these various areas are barking up a tree which looks remarkably similar to the brainwashing tree. In criminology, students of hostage situations have built a conjecture around a concept known as the Stockholm Syndrome to account for an unexpected mutual positive regard that often develops between captors and captives.[27] Descriptions of the Stockholm Syndrome are homologous with descriptions of the first two stages of brainwashing, stripping and identification. In the mental health field, work by Frank has demonstrated the extent to which prolonged psychotherapy often resembles the sort of resocialization process we are discussing.[28] Research in the sociology of the family on the battered wife syndrome has also shown interesting parallels.[29] Two important tentative findings coming out of this literature are of particular note. One indicates that there is no single personality profile that makes a woman vulnerable to this syndrome. As I have alleged for brainwashing, it is situational and relational factors rather than predispositions that help us to predict this phenomenon. A second important finding is that perceived exit costs for a battered woman do not appear to be strongly correlated with her assessment of the danger of attempted escape. In many cases, changes in self conception make the very thought of living independently from the abuser unthinkable. Research on the false memory syndrome by Loftus and her colleagues demonstrates how malleable our view of our own reality can be under suggestion.[30] This provides an important clue as to how brainwashing may work. Finally, experimental research in social psychology by Asch, Zimbardo, Milgram, and many others converges well with many specific pieces of the brainwashing puzzle.[31]

Discriminant Validity

Many scholars who are wary of taking brainwashing seriously as a concept base their reservations more on problems of discriminant validity than on falsifiability or convergent validity. Problems of discriminant

validity emerge when two or more different concepts can be used to explain the same empirical findings. Without some degree of divergence in what they predict, there is thus no practical way to determine why we should prefer one over another. The psychological concept of cognitive balance, the psychoanalytic concept of projection, and the social-psychological concept of brainwashing all are equally capable of generating accounts that allege high exit costs and so potentially pose a problem of this sort in accounting for allegations of manipulative resocialization in religious groups.[32]

To see why, let us imagine that Larry, Curly, and Moe each joined a cult movement, stayed for a while, became disillusioned, and left. Each claims that the costs of leaving were manipulative and were exceptionally high. For Larry, the problem was one of cognitive balance. He remained attached to his network of co-religionists after his belief in the religion was gone. Religion is a matter of both believing and belonging. Larry's exit costs are real but they are due to the pain of separation after believing has ceased. The cognitive balance theory would predict that you might claim never to have believed once you no longer belong.

For Curly, the process was one of projection. Curly encountered his cult movement and had a genuine nonmanipulative conversion experience. This caused him to behave in ways that were very much at variance with his old preferences. But, of course, for some people (genuine) conversion is temporary. Curley's conversion lasted a few years and then wore off. He soon reverted to his old pre-cult self. He resented the lost years which his investment in the cult movement now represented to him. Rather than accept personal responsibility for his "mistake," he adopted the ego defense of projecting the cause of his conversion outward onto the movement's charismatic leader. His projection led him to falsely claim (and believe) that this leader brainwashed him.

Finally, Moe's experience was one of genuine brainwashing. The movement took him through a set of orchestrated stages as described earlier, culminating in a perception of rebirth that created in Moe a shadow self imbued with the cult ideology. The question then becomes the following: If we are confronted with these three gentlemen after they have disaffiliated, without knowing their names, can we determine which is Moe? In these terms, the problem of establishing discriminant validity becomes one of specifying a set of rules that will allow us to determine whether a new case is to be interpreted as a result of cognitive balance, projection, or brainwashing.

This task is trickier than it may seem. I have not been able to discover any single test that reliably discriminates among these three phenomena. However, the application of multiple tests can often accomplish this. Let us assume that we know that Larry fails Test A while Curly and Moe pass it and that Curly fails Test B while Larry and Moe pass it. It follows

that only the person who passes both of these tests has been brainwashed. In my research, I have found that the two tests that work best in this regard are what I call "the dread of reunion test" and "the residual guilt test." To pass the first of these tests, the individual must show a dread of contact with the charismatic leader—either face to face, or on the phone, or even while watching him on videotape. In my experience, Larry generally fails this test while Curly and Moe pass it. To pass the second of these tests, one must experience a sense of shared guilt or responsibility for the previously held convictions and relationships. It's not that the individual holds himself or herself entirely to blame; rather, there is a recognition that one was to some degree an accomplice in the process. In my experience, Curly generally fails this test while Larry and Moe generally pass it. Although this test is not foolproof, I would be dubious of classifying anyone as having been brainwashed who does not pass both of these tests. Of course, there are often better ways to discriminate among these three processes. When the respondent can be trusted to tell the truth, asking in detail about the specific steps of the alleged brainwashing may be the most direct. In addition, we find that those who are merely resolving cognitive imbalance experience much shorter periods of disenchantment than do those who were brainwashed. I am not arguing that it is easy but that it is possible to distinguish among these three processes with a reasonable degree of reliability.

On the basis of all of the above, I conclude that we have now established that brainwashing is not only a well-defined but also a scientifically valid concept. It remains to determine how useful it is. In order to determine this we must move from concept to conjecture in the next two sections of this paper and finally from conjecture to theory in the fifth and final section. The requirements for the viability of a conjecture are weaker than for a theory. A conjecture need not be testable. It merely has to tell a story in which an explanation for a class of events is embedded. And that story needs to be convincing. It needs to be as least as plausible as other competing tales that have been told to account for the same events. Let us now turn to an examination of the evidence for my assertion that the "story" that uses the concept of brainwashing to explain certain religious events is a plausible one.

EVIDENCE FOR BRAINWASHING

Social scientists seeking to debunk the brainwashing conjecture have often spoken as if extensive research has already been done on the behavior of new religious movement (NRM) participants and definitive conclusions could now be formed. And, indeed, there has been a great deal published on cults in the past ten years. However, a close examination of this vast quantity of writings shows that it is based upon

a skimpy body of empirical research. The best research consists of ethnographic monographs on single NRMs, and all of this remains to be synthesized.[33] The few epidemiological or other comparative and quantitative studies have often been based upon small and unrepresentative samples.[34]

Stuart Wright's work, which is among the most careful of this genre, shows how even the best of these studies can yield misleading results. In one of his major questions—meant to test the degree to which ex-members of NRMs believed that they had been brainwashed—he asked the following question: "When you think about having been a member, how do you feel: 1. Indifferent? 2. Angry? 3. Duped/Brainwashed? 4. Wiser for the experience?" Clearly lumping "brainwashed" together with "duped" in the same response category shows a misunderstanding of the brainwashing concept, as does the assumption that it is mutually exclusive with feeling angry or even wiser for the experience.

Another area of confusion concerns the question of whether brainwashing is an all-or-none phenomenon. Often it is assumed that a demonstration that not all of a cult movement's members were brainwashed is equivalent to proof than none were brainwashed. But why does this follow? Even Mao never tried to brainwash *all* of the citizens of China. Why should he have? No leader needs that many deployable agents. The right question to ask is not whether *all* Moonies were brainwashed but whether *any* Moonies were brainwashed.

Membership Turnover

Aggregate membership turnover rates can tell us nothing about the presence or absence of brainwashing. To see why, one need only do the following thought experiment. Imagine yourself in a strange land with many walled towns. As a stranger, you may not enter any of these towns but you may stand by their gates and observe people entering and leaving. It is known that half the towns allow people to enter and leave freely. The other half allow people to enter freely but impose a fee of $10,000 on anyone wishing to leave. The problem is to determine, merely by standing at the gate and observing people going in and out, which towns impose exit costs and which do not. A little reflection will demonstrate that there is no way of doing so based simply on aggregate turnover statistics. But, since we have defined brainwashing as a form of imposed exit cost, it follows that such data, if they cannot tell us anything about exit costs in general, *a fortiori* cannot tell us anything about a specific class of exit costs. Population data by itself is inherently incapable of distinguishing groups that impose exit costs from groups that do not.

A common misconception about turnover data in cults stems from a confusion between the efficiency of brainwashing and the efficacy of

brainwashing. Barker and others have argued that, since very few NRM recruits become members, the resocialization process is not irresistible and therefore cannot involve brainwashing.[35] But nothing in the brainwashing conjecture predicts that it will work on everybody, and it says nothing at all about the proportion of recruits who will become agents. In fact, the efficiency of brainwashing, understood perhaps as the expected yield of deployable agents per 100 NRM agents, is an unknown (but discoverable) parameter of any particular brainwashing system and may often be quite low. For the system to perpetuate itself, the yield need only produce a sufficient number of deployable agents to compensate it for the resources required to maintain the brainwashing process. Nothing in the brainwashing conjecture is inconsistent with the finding of rapid turnover in religious communities. In general, drop-out rates tell us only about the rigor of the program, not about its effectiveness for those who stick it through to the end. As an analogy, if 99 out of 100 people training to be astronauts dropped out of the training program, we would be likely to have more rather than less confidence that the one who did not drop out had been thoroughly trained.

It does not follow, however, that population turnover data is worthless for the study of brainwashing. When we turn from aggregate rates to individual-based leaver-stayer models, we see that there is some value in knowing whether membership turnover obeys a thermodynamic model (probability of leaving independent of length of time stayed), a satiation model (probability of leaving directly dependent upon length of time stayed), or a commitment model (probability of leaving inversely dependent on length of time stayed). Of the three, only commitment turnover is compatible with an assertion of brainwashing. Observation of thermodynamic or satiation turnover is grounds for rejecting the brainwashing conjecture. However, this doesn't do us much good because those few leaver-stayer studies that have been done demonstrate thermodynamic turnover during the early years of membership[36] and commitment turnover thereafter.[37] Although commitment turnover is compatible with the brainwashing conjecture, it is also compatible with all other competing conjectures.

Ethnographic Observation

Of somewhat more value is direct ethnographic observation of brainwashing mechanisms. An observer can often determine whether a specific cult movement has institutionalized such mechanisms as identity stripping, forced confessions, alternating periods of severity and leniency, and initiation through a symbolic death and rebirth ordeal. These mechanisms are presumably costly to maintain, so we are justified

in asking, in movements in which they are observed, what purpose do they serve? While it does not follow that the answer must be brainwashing, the burden of proof is on those who wish to reject the brainwashing conjecture to come up with alternative plausible explanations for the presence of these costly mechanisms.

My own research in this area has convinced me that this is a promising line to pursue.[38] When I first studied the Bruderhof thirty years ago using ethnographic methods, I was struck by the homology between the stages of the Bruderhof novitiate and the stages of brainwashing in Chinese re-education centers described by Lifton.[39] Since I could think of no other reason why the Bruderhof would support such a costly and labor intensive resocialization program if it were not to create deployable agents with long term loyalty to the community, I hypothesized that something akin to brainwashing must be occurring. My observations over the next thirty years have only strengthened my confidence in the correctness of this hypothesis. Bruderhof members were never kept from leaving by force or even by the threat of force. But the community put substantial time and energy into assuring that many defections would be made extraordinarily difficult by imbuing in its members an addictive attraction to the community experience and a terror of life outside the community.

What is the frequency with which we find institutionalized structures that approximate those that were found in the foundational brainwashing literature? For the purposes of this paper, I selected the ten religious collectivities other than the Bruderhof in which I have done the most extensive field work. Institutional mechanisms supportive of the brainwashing conjecture were observed in seven of these ten religious collectivities. Since these institutional mechanisms are costly for the collectivity to maintain, it may reasonably be inferred that they would not be maintained if they did not serve some important collective function. However, this evidence, though suggestive, falls somewhat short of definitive proof because of the possibility that the connection is spurious and that these institutional mechanisms actually serve an important collective function having nothing to do with the manipulation of exit costs.

The Veracity of Apostate Accounts

Another promising area of evidence has to do with apostate testimonies of disenchantment. While the brainwashing conjecture clearly requires a world in which at least some of these testimonies reflect true experiences, it does not require that all such testimonies be accepted as true. Researchers attempting to fit their data to a brainwashing model

will generally approach the retrospective accounts of ex-members of NRMs with skepticism. However, in instances where a great many individuals independently report similar accounts of disenchantment, and where there are no apparent financial or emotional incentives for fabricating evidence, these accounts deserve to be taken seriously.

When looked at over a considerable length of time, these accounts show an extraordinary consistency. To my knowledge, there has not emerged even a small number of cases of apostates who claimed they had been brainwashed but who later recanted and admitted that their brainwashing allegations had been lies or self-deceptions. It is this negative evidence—the lack of any significant number of subjects who lied about exit costs but who later changed their stories and admitted they were fabrications—that convinces me that the brainwashing hypothesis cannot be rejected at this time.

Red Herrings: Physical Coercion and Mental Breakdown

Before leaving the topic of empirical evidence, I must address two issues that have often been cited as proof that cult movements do not brainwash. Because of the dearth of receptivity to genuine brainwashing research in the sociology of religion, a "straw man" model of brainwashing has been allowed to circulate unchallenged for quite some time. This dubious model alleges that brainwashing always requires physical force or restraint to be effective. It further alleges that brainwashed individuals are programmed zombies out of touch with reality and that their insanity can be measured by objective tests of psychosis. When ethnographers fail to find signs of physical coercion or psychosis in cults, these facts are taken as "proof" that there can have been no brainwashing.

It is true that cult movements rarely retain their members by the use of physical force or constraint. But is the necessity of force or the threat of force required for true brainwashing? This widespread belief is based on a misreading of Lifton and Schein. This misreading came about because, in fact, many (although by no means all) of the cases they studied were brought to a state of agency by real or threatened force. As incarcerated agents, they were forced to go through the brainwashing process although the desired goal of that process was to give them their freedom as deployable agents.

Within family sociology, it used to be the tendency to say of battered wives, "Why don't they just leave the abusive situation? Nobody is holding them there by force." Now it is much better understood that chronic battering can wear down not only the body but the capacity to make independent decisions about leaving. I fail to see any significant differences between this phenomenon and the phenomenon of the charismatically abused participant in a cult movement. Furthermore,

there is no known human behavior (from murder, to suicide, to child abuse, to self-mutilation) that can be experimentally induced in human subjects by force that cannot also be produced by manipulation of the psychological and social environment. Why should brainwashing be the only phenomenon that is an exception to this rule?

It is also true that researchers studying NRM members have often administered mental functioning tests which usually find little significant psychotic disorientation.[40] Such results have erroneously been taken as evidence that the members could not possibly have been brainwashed. In fact, the brainwashing conjecture predicts disorientation only during some of the intermediate stages of the brainwashing process, not at the end state. The popular association of brainwashing with zombie or robot states comes out of a confusion between the physical characteristics of people *going through* the brainwashing process and the characteristics of people who *have completed* the process. The former are, at times, so disoriented that they do appear to resemble caricatures of zombies or robots: Glassy eyes, inability to complete sentences, and fixed eerie smiles are characteristics of disoriented people under randomly varying levels of psychological stress. But the brainwashing process does not simply take people apart. It puts them back together in a new and functionally adequate way. If it did not, they would be useless as deployable agents.

I, myself, happened to witness an entire building full of several hundred highly disoriented Moonies, and it is not an experience that I will ever be able to forget. These people, although gentle and harmless, were frightening in their disjointed affect and loose cognition. But they were not brainwashed, or at least not fully brainwashed. Most of them, quite likely, never went on to complete the brainwashing process. Some may have broken down mentally and been discarded by the movement. Others may have finally found the resources within themselves to leave. Still others may have stayed within the group but were never fully processed through the system. A fully brainwashed person is emotionally and mentally functional as long as he or she does not contemplate disobedience or apostasy. There are no defining bizarre physical characteristics unless one counts a total unwillingness to discuss or even think about certain taboo subjects. Only the underlying values and preferences of the individual have been modified. The value of deployable agents is precisely that they are submissive *without* being functionally immobilized.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER CONJECTURES

The brainwashing conjecture is based on a theory of preference modification. Since there is no direct way to observe or measure the process of preference transformation, we can currently test this

conjecture only at the level of plausibility. In other words, we need to ask whether the brainwashing explanation is more or less plausible than other conjectures that purport to explain the same observable phenomena. In this section I will discuss the four such competing conjectures that have been advanced in the literature on NRMs. I do not mean to imply that these four comprise an exhaustive list of the explanations proposed. But I offer this list as a convenient way to organize the literature that attempts to explain the commitment behavior of NRM members.

The Deviant Labeling Conjecture

The most parsimonious challenge to the brainwashing conjecture comes from labeling theory. The argument here is simply that there is nothing to explain. Conversion is viewed as an opportunity, not as a trap. Plain vanilla religious commitment mechanisms assure that the disaffiliate will experience exit costs.[41] All this is normal and has gone on for millennia in all religions. It is only the deviant nature of the doctrines of some religions that calls this normal process into question.

According to this perspective, what goes on in cult movements is no different from what any religious organization experiences in its early stages. However, public opinion is threatened by these new movements and therefore labels their converts as brainwashed dupes. The deviant labeling conjecture and the brainwashing conjecture do not differ with regard to the affiliation process. They do, however, differ in their modeling of disaffiliation and disenchantment. The deviant labeling conjecture accounts for ex-members' experience of strong emotional obstacles to disaffiliation by reference to the belonging dimension of religion. Even after disenchantment sets in with regard to belief, there is still a strong sense of belonging to the group that holds these beliefs. These exit costs are similar to those experienced by a married couple who are no longer in love but still feel bound to the relationship.

The Lofland and Stark model of conversion is probably the most sophisticated and influential of this genre.[42] Like the brainwashing model, it describes a process that develops over time in specific stages. However, unlike the brainwashing model, it emphasizes the decisions and activities of the individual convert rather than the manipulative activities of the cult. Lofland and Stark divide the process into three predisposing steps followed by four situational steps. The predisposing steps are: (1) feelings of tension or deprivation of some duration; (2) development of a problem-solving strategy within a religious perspective; and (3) definition of oneself as a seeker after religious truth. The situational steps are: (1) a sudden opportunity to abandon an old way of life and embrace an entirely new one; (2) development of intense

emotional bonds between the individual and group members; (3) atrophy of relationships with nonmembers; and (4) intense communal involvement in a totalistic social structure.

A critical experiment to distinguish between a spontaneous conversion that has been labeled as deviant and a manipulated conversion that involves brainwashing depends to some degree upon a more detailed specification than now exists in the literature of just what happens to an individual during spontaneous conversion. At minimum, attention should be paid to the role played by the cult movement in manipulating stresses on the individual. In addition, these two conjectures predict somewhat different outcomes at the disenchantment stage. Spontaneous conversions labeled as deviant should show a positive correlation between the extent of disenchantment and the degree to which the subject's post-group social environment disdains the movement. Conversions brought about by brainwashing should instead show a correlation between the extent of disenchantment and the degree to which movement beliefs and activities were dystonic to the pre-affiliative self.

Without a model of what happens to individuals during "normal" conversion, we cannot hope to distinguish it from brainwashing definitively. It is possible that some brainwashing may have a normal conversion component. But it is equally possible that much of what we consider normal conversion experiences may involve a measure of what I have been calling brainwashing.

The Seekership/Spite Conjecture

This conjecture is based on the assumption that recruits to NRMs are dissatisfied seekers whose quests may cause them to affiliate (temporarily or permanently) with these groups. Any allegations of mental or emotional coercion that such a person may utter against the movement after ceasing to be a member are best explained as spiteful reactions of disenchanted idealists. There is actually no single body of work that fits this name because those using this explanation have not generally taken as full a longitudinal perspective as we are doing here. Therefore I am combining the congruent speculations of those who explain affiliation in terms of seekership and those who explain the attitudes and beliefs of disaffiliates in terms of spite.

There are individuals known as seekers. These seekers have measurable characteristics that distinguish them from the larger population. They find cult movements and join them as part of their seeking for something that the dominant culture does not offer. Some stay while others move on to further episodes in their seekership careers. Still others outgrow seekership.

The empirical key to establishing the plausibility of the seekership conjecture is the discovery of a reliable and valid measure of the seeker personality traits. Ideally, the application of such a measure should be able to prospectively determine the likelihood of an individual becoming a member of a cult movement. Some efforts to delineate such a measure have produced some interesting findings but have not, to date, begun to converge into one or more general measures of seekership.[43]

When individuals leave an organization to which they have been totally committed, there is sometimes a spite response. This stems from a psychological need to completely disavow, perhaps even take vengeance upon, this organization. This kind of apostasy falls into two distinct categories. The first we may call apostasy at the behest of family enmeshment. Because of the pathology of enmeshed families, total disavowal of the offending group may be a requirement for full reacceptance into the family of origin. Under such circumstances, a mutual agreement that the former member was brainwashed may be the path of least resistance for all concerned.

A second type may be called apostasy in the service of litigation. Feigned distress is always a possibility in civil suits. Could brainwashing be the psychic analog to whiplash in auto accidents? If the brainwashing conjecture creates sympathy for potential plaintiffs, this may give them the motivation to fabricate a history of brainwashing.

A critical experiment to distinguish the seekership/spite conjecture from the brainwashing conjecture would hinge upon the issue of whether loyal, committed members are drawn from a wide spectrum of personality types or from a relatively narrow band known as seekers. Close observation of the recruitment process is necessary here to assure that data are recorded on the characteristics not only of movement members, but of recruits and prospective recruits as well.

The spite portion of the seekership/spite conjecture predicts that the probability of disenchantment is subject to a cost-benefit calculus. Therefore, a high positive correlation between degree of disenchantment and independent measures of the benefits to the individual of an apostasy stance would constitute evidence for the spite conjecture. To the extent that we find apostasy accounts in individuals with nothing to gain by these accounts, we should be more willing to consider their possible veracity. Another approach consists of looking for consistency in in-depth interviews. Still another approach is the development of a lie factor in questionnaires designed to document the process of movement disenchantment.

However, the best way of comparing these two conjectures involves the fifth stage of the behavioral process discussed above. Seekership/spite suggests that reinterviews with apostates many years after leaving the group should show significant signs of retreat from claims of manipulation, especially when there has been a successful reintegration

into the larger society. The brainwashing conjecture, by way of contrast, predicts that apostates will hold fast to their accounts of manipulative resocialization for the rest of their lives. I have followed a sample of respondents for periods of time up to twenty years from the date of declared apostasy and have found no examples of recanted accounts. This suggests to me that the spite argument is not consistent with observed data over a sufficient period of time.

The Role Playing Conjecture

At certain points in life—most notably during the transition from adolescence to adulthood—individuals need to experiment with radically new sets of attitudes and behavioral roles. Often the need is to commit to these allegiances intensely and absolutely. These experiments are almost always short-lived and have few adverse consequences for later life. There may also be behavioral role playing (even of the most fanatical type) without any inner conviction. The role playing conjecture predicts not only that young people affiliate with cult movements based on no great commitment, but also that they are able to stay loosely bonded and disaffiliate when it suits them, with relative ease.

An example of this approach is to be found in Pilarzyk's alternation conjecture.[44] Alternation is viewed as a religious transformation that is less pervasive than conversion. Research in this area tries to distinguish those NRMs whose members undergo true conversion from those whose members undergo a more temporary and superficial process known as alternation. The notion of alternation is important in understanding why some disaffiliates experience exit costs while other members of the very same movement do not.

A role theory approach is associated with the work of Jehenson[45] and later of Bromley and Shupe.[46] Role theoretic approaches tend to be associated with suspicion concerning the reliability and validity of apostate data. Defining apostates by virtue of a shared role rather than by virtue of a shared choice seems to make it easier to justify stereotypical prejudgment of their responses, overlooking the great diversity within this category.

I seek to define this term empirically, in a way that does not prejudge any of the questions addressed in this paper. Unfortunately, apostasy is not always so defined as, for example, in the following study that looks at apostasy from a role theory perspective:

> "Apostates" constitutes a special category of defectors who have moved beyond simple disaffiliation to establish a "career" which involves assuming an active role in the anti-cult movement. . . . Exhibiting much the same type of emotional polar reversal as former alcoholics who have become crusading teetotalers,

former inmates who counsel juvenile delinquents, and self-proclaimed "sinners" who have been "born again," apostates campaign against their former cause. These actions, of course, constitute means of simultaneously burning bridges with the new religious group and building bridges with the anti-cult group and conventional society.[47]

The problem here is that the authors have put the theoretical cart before the empirical horse. Instead of attempting to determine what proportion of ex-members hold strong "anti-cult" views and for what reasons, they define a deviant role solely in terms of holding such a view and thereby dismiss its importance by assuming that apostasy is "merely a stage" through which some ex-members pass.

Mental or Physical Impairment Conjectures

There are a number of explanations of the phenomena we are investigating which rest on the assumption that the actions taken by the individual NRM member are a result of impairment. These divide naturally into two rather distinct classes: "pre-existing condition" models, which allege one must be crazy or deficient in some way to join a NRM in the first place, and "iatrogenic" models, which allege that it is the movement itself that inadvertently impairs you or drives you crazy as an unintended by-product of its attempt to bring you to salvation or enlightenment.

The leading figure of the "pre-existing condition" school is Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi.[48] Beit-Hallahmi's work, like Galanter's to some degree,[49] has shown evidence of a correlation between conversion and pre-conversion mental and emotional problems. Silvano Arieti has argued that NRMs are sometimes unconsciously sought out by schizophrenics and can sometimes be of greater help than psychotherapy in arresting cognitive degeneration due to some types of schizophrenia.[50] Robert Simmonds has made a similar argument for drug and alcohol abusers, giving evidence that joining a NRM may be seen as a way of trading in a more harmful addiction for a less harmful one.[51]

Another "pre-existing condition" that has been advanced as an explanation for cult affiliation and disaffiliation is hypnotic suggestibility. Orne has done some interesting experimental work on the extent to which subjects can be hypnotized to do things against their will.[52] Katchen claims to have developed a reliable and valid measure of hypnotic susceptibility.[53] He argues that it can be used to predict vulnerability to cult movements. If this is true, it should be a relatively straightforward task to determine the degree to which this correlates with the amount of time spent in a cult movement.

Another "pre-existing condition" conjecture comes from the anthropological literature. Kehoe and Giletti have argued, based on

their observation of shamanistic trance states, that there is reason to believe that calcium deficiency in diet may be related to charismatic susceptibility and suggestibility.[54] At least one follow-up study has refined this argument by pointing out that, under certain circumstances, extreme stress reduces the body's ability to retain calcium regardless of diet.[55] It would follow from their argument that calcium deficiency may merely be an intermediate variable between stress and charismatic susceptibility. As far as I know, there have been no attempts to date to apply this conjecture to NRMs despite the fact that many of them provide highly deficient diets to their members. It should be easy to test this conjecture with adequate measures of dietary intake and metabolism of NRM members.

Margaret Singer is the leading name associated with the "iatrogenic" school. She sums up her argument as follows:

> Despite the myth that normal people don't get sucked into cults, it has become clear over the years that everyone is susceptible. . . . Contrary to the myth that those who join cults are seekers, it is the cults that go out and actively and aggressively find followers. Eventually, these groups subject their followers to mind-numbing treatments that block critical and evaluative thinking and subjugate independent choice in a context of a strictly enforced hierarchy. . . . Some cult members end up in psychiatric hospitals; others sometimes drift for years after a cult experience, never quite getting it together. People who have had such intense experiences, particularly when combined with a concerted breaking down of their selves, require special care afterward . . . . Even those who may not experience severe psychological difficulties often will have considerable problems adjusting to normal life after leaving a cult.[56]

The snapping conjecture, which posits a kind of information overload disease, is a more extreme example of an "iatrogenic" theory. According to Conway and Siegelman, the originators of the conjecture, the human mind is limited in its ability to process information.[57] When stressed in certain ways, the mind snaps and can then be imprinted with the designs of NRM leaders. Minds in this condition are infinitely malleable and vulnerable to any influences. Almost anyone is potentially vulnerable to this type of rapid imprinting. Imprinted individuals, even those with no prior interest in NRMs, become totally deployable agents of movement leaders. This condition will often be permanent unless there is a forcible intercession (e.g., deprogramming).

A critical experiment to distinguish between brainwashing and snapping involves determining the rapidity with which conversion takes place. Brainwashing predicts a slow nonlinear process of conversion with many intermediate crises and backsliding. The snapping conjecture suggests that the conversion happens at a specific point in time. The two models also differ in that snapping predicts impaired mental functioning among the converted whereas brainwashing does not.

Therefore, measures of mental functioning before, during, and after affiliation will be important in any critical experiment to distinguish brainwashing from snapping.

Sirkin and Wynne's *folie à deux* conjecture is yet another interesting attempt to account for NRM member behavior in "iatrogenic" terms. According to the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, folie à deux* is a delusional system shared by and supported by a network relationship.[58] As it applies to this conjecture, it refers to the dyadic relationship between the charismatic leader of a NRM and each of his followers.[59] Evidence for this conjecture should be based on the observable diagnostic criteria of psychotic delusion which most observers have not found to be characteristic of many known NRMs. However, I believe this perspective has something important to teach us about the study of brainwashing, notably that it is not an individual level characteristic but is rather an emergent property of relationships.

Having reviewed these various conjectures, I think it is fair to conclude that none account for NRM member behavior in a way that is clearly superior to the brainwashing conjecture. On the other hand, neither have I succeeded in showing that the brainwashing conjecture is so far superior to these others that it may be declared our theoretical champion. The point of these comparisons has not been to declare a winner but to establish a research agenda.

FROM CONJECTURE TO THEORY: BRINGING THE BRAIN BACK IN

These sorts of comparisons can only be made on the basis of plausibility. If we want a theory we can actually test, we need to model the phenomenon in terms of measurable changes to persons and relationships. At the present time I believe we are still far away from such an achievement. That is why I have repeatedly referred to arguments concerning brainwashing as conjectures rather than as theories. However, in the last section of this paper I am going to speculate on what a real theory of brainwashing may eventually look like.

Earlier I defined brainwashing as a set of transactions between a charismatically-led collectivity and an isolated member of the collectivity with the goal of transforming the member into a deployable agent. A deployable agent is one who can be relied on to continue to carry out the wishes of the collectivity even when they are in opposition to his or her own simple hedonic interests and in the absence of any external controls. The theoretical problem then becomes to develop hypotheses concerning measurable physiological and behavioral changes occurring in the course of this process and then to determine whether these

changes in fact occur. The theoretical direction I am proposing suggests that internalized changes at both cognitive and emotional levels must occur to result in brainwashing. Understanding these changes will involve work in advancing the study of both credulity and the addictive aspects of strong emotional attachment.

The Charismatic Relationship and the Free Rider Problem

Since brainwashing as I have defined it is possible only in the presence of charismatic authority, a theory of brainwashing must be seen in the context of a theory of charisma. This is not to say that all charismatic relationships involve brainwashing, but that brainwashing is a solution to a fundamental problem posed by charismatic authority. This problem is charisma's tendency to create cycles of reciprocally escalating demands between the leader and the leader's agents that result, for the collectivity, in a positive feedback loop which must, sooner or later, spin out of control unless the agents can be made deployable.

Coleman has suggested that charisma can be explained as a rational response to the free rider problem.[60] If all the members of a collectivity can somehow agree to transfer authority over their own actions to a leader who will make decisions on behalf of the group, there can be a vast increase in "social capital," allowing the collectivity to perform actions beyond the sum of the abilities of the aggregate of individuals. It is possible to see how the maintenance of even a very costly structure for perpetuating charismatic influence can therefore be rational for a collectivity in its pursuit of ambitious collective goals requiring many willing hands. However, charismatic compliance is never or rarely in the interest of a reasonably competent individual conceived as a simple hedonic actor. As Coleman points out, what is puzzling about charismatic influence is why a rational actor would ever submit to it.[61]

An individual's control over his own actions is inalienable. The compliance of an agent can be revoked at any moment, however long the history of fidelity. For a charismatic collectivity to have any degree of stability over time, it must find a way to create agents that are not merely committed but deployable as well. Otherwise, a rational individual will retain authority over his or her own decision making while taking a free ride on the charismatic investments of all the other members. This will create for the group a second-order free rider problem.

In the short run, this problem can be staved off by a continuing cycle of crises and triumphs. But the point made by Weber about the need for charismatic authority to be continually proved thrusts two ways.[62] If the charismatic leader can never rest on his laurels in legitimating his authority, neither can the leader's agent be trusted to remain loyal

through yet another crisis just because he or she has been trustworthy in the past. The charismatic leader must appear to be capable of accomplishing extraordinary deeds. Otherwise, there is no basis for the heavy claims that charismatic influence makes on its agents. But one of the things that makes such accomplishments possible is the trustworthiness of the leader's agents. This trustworthy corps of agents allows the leader to accomplish deeds that appear even more miraculous which, in turn, justify even greater claims on the followers.

It is obvious that such a system, caught in a positive feedback loop of mutually increasing expectations of miracles and loyalty, can never attain equilibrium. One way out of the loop is finding a way for the loyalty of the agents to be guaranteed regardless of the actions of the leader. This is possible only to the extent that the hedonic self is transformed into one driven in large part by normative precommitments involving high exit costs. Only individuals who have made such precommitment can be trusted to support a charismatic leader in the long run. Such complex internal structures are called by Coleman internal constitutions.[63]

But none of this is helpful to us in theory building unless we can find a window through which we can observe the process whereby individuals develop internal constitutions. Can we observe a rational agent transferring authority over his or her actions from the hedonic self to the self governed by an internal constitution, thus becoming a deployable agent? This may be possible to the extent that something observable gets rearranged inside the individual when this happens. I would argue that what gets rearranged are cognitive beliefs of a certain type and emotional dependencies.

Charisma and Cognitive and Emotional Restructuring

Weber asserts that actions based on charismatic influence "are very closely related to phenomena which are understandable either only in biological terms or are subject to interpretation in terms of subjective motives only in fragments and with an almost imperceptible transition to the biological."[64] My argument is that this transition to the biological involves both a suspension of incredulity and an addictive orientation to the alternation of arousal and comfort comparable to the mother-infant attachment. This argument is based on the key assumption that all charismatic relationships are dyadic. Although higher order networks are important and often indispensable in providing the institutional infrastructure for charismatic authority, my assumption is that each follower's relationship with the charismatic leader is lonely and private.

At the cognitive level, this relationship involves the suspension of left-brain criticism of right-brain beliefs such that the beliefs are uncritically and enthusiastically adopted. There exists some biological

evidence for the universality of convictions. Michael Gazzaniga sees convictions as neurologically inevitable byproducts of the division of labor within the brain.[65] The left-brain interpreter working with various right-brain behavior modules imposes consistency on them through mechanisms of belief formation. Gazzaniga further argues that cognitive dissonance can be shown to be a neurologically inevitable consequence of this internal control mechanism.[66] He cites evidence from temporal lobe epilepsy that a brain injury can cause a deepening of religious conviction: "the brain lesion frees the patients from their personal histories and prepares them for any set of beliefs."[67] By preventing even low-level testing of the consequences of our convictions, the individual is able rapidly to be convinced of a changing flow of beliefs, accepted uncritically.[68]

It seems reasonable to hypothesize that the cognitive mechanism for precommitment is through the development of certain kinds of beliefs. Beliefs can be divided into two categories serving different functions: (1) testable beliefs which serve an obvious social reality function and (2) distal beliefs which cannot be tested and seem to serve no obvious function.[69] Nevertheless, distal beliefs are held by pretty much everyone, so there must be some non-obvious function that they serve. Let us limit our concern to those convictions that can be classified as distal beliefs (not ordinarily subject to empirical verification). From this point on, I will use the term convictions to refer to strongly held distal beliefs.

In the normal person, there is some evidence that convictions, once developed, are treated by the actor as valued possessions. There are, in other words, costs (possibly substantial) to the actor in giving them up. There is abundant evidence that people tend to defend their convictions even against highly reasonable attacks. Coleman has shown how direct attacks on beliefs polarize communities.[70] Greenwald has shown that there is a low correlation between recollection of the rational arguments used in persuasion and the degree to which one is persuaded.[71] Abelson offers linguistic evidence that convictions are treated as possessions more than as ways of testing reality.[72]

Based on the above considerations, we can postulate that the cognitive aspect of a simple internal constitution consists of the following: a fluid substrate of hedonic preferences; a mantle of more rigid preferences locked in via convictions; will power as the inner agent that speaks for convictions when they are in opposition to hedonic interests. However, a more complex (and probably more realistic) model of the internal constitution makes room also for ego defenses—stress induced reactions to anything that threatens convictions and will power. Ego defenses, like convictions, are virtually universal but functionally useless to individuals who are willing constantly to modify their convictions, rationally, in the light of new evidence.

At the emotional level, my hypothesis is that the charismatic relationship recapitulates the attachment-separation relationship between mother and infant. The initial impulse of the charismatic leader is to nurture and of the disciple to be nurtured. The discarded infantile hope for absolute nurturance and the parental hope for unconditional innocent love are revived. As Smith has argued,

> . . . the extreme dependency of disciples or followers immediately suggests that there is a root for charismatic appeal in experiences somehow analogous to those of infancy. In particular, the propensity of followers to attribute charismatic qualities to a leader seems akin to the developmental readiness of an infant to "discover" greatness in a parental figure.[73]

This relationship involves a mutuality of sensitivity in which each party comes to recognize the other's cyclical need for arousal and comfort. The equilibrium involved is never a stable one. Indeed, it involves a continual mutual testing similar to what Bowlby has called "anxious attachment."[74] Smith and Stevens, with their concept of the hyperstructure, have provided us with a potential tool for understanding the increasingly addictive nature of the relationship between the charismatic leader and each disciple.[75] They argue,

> Specifically, physiological research over the last several decades . . . has drawn attention to correlations, widespread among animal species, between endogenous opioid activities in the brain and the dynamics of attachment and separation. . . . Not only testosterone levels, that is, but also opioid fluctuations appear to be controlled through behavioral channels—through dominance and attachment, respectively.[76]

Although it is a stretch to extrapolate from animal to human research, it seems to me that this is a line of investigation worth pursuing. If it really is the case that opiate stimulation and inhibition are involved in the charismatic relationship, this would explain why this relationship often seems to become addicting for both the subordinate and the superordinate. For the superordinate this is manifested in the oft seen corrupting influence of authority. For the subordinate, it may be manifested in an increasing dependency upon the state of dependency.

Simmonds in his early study of the Jesus Movement argued on the basis of longitudinal psychological testing that the members of this movement were behaving in ways more consistent with our understanding of addiction than with our understanding of conversion.[77] My own studies of the Bruderhof have suggested a similar conclusion.[78] If it is the case that brainwashing can be understood as the process of becoming addicted to a charismatic relationship, we would then have the key for advancing it from a conjecture to a testable theory.

The Role of Brainwashing in Charismatic Restructuring

In these terms, brainwashing can be operationalized as an influence process orchestrated toward the goal of charismatic addiction. My hypothesis is that each of the three stages of brainwashing achieves a plateau in this addictive process. The stripping stage creates the vulnerability to this sort of transformation. The identification stage creates the biochemical alignment, and the rebirth stage creates the fully addicted shadow self.

The cognitive goal of the stripping stage is to destroy prior convictions. The emotional goal of the stripping stage is to create the need for attachments. Overall, at the completion of the stripping stage, the situation is such that the individual is hungry for convictions and attachments and dependent upon the collectivity to supply them. This sort of credulity and attachment behavior is widespread among prisoners and hospital patients

The cognitive goal of the identification stage is to establish a search for conviction and to bring about the erosion of the habit of incredulity. The emotional goal of the identification stage is to instill the habit of acting out through attachment. Overall, at the completion of the identification stage, the individual begins to rely on the collectivity for beliefs and for a cyclic emotional pattern of arousal and comfort. Also at this point, however, this reliance is just one highly valued form of existence. It is not yet viewed as an existential necessity.

The cognitive goal of the rebirth stage is to establish a sense of ownership (and pride of ownership) of the new convictions. The emotional goal of the rebirth stage is to deindividuate to a sufficient extent that one no longer recognizes the emotional validity of life aside from the charismatically led collectivity. Overall, at the completion of the rebirth stage, we may say that the person has become a fully deployable agent of the charismatic leader. The brainwashing process is complete.

If the assumptions made above are correct, this theory should at some point in the future be testable at the biochemical level of the brain. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the specific directions for such interdisciplinary research, hopefully I have at least traced the outlines of a viable agenda for theory building.

CONCLUSIONS

It has not been my aim in this paper to reach a definite conclusion as to whether brainwashing occurs in cult movements. Although I find the evidence convincing that it does, other scholars have found

alternative conjectures equally convincing, and my objective has not been to prove them wrong. Personally, I believe that the cult movement phenomenon is so subtle and multifaceted that all of the conjectures I have discussed in this paper—including brainwashing—eventually will be found partly true.

What I have tried to do in this paper instead is to provide a fair and scientifically grounded set of rules by which all of the conjectures that have been proposed to explain how cult movements retain their members may be comparatively evaluated. This has involved a fair amount of epistemological housekeeping, a kind of sweeping away of stereotypes so that brainwashing can be considered on an equal basis with such conjectures as labeling, seekership/spite, role theory, and theories of mental and physical impairment.

Establishing the need for exit cost analysis, particularly with regard to charismatic religious groups, has been the major goal of this paper. The need for such analysis seems obvious to me. Hopefully even those readers who remain unconvinced that brainwashing contributes significantly to the costs of leaving cult movements will agree that the costs themselves are frequently not negligible. Too often in sociology, especially in rational choice treatments, we have assumed that they are and that one can change religions almost as easily as one changes hats. I invite all who agree with me that the analysis of exit costs is an important line of research to participate in testing the brainwashing conjecture.

ENDNOTES

[1] I wish to thank Janja Lalich, Phillip Lucas, Thomas Robbins, and two anonymous reviewers for helpful suggestions. The author welcomes comments from readers. These may be sent to him at the Department of Sociology, Rutgers University, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854-8045 or by e-mail to zablocki@durkheim.rutgers.edu

[2] I am using the term "brainwashing" here as generally equivalent to what Lifton has called "thought reform" (Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989]) and Schein has called "coercive persuasion" (Edgar Schein and C.H. Barker, *Coercive Persuasion* [New York: Norton, 1961]). There are subtle connotative differences among these terms, but a debate over terminology is beyond the scope of this paper.

[3] Joseph Agassi, "Brainwashing," *Methodology and Science* 23 (1990): 117.

[4] James T. Richardson and Brock Kilbourne, "Classical and Contemporary Applications of Brainwashing Models: A Comparison and Critique," in *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy: Sociological, Psychological, Legal, and Historical Perspectives*, eds. David G. Bromley and James T. Richardson (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1983), 29-46, and Stuart A. Wright, "Defection from New Religious Movements: A Test of Some Theoretical Propositions," in *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy*, eds. Bromley and Richardson, 106-21.

[5] John G. Clark, "Cults," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 242 (1979); Bijan Etemad, "Extrication from Cultism," *Current Psychiatric Therapies* 18 (1979): 217-23; David Halperin, *Psychodynamic Perspectives on Religion, Sect, and Cult* (New York: John Wright, 1983); John Hochman, "Intragenic Symptoms Associated With A Therapy Cult: Examination of an Extinct New Psychotherapy with Respect to Psychiatric Deterioration and Brainwashing," *Psychiatry* 47 (1984): 366-77.

[6] The use of the term "cult" in this paper is not meant to be evaluative. I am using it in the by now standard sense as defined by Stark and Bainbridge: "A cult . . . is a deviant religious organization with novel beliefs and practices. Deviance is departure from the norms of a culture in such a way as to incur the imposition of extraordinary costs from those who maintain the culture" (Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996], 124). The term "cult movement," also used in this paper, denotes a religious organization that is not the offshoot of a church or denomination (a sect movement), but rather one that has started independently of any normative religious body (Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985], 25).

[7] Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism.*

[8] Stephen Kent, "Methodological Problems Studying Brainwashing in Scientology's Rehabilitation Project Force" (paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, San Diego, CA, November 1997). Cited with permission of the author.

[9] Not all cult movements, of course, choose to make use of any of these tools. Hopefully only a small minority make use of the hammer.

[10] James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

[11] Lawrence R. Iannaccone, "Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-Riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives," *Journal of Political Economy* 100 (1992): 271-91.

[12] Stark and Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion.*

[13] Christopher Ellison and Darren Sherkat, "The 'Semi-Involuntary Institution' Revisited: Regional Variations in Church Participation among Black Americans," *Social Forces* 73 (1995): 1415-437.

[14] Jack Douglas Shand, "A Forty-Year Follow-Up of the Religious Beliefs and Attitudes of a Group of Amherst College Graduates," in *Research in The Social Scientific Study of Religion,* eds. Monty L. Lynn and David O. Moberg (Greenwhich, CT: Jai Press, 1990), 117-36.

[15] Dean R. Hoge, "Why Catholics Drop Out," in *Falling From the Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religious Apostasy,* ed. David G. Bromley (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1988), 81-99, and C. Kirk Hadaway and Wade Clark Roof, "Apostasy in American Churches: Evidence from National Survey Data," in *Falling From the Faith,* ed. Bromley, 29-46.

[16] Stark and Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*; Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *Religion, Deviance, and Social Control* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); and Iannaccone, "Sacrifice and Stigma."

[17] Ellison and Sherkat, "The 'Semi-Involuntary Institution' Revisited."

[18] For example most of the essays in Bromley and Richardson, *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy.*

[19] John Lofland, *Doomsday Cult: A Study of Conversion, Proselytization and Maintenance of Faith* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966); James T. Richardson, *Conversion Careers: In and Out of the New Religions* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1978); Benjamin D. Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma: A Study of Contemporary American Communes* (New York: Free Press, 1980); Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); Marc Galanter, *Cults: Faith, Healing, and Coercion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[20] Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism.* These eight characteristics are described more fully in chapter 22 (especially p. 420).

[21] Benjamin D. Zablocki, *The Joyful Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Richard Ofshe and Margaret Singer, "Attacks on Peripheral versus Central Elements of Self and the Impact of Thought Reform Techniques," *Cultic Studies* 3, no. 1 (1986): 3-24.

[22] In calling the process manipulative, I am stating nothing more than that the goal of the collectivity is to change the target individual according to its own preconceived plan. I am not implying that the collectivity is always deceptive as to its plan nor that the target individual is always guided through the process involuntarily.

[23] The terms used here are my own modifications of Lifton's as developed in Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism.* Cf. Zablocki, *The Joyful Community.*

[24] Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism.*

[25] Robert Jay Lifton, "Cult Formation," *The Harvard Mental Health Letter* 7, no. 8 (February 1991): 2.

[26] See for example D. C. Phillips, *The Social Scientist's Bestiary* (New York: Pergamon, 1992), 52-53, 57 for a fuller discussion of the history of this concept.

[27] Irka Kuleshnyk, "The Stockholm Syndrome: Toward an Understanding," *Social Action and the Law* 10 (1984): 37-42; and Joel O. Powell, "Notes on the Stockholm Syndrome," *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* 7 (1986): 353-65.

[28] Jerome D. Frank, *Persuasion and Healing* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1961).

[29] Ola W. Barnett and Alyce D. LaViolette, *It Could Happen to Anyone: Why Battered Women Stay* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993).

[30] Elizabeth Loftus and Katherine Ketcham, *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memories and Allegations of Sexual Abuse* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994). It should be noted that research into false recovered memories cuts two ways with regard to the brainwashing conjecture. Although it does help us understand something of the malleability of memory under stressful influence, this same research suggests that false memories of being brainwashed can be implanted in the minds of religious apostates and that we should therefore proceed cautiously when interpreting apostate accounts.

[31] Solomon Asch, "Effects of Group Pressure upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgements," in *Groups, Leadership, and Men*, ed. Harold Guetzknow (Pittsburgh: Carnegie, 1951); Philip Zimbardo and Susan Anderson, "Understanding Mind Control: Exotic and Mundane Mental Manipulations," in *Recovery From Cults: Help for Victims of Psychological and Spiritual Abuse*, ed. Michael D. Langone (New York: Norton, 1993); and Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

[32] For reasons of space, I don't discuss other potential sources of discriminant confusion such as sunk investments (Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*) and attachment anxiety (John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, vol. 2, *Separation* [New York: Basic Books, 1973]) although both should be a part of any systematic study of exit costs.

[33] I will mention here only six of the best of the many excellent ethnographic studies that have been published in recent years: David E. Van Zandt, "The Children of God," in *America's Alternative Religions*, ed. Timothy Miller (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 127-32; Roy Wallis, *The Road to Total Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of Scientology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Phillip Charles Lucas, *The Odyssey of a New Religion: The Holy Order of MANS from New Age to Orthodoxy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); John A. Hostetler, *The Hutterite Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974); George A. Hillery Jr., *The Monastery: A Study in Freedom, Love, and Community* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1992); Lewis F. Carter, *Charisma and Control in Rajneeshpuram: The Role of Shared Values in the Creation of a Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[34] For example, Stuart A. Wright, *Leaving Cults: The Dynamics of Defection*, ed. S. D. Gaede, vol. 7, *SSRC Monograph Series* (Washington, DC: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1987).

[35] Barker, *The Making of a Moonie.*

[36] Ibid. and Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma.*

[37] William Sims Bainbridge, *The Sociology of Religious Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[38] Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma* and *The Joyful Community.*

[39] Zablocki, *The Joyful Community*, ch. 6.

[40] Galanter, *Cults: Faith, Healing, and Coercion*; J. Thomas Ungerleider and David K. Wellisch, "Coercive Persuasion (Brainwashing), Religious Cults, and Deprogramming," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 136 (1979): 279-82.

[41] Rosabeth M. Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

[42] John Lofland and Rodney Stark, "Becoming a World Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective," *American Sociological Review* 30 (1965): 862-75.

[43] Arthur L. Greil, "Previous Dispositions and Conversion to Perspectives of Social and Religious Movements," *Sociological Analysis* 38 (1977): 115-25; Robert Jay Lifton, "Protean Man," *Partisan Review* 35 (1968): 13-27; Lofland and Stark, "Becoming a World Saver"; Tommy H. Poling and J. Frank Kenney, *The Hare Krishna Character Type: A Study of the Sensate Personality* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1986); A. Tellegen, "Openness to Absorbing and Self-altering Experiences (absorption), a Trait related to Hypnotic Susceptibility," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 83 (1974): 268; Arnold Weiss and Andrew Comrey, "Personality Characteristics of Hare Krishnas," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 51 (1987): 399-413.

[44] Thomas Pilarzyk, "Conversion and Alternation Processes in the Youth Culture: A Comparative Analysis of Religious Transformations," *Pacific Sociological Review* 21 (1978): 379-405.

[45] R. G. Jehenson, "The Dynamics of Role Leaving: A Role Theoretical Approach to the Leaving of Religious Organizations," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Analysis* 5, no. 3 (1969): 287-308.

[46] David G. Bromley and Anson Shupe, "Affiliation and Disaffiliation: A Role-Theory Interpretation of Joining and Leaving New Religious Movements," *Thought* 61, no. 241 (1986): 197-211.

[47] Ibid., 209.

[48] Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Despair and Deliverance: Private Salvation in Contemporary Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 173-83.

[49] Galanter, *Cults: Faith, Healing, and Coercion.*

[50] Silvano Arieti, *Understanding and Helping the Schizophrenic* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975).

[51] Robert B. Simmonds, "Conversion or Addiction: Consequences of Joining a Jesus Movement Group," *American Behavioral Scientist* 20 (1977): 909-24.

[52] Martin Orne, "Demand Characteristics and the Concept of Quasi-Controls," in *Artifact in Behavioral Research*, eds. Robert Rosenthal and Ralph Rosnow (New York: Academic Press, 1969), 143-79; Martin Orne, "Can a Hypnotized Subject be Compelled to Carry Out Otherwise Unacceptable Behavior," *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 20 (1972): 101.

[53] Martin Katchen, "Brainwashing, Hypnosis, and the Cults," *Australian Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 20 (1992): 79-88.

[54] Alice B. Kehoe and Dody H. Giletti, "Women's Preponderance in Possession Cults: The Calcium Deficiency Hypothesis Extended," *American Anthropologist* 83 (1981): 549-61.

[55] Douglas Raybeck, Judy Shoobe, and James Grauberger, "Women, Stress, and Participation in Possession Cults: A Reexamination of the Calcium Deficiency Hypothesis," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 11 (1991): 139-61.

[56] Margaret Thaler Singer, *Cults in Our Midst* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), xxiii, 17, 93.

[57] Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, *Snapping: America's Epidemic of Sudden Personality Change* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1978).

[58] The essential feature of Shared Psychotic Disorder (*folie à deux*) is a delusion that develops in an individual who is involved in a close relationship with another person (sometimes termed the "inducer" or "the primary case") who already has a Psychotic Disorder with prominent delusions (Criterion A). The individual comes to share the delusional beliefs of the primary case in whole or in part. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994), 306.

[59] Mark Sirkin and Lyman Wynne, "Cult Involvement as a Relational Disorder," *Psychiatric Annals* 20 (1990): 199-203.

[60] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, 311.

[61] Ibid., 75ff.

[62] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Free Press, 1947), 362.

[63] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, 947-48.

[64] Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 106.

[65] Michael Gazzaniga, *The Social Brain: Discovering the Networks of the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

[66] Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, IL: Row Peterson, 1957).

[67] Norman Geschwind, "Behavioral Change in Temporal Epilepsy," *Archives of Neurology* 34 (1977): 453.

[68] Gazzaniga, *The Social Brain*, 167.

[69] Robert Abelson, "Beliefs are Like Possessions," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 16 (1986): 229.

[70] James S. Coleman, *Community Conflict* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957).

[71] Arthur Greenwald, "Cognitive Learning, Cognitive Response to Persuasion, and Attitude Change," in *Psychological Foundations of Attitudes*, eds. Arthur Greenwald, Timothy Brock, and Thomas Ostrom (New York: Academic Press, 1968), 115-31.

[72] Abelson, "Beliefs are Like Possessions," 230.

[73] Thomas Spence Smith, *Strong Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 164.

[74] Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 213.

[75] Thomas S. Smith and Gregory T. Stevens, "Comfort Regulation as a Morphogenic Principle: Local Dynamics of Dominance, Competition, and Attachment," *Advances in Group Processes* 14 (1997): 113-55.

[76] Ibid., 114.

[77] Simmonds, "Conversion or Addiction."

[78] Zablocki, *The Joyful Community.*

Listing (in Black and White) Some Observations on (Sociological) Thought Reform

David G. Bromley

Benjamin Zablocki's article, "The Blacklisting of a Concept: The Strange History of the Brainwashing Conjecture in the Sociology of Religion" (*Nova Religio* 1: 96-121), qualifies as a shot across the bow of some scholars, although just whose metaphorical bows have been traversed will be a matter of some contention. A number of scholars doubtless perceive themselves to occupy exactly the moderate position to which Benjamin Zablocki seeks to lay sole claim by dividing the rest of the scholarly community into two radical camps. The argument in this article seems to be that there is a moderate, responsible "brainwashing" position between the two radical camps, but that legitimate existing work has been ignored and other work that might support the position has been "blacklisted." The sequel paper, "Exit Cost Analysis: A New Approach to the Scientific Study of Brainwashing" (published in this issue), offers a prolegomenon to a "brainwashing" theory.[1] Each of these "conjectures" I find problematic, and I shall respond to each in turn. I conclude with a proposal for addressing issues related to "brainwashing" through the more neutral, sociologically relevant framework of socialization/resocialization.

THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

If there is a true "conjecture" to be found in "The Blacklisting of a Concept," it is with respect to "blacklisting" rather than "brainwashing." It is important to consider the "blacklisting" interpretation because if the "brainwashing" position is regarded as "forbidden fruit," it may draw more attention than it merits. Arguing as he does for the careful, systematic collection and interpretation of data in assessing the controversial "brainwashing" thesis, Zablocki seems willing to reach a "blacklisting" conclusion on the basis of slim evidence indeed. Some of his observations have substantive merit, but they can be more appropriately contextualized. Let me begin with some points on which there is a measure of agreement.

There clearly are some rather strongly held theoretical positions on the "brainwashing" issue, and these positions have been vigorously ad-

vanced and defended. Contested positions, in which individuals sometimes become personally invested, surely do not distinguish this area of inquiry from many others. The debate between consensus and conflict theorists, for example, has raged for decades; in fact, separate professional journals have been established in which scholars refine the details of positions that are of limited interest to broader disciplinary audiences. In the "brainwashing" debate, theoretical divisions have been compounded by methodological differences. For example, there continues to be a disagreement over the representativeness of member and ex-member samples and the status of accounts yielded from these samples.[2] Again, this situation is not unique. The community power structure literature for years divided along methodological lines with decision-making studies regularly discovering pluralism and reputational studies finding elites. Whatever one's assessment of entrenched, contesting schools of thought, it would appear that the condition is normal intellectual politics. To call for greater collegiality in intellectual debates is commendable, but the substance of that message and the tone of "The Blacklisting of a Concept" seem oddly discordant.

It is also clear that the study of new religious movements (NRMs), and the sociology of religion itself, have been quite insular. This critique has been made by a number of those working in the field.[3] There is no shortage of illustrations. For a considerable period, new religion scholars virtually ignored the wealth of historical and cross-cultural research on religious movements.[4] Until recently, the connection of quasi-religious movements to the cohort of movements exhibiting more conventional religious attributes remained unexplored.[5] Similarly, the important relationships between movements within churches and those contesting institutionalized religion have been disregarded.[6] In recent years, however, the groups and scholars studying new religions and the issues discussed have changed rather rapidly. While much of the initial wave of research on religious movements focused on the affiliation process, a new generation of scholars has broadened the research agenda to include a much greater range of groups, a variety of organizational and developmental issues, and more historical and comparative perspectives. Perhaps research on new religions can still be constructively critiqued on such grounds, but insularity is quite a different matter from intentional exclusion. In fact, if there is an insular and exclusionary perspective to be found here, I would argue it is "brainwashing." It is precisely the narrowness and insularity of the "brainwashing" conjecture that forms a primary basis of the critique I shall offer of the perspective presented in "The Blacklisting of a Concept."

There is yet another problem that complicates theory and research in this area—the unfortunate conflation of scholarly and legal argumentation. The scholarly need for complexity and uncertainty clashes frontally with the legal system's need for closure and certainty. This problem, for

example, has continued to plague psychological and psychiatric testimony on the issues of legally defined "sanity" and "responsibility." The effects of the extension of theoretical debate over interpretations of religious movement affiliation into the legal forum are similar to those in other areas. It is very unlikely that scholars operating as "experts" in legal cases will advance sociological understanding in any appreciable fashion. I think the conditions under which social scientists should function as legal "experts" should be openly debated in professional forums.[7]

In the case at hand, however, I disagree with the assessment of scholars' involvement. Entrance of social scientists studying new religions into the legal and judicial process was precipitated by attempts to use radical "brainwashing" theories (from which "The Blacklisting of a Concept" carefully distances itself) to invoke the power of the state through mental health diagnostic categories, legislative statutes, and judicial precedents. The models that were being resisted at that historical moment were not simply "straw men" that were gratuitously attacked. Those theories were extreme, they were unsubstantiated, and they were premised on assumptions that contravened the weight of evidence accumulating in the research area. Resisting the extreme versions of "brainwashing" theories was a professionally responsible course of action under those circumstances.[8] As the debate continued to unfold, a broader coalition formed around what came to be termed the "agnostic" position that social scientists simply do not possess sufficiently definitive knowledge to participate in judicial proceedings as expert witnesses on this issue. I would submit that a responsible position did emerge from the debate and that the current position, which has been in place for some time, is one that invites rather than precludes further theorizing and research.

Finally, it is also not particularly surprising that there has been some skepticism directed toward research premised on "brainwashing" assumptions. While "The Blacklisting of a Concept" refers to accumulated research findings as "skimpy," the corpus of work in this area by historical standards is rather impressive both theoretically and empirically, and affiliation is the most thoroughly researched single issue.[9] To reduce that corpus of work to a "conjecture" and elevate the extremely limited work on these groups from a "brainwashing" perspective is simply bravado. Tracing back several decades to one of the earliest pieces of research—Lofland and Stark's research on the Unificationist movement—a large number of scholars with direct, extensive participant observation experience have independently reported their findings through a variety of role theory, socialization, and conversion models.[10] For most of this period the theoretical debate over "brainwashing" was well known to these scholars. Researchers had a choice about how to interpret and report their findings, and they exercised that choice. Anyone is free to challenge this corpus of work theoretically or empirically and to develop a comparable corpus of work that offers a compelling alternative. That is the essence of

scientific knowledge building, and that opportunity is and must be freely available and collegially supported. The appropriate course of action for anyone dissatisfied with the state of current knowledge is clear—produce a superior theory and empirically substantiate it.

All of the kinds of problems enumerated here have been raised previously and can be openly discussed in professional forums. However, to assemble these various disciplinary problems into a single narrative with a "blacklisting" theme is a much more contentious and, I think, erroneous claim. Quite simply, it is not plausible that a small number of scholars in a specialized area within the sociology of religion, itself a specialized area, could exert very much control over the presentation or publication of ideas not comporting with their professional or ideological preferences. If one considers the number of professional meetings, disciplinary journals and serials, and publishing houses available to scholars, this quickly becomes apparent. Of course, the argument might be narrowed to the small number of journals in the sociology of religion. However, my experience as prior editor of one of those journals and as a reviewer for all of them is that editors quickly become cognizant of rival schools of thought (as in the case of the debate among psychologists over intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity) and select reviewers rather carefully to balance the review process. As an editor and reviewer my own philosophy is that the best theory and research from extant schools of thought should be represented in professional forums.[11]

While there may be isolated instances where the editorial or review process is somehow compromised, I think the history of "The Blacklisting of a Concept" is much more representative of how the process works in the model case. The original paper was accepted by the program chair and presented in an open session at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. At that session, attended by colleagues with a variety of theoretical persuasions, the paper received formal and informal feedback. Following the meetings the author remained in dialogue with colleagues representing a variety of positions. The paper was revised and subsequently submitted to this journal. The manuscript was sent out for review. Presumably it was further revised in response to reviewer comments. The editor was aware of the differences in perspective on the issues at hand, selected reviewers carefully in light of those disagreements, and functioned as an editorial mediator during the review process. The paper was published. In order to preserve balance a rejoinder was invited. Journal readers are now free to assess the merits of the arguments on both sides. Given the intensity of the debate, it strikes me that the process is more notable for its openness than its obstructionism.

ASSESSING THE "MODERATE" "BRAINWASHING" POSITION

The arguments posed in "The Blacklisting of a Concept" raise more problems than they resolve about the utility of "brainwashing" as a theoretical approach.[12] Most notably these include the counterproductiveness of employing "brainwashing" as a concept in conducting fieldwork and scholarly exchange, the inadequate definition of some basic concepts, and the summary rejection of existing empirical evidence.

Let's begin with terminology. Why attempt to organize the scholarly discussion around the term "brainwashing"? "The Blacklisting of a Concept" asserts that it is because the term commands the widest public recognition. However, if this is a theory-building enterprise rather than a political campaign, building on prior work such as *The Joyful Community* and drawing upon concepts such as the *thought reform* tradition applied in those works make considerably more sense.[13] Nonetheless, not only is the popularized "brainwashing" term employed, but the text is salted with a variety of other terms ("target," the criminal justice metaphor of "motive, opportunity, and weapon," "social-psychological prison," "charismatic abuse," "puppet show," and "deployable agent") that seem designed to be provocative and conclusionary rather than analytic and exploratory. It sounds as if the "verdict" is already rendered and "evidence" is being gathered after the fact.

This is not trivial semantic dispute. If the goal of the paper is scholarly "rapprochement," this is a peculiar initiative that is unlikely to create much common ground. More importantly, if researchers are candid and negotiate with the subjects of their research about their objectives, what religious movement would be receptive to a research agenda constructed in these terms? Why urge on colleagues a model that is likely to abort empirical inquiry at the outset? How is knowledge thereby advanced? Researchers obviously should not capitulate to organizational interests by employing "user friendly" theories or methods as a condition of access. However, if, as "The Blacklisting of a Concept" asserts, "brainwashing" may occur in some groups but not others, at some times but not others, for some individuals but not others, why adopt a model that is presumptive, limiting, and alienating from the outset?

A second key problem is definitional. What precisely is "brainwashing"? Despite its being the focal point of the intellectual argument in "The Blacklisting of a Concept" and "Exit Cost Analysis," the concept remains a slippery one. It is defined as "nothing more than an orchestrated process of ideological conversion that takes its subjects through a well-defined sequence of social psychological stages." The process through which this occurs is described as "persuasive influences so overwhelming that they actually restructure core beliefs and world-view and profoundly modify one's self conception." But as the argument develops, murkiness increases.

The argument seeking to establish the existence of "brainwashing" begins with what it is *not*. The phenomenon does not require:

1. Deceptive, manipulative recruitment practices. Rather, the emphasis is on high "exit costs."
2. A loss of "free will" (better constructed sociologically, I think, as "agency"). Rather, through "resocialization" (a concept to which I shall return) the individual may voluntarily and rationally act in conformity with organizational requisites. The individual may even enthusiastically participate in the process.
3. A particularly high rate of effectiveness. In fact, it may occur in a tiny minority of cases. The organization does not necessarily need a total complement of "deployable agents" and so may not be motivated to implement this costly "environmental management program" more comprehensively. Further, some movement participants may be less affected by the process if, for example, they have relatively short movement careers or if they possess a higher personal capacity for resistance for whatever reason.
4. Obvious indicators of its presence. On the organizational side, coercive power is not necessary. On the individual side, there are not necessarily any indicators of cognitive, emotional, or physical distress or debilitation of individuals who have been subjected to the process.

What, then, does definitively distinguish "brainwashing"? The process is:

1. Qualitatively different from other processes with which it might be confused. So, for example, it differs from conventionally accepted socialization procedures practiced by educators or tolerated manipulation strategies used by salespersons. It also is distinguished from "spontaneous conversion."
2. Encapsulating. The process makes it emotionally very difficult, although not impossible, for the individual subjected to it to exit the implementing group.
3. Transformative. It involves the elements of thought reform (absolute control over channels of communication, manipulation of the individual based on the priority of group goals, a demand for absolute purity and strong reaction to any hint of ambivalence or rebellion, demands for continuous personal confession, a closed ideological system, elimination of individual idiosyncrasies, division of the world into worthy insiders and unworthy outsiders). There may also be desensitization rituals employed. These are organized into a sequence of stripping, identification, and symbolic death-rebirth during which individuals are subjected alternately to assaults and leniency. Significantly, it is not necessary that all these elements be present for the process to qualify as "brainwashing," and they do not necessarily occur in any specific sequence.

4. Psychologically disruptive. There is an extended socioemotional impact. Effects must continue after the process is halted, and the "dread" created by the process reduces the individual's capacity for exit.

Framing the argument in this way creates a definitional quagmire. One concern about this formulation is that it leaves unclear whether "brainwashing" refers to the totalistic structure of the organization, the process through which various elements of that structure operate, the intent of actors implementing those elements, the impact or state that is created by the structure/process, or some combination of the foregoing. There are references to each at various points in the text. This is an important matter. For example, if "brainwashing" is defined in terms of organizational structure or the process, then it becomes a pivotal question as to which elements or combinations are central. If it is not simply the structure/process but the intent with which these elements are employed or the impact that they make, then that connection must be specified and demonstrated.

There is an enormous amount of slippage allowed in this formulation. The existence of the process is not necessarily constrained by the degree of voluntarism, its rate of effectiveness, or exit rates. "Brainwashing" is a costly and laborious process, it is asserted, and so the organization only invests the resources necessary to maintain the level of control needed. At the same time, it is suggested that technological advances in the form of psychotropic drugs and electronic devices may be increasing the effectiveness of brainwashing, although no evidence is cited to support this supposition. Since no specific level of requisite control is stipulated, a "brainwashing" argument can be defended on the basis of almost any numerical outcomes, and various unsubstantiated speculations become possible. If "brainwashing" constitutes a qualitatively distinct process, then the distinctive nature of that process must be defined, demonstrated, and defended. Further, "brainwashing" is juxtaposed to "spontaneous conversion" (a rare event), which creates the potential for labeling as "brainwashing" any behavior that is not "spontaneous" (i.e., very high agency and very low structure). Obviously the distinction between "conversion" and "brainwashing" will be an issue of some interest and sensitivity to many sociologists of religion. The effect of this formulation is to expand the possible range of illegitimate influence findings and correspondingly decrease the range of legitimate influence findings.

Equally importantly, "The Blacklisting of a Concept" seeks to disqualify through redefinition a number of well-established empirical observations about NRMs that are the basis of serious skepticism about the "brainwashing conjecture."[14] Among the major arguments countering "brainwashing" claims that rest on deceptive, manipulative recruitment practices (front-end loaded models) are that (1) the sociocultural conditions appear to be pivotal, as a number of the groups charged with employing

such practices increased in size for a very limited time period before declining precipitously; (2) the recruitment success rate of groups labeled cults was very low; (3) recruitment success was limited to a very narrow range of age, socioeconomic status, and educational level characteristics; and (4) recruitment success rates declined over a several year period, when time, practice, and organization presumably would yield higher success rates. These observations become largely irrelevant as it is not recruitment practices but subsequent organizational control practices influencing exit costs (back-end loaded models) that are causal. Research on NRMs also indicates very high membership turnover rates; the number of individuals ever affiliated with these movements is many times membership size at any point in movement history.[15] Simply put, the overwhelming majority of those ever affiliated ultimately disaffiliated. In fact, disaffiliation rates must have increased dramatically, as movements that only a few years earlier were growing exponentially suddenly went into sharp decline. However, high exit rates, and even increasing ones, do not undermine this "brainwashing" conjecture either since the argument is sustained if affiliates faced difficulty in exiting and since the organization does not need everyone to be a deployable agent. Numerous case studies of new religions discuss schisms within religious movements, individuals moving to marginal status, and struggles for power, but these various ongoing conflicts are irrelevant if movements do not need to "brainwash" everyone.[16] The extraordinarily varied cultural origins, patterns of organizational development, and leadership styles of such groups pose a problem in explaining how they seem to have discovered the same "brainwashing" psycho-technology at almost precisely the same historical moment. This predicament is handled through the observation that individuals in some movements confess to having read Robert Lifton's work and to having attempted to implement its principles.[17]

One important characteristic of a theory is testability/verifiability. In these terms, the problem with the present formulation is twofold. On the one hand, the conceptualization of "brainwashing" is so indeterminate that no necessary and sufficient organizational or behavioral indicators are specified. This means either that "brainwashing" cannot be verified at all or it can be invoked at will. On the other hand, the concept is defined so as to disqualify referents that numerous scholars studying new religions have developed using empirical methods or employing alternative theoretical formulations. Further, the emphasis in "The Blacklisting of a Concept" is on the verification end of testability. However, the other question, that of disconfirmation, is equally important. How and with what kind of data could a theory such as the one proposed here be disconfirmed? How could any group defend itself against "brainwashing" charges? Both questions are important since "brainwashing" clearly is a normative, conclusionary concept, particularly in a dichotomous, typological form.

There are, then, a number of problems with the "brainwashing conjecture" in its "moderate" as well as its radical form. The theory is essentialist, seeking to identify essential elements of organizations/processes rather than placing those in the context of the sociocultural environment, on one side, and individual attributes and intentionality, on the other side. It is also normative and conclusionary. There is an implicit presumption about an appropriate balance of structure and agency in organizational relationships. It is not clear that it would be possible to have a totalistic, revolutionary movement, for example, without invoking the specter of "brainwashing."

TOWARD A THEORY OF ORGANIZATIONAL POWER AND CONTROL

One of the most important points to be made here is that none of this conjecturing is necessary. It is unnecessary to claim "blacklisting"; it is unnecessary to develop a theory under the "brainwashing" nomenclature; and it is unnecessary to rely on assembling data from movements that are small, rapidly changing, and highly controversial. There is a logical, moderate course available that would link theory and research in sociology of religion to the broader discipline. This agenda would build upon the well-established, non-evaluative concepts of socialization and resocialization (S/R) to which "The Blacklisting of a Concept" in fact makes passing reference.[18] There is an enormous body of scholarship in this area. The logical strategy is to work from the existing stock of knowledge on these bedrock social processes. S/R processes obviously vary in their intensity, extensiveness, and impact. From this perspective, "brainwashing" is proposed as a radical form of S/R. But what is created by thinking about the problem in this fashion is a continuum rather than a dichotomy in which one form of S/R is presumptively labeled as qualitatively different from others. The problem then becomes one of identifying the key elements of S/R that distinguish various forms along the continuum. This strategy has the virtue of reasoning from well-established principles and common forms of behavior. It involves reasoning from the middle of the behavioral distribution outward toward more radical forms rather than reasoning from extreme cases.

The approach proposed here would open up a cache of existing knowledge that does not present the problems that become apparent from analyzing the proposals in "The Blacklisting of a Concept" and "Exit Cost Analysis." The material to which I refer is the substantial body of theory and research on S/R within a very diverse array of high control environments as well as lower control environments that would help to develop a continuum conceptually. Most of this literature is produced by scholars

not involved in the present debate and published in mainstream journals, but scholars studying new religions also have raised many of the same issues.[19] Consider the following:

There have been a number of attempts to identify characteristics of "radical" forms of organization that exhibit totalistic qualities and to compare them with more moderate characteristics.[20] There is also a substantial body of theoretical and experimental work on manipulative forms of interpersonal influence, which has been summarized by Robert Cialdini.[21] It is worth observing that some research suggests that there are cultural differences accounting for one's "vulnerability" to interpersonal and situational influence.[22] Finally, Dean Kelley's cataloging of the "traits of a strong religion" develops this line of analysis with respect to religious organizations.[23]

An array of theoretical and empirical work is available on the impact of social control mechanisms in conventional and totalistic situations. This would include work by Lewis Coser on "greedy institutions," Stanley Elkins' classic analysis of slavery, Erving Goffman and Madeleine Karmel on the structure and impact of "total institutions," Herbert Kelman and V. Lee Hamilton on "crimes of obedience," Abraham Cohen and Takie Lebra on countercultural, high-demand groups, Henry Kellerman on sources of group cohesion, and John Van Maanen on organizational socialization strategies.[24] Other work by scholars such as Helen Rose Ebaugh and Susan Rothbaum examines the exit problems faced by individuals leaving both conventional and higher demand organizations.[25]

There are a number of studies that attempt to link to "brainwashing," conceptually or empirically, a variety of social processes in conventional, "legitimate" organizational contexts (the work of psychologists Theodore Sarbin and Nathan Adler is particularly instructive). Examples include the work of J. A. C. Brown, who compares "techniques of persuasion" that include advertising and political propaganda; Jerome Frank's work on influence in therapeutic relationships; research on religious conversion and exiting by Theodore Long and Jeffrey Hadden, Drew Westin, and Helen Rose Ebaugh; Richard Lynn's work on child rearing; Thomas Rohlen's study of worker training and motivation in Japan; research on psychotherapeutic treatment by Robert Dolliver and Richard Ofshe; comparisons of brainwashing and sexual seduction by Jack Douglas and Frances Waksler; Stuart Wright's comparison of apostasy and divorce; and E. O. Boyanowsky's exploration of psychological, social, and cultural level factors impacting individual identity change.[26]

Some research on conventional socialization practices suggests means through which organization members may move from individualistically motivated participation (e.g., personal idealism) to continued involvement based on institutionally defined priorities. Examples include Howard Becker and Blanche Greer's research on socialization of medical students,

parallel work on nursing students by George Psathas, and a study of the socialization of priests by Fred Goldner, Richard Ritti, and Thomas Ference.[27]

There is a vast literature on religious and nonreligious communal organizations, many of which developed as social experiments, offering insight into the diversity of such totalistic organizations. In particular, Rosabeth Kanter has reviewed this literature in a way that identifies characteristics associated with totalism.[28] The research on religious communes, such as convents and monasteries, is particularly interesting because they have been accorded substantial legitimacy, are voluntary associations, and share a number of characteristics with coercive organizations. George Hillery's work in this area is particularly instructive.[29]

There is a massive corpus of theory and research dealing with family violence that might be defined in this context as a "naturalistic experiment" on encapsulation and identity transformation. Research dealing with the escalation of violence, such as that by Ola Barnett and Alyce LaViolette, and on spouses who remain in abusive relationships, such as studies by Trudy Mills and Kathleen Ferraro and John Johnson, are especially relevant.[30] Sometimes work in this area employs models that theorize high levels of coercion.[31]

Another substantial body of theory and research addresses control in state authorized organizations. There are military organizations in which participation, which is sometimes voluntary and sometimes involuntary, has generally been accorded legitimacy. S/R is designed to maximize conformity and explicitly legitimates engaging in violence. The literature in this area is extensive. There is work on basic training in military academies by Sanford Dornbusch, in the Army by Peter Bourne, and in the Air Force by Melford Weiss; military training as a rite of passage by Robert Endleman; and the mechanisms of social control employed in the armed forces by Lawrence Radine.[32] Findings from other state-sponsored, coercive institutions, such as Etzioni's analysis of high security prisons, indicate that many participants resist official S/R efforts despite high control levels,[33] but individuals may become encapsulated (Donald Clemmer expresses this in terms of "prisonization") despite their involuntary participation.[34]

Research on police interrogation methods by Edward Driver, Mike Hepworth and Bryan Turner, T. Shallice, and Philip Zimbardo suggests significant effects on individuals as a result of even limited periods of high control, such as when false confessions are induced.[35]

Yet other state-authorized institutions, such as the custodial mental health organizations about which Erving Goffman has written, present the opportunity for observing shifting patterns of voluntarism.[36] Some participants initially resist, others initially cooperate, and yet others begin by resisting and later participate voluntarily. More generally, Perry Lon-

don has analyzed therapy as one of the technologies developed under state authorization to bolster "behavior control."[37]

Then, of course, there is the body of research on P.O.W. and concentration camps, exemplified by the work of Robert Lifton and Edgar Schein.[38] There have been a few attempts, such as the work by Roy Baumeister, to connect S/R processes in NRMs to the P.O.W. and Chinese re-education camp literature.[39]

The foregoing is only a sampler of the relevant theory and research upon which a theoretical continuum of social control organization and mechanisms could be constructed. I submit that a preliminary model of some sophistication, identifying putative characteristics of radical forms of organization and their impact, could be formulated from just such theory and data. The initiative begins rather than ends at the social psychological and organizational levels. Since the concept of "brainwashing" is a normative and conclusionary one, it would be preferable to interpret S/R more neutrally in the context of organizational control. Anthony Giddens' concepts of "structure" ("systems of generative rules and resources") and "agency" ("causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world") offer one useful alternative.[40] Theories about the relationship between relative levels of individual-organizational control can be analyzed in terms of the balance of structure and agency.[41] To this must be added a perspective on power. Rather than traditional formulations of power that refer to position, reputation, control over organizational decisions, or even agenda control, a conception such as that proposed by Steven Lukes, which admits the possibility that power may involve shaping the way that individuals perceive situations and thus their capacity to identify grievances or initiate disputes, would be useful.[42] The notion of "manipulated agreement" seems to be foundational to "brainwashing" as a normative concept. If theoretical elements such as these could be conjoined, they might form the basis for a sociologically meaningful analysis of the pivotal elements of both totalistic structure/process and structure/agency in that social context.

In some respects this proposal cannot fail because it constitutes a viable strategy for developing a continuum of organizational influence structure/process. However, this does not in any sense mean that a "brainwashing" theory as envisioned in "The Blacklisting of a Concept" and "Exit Cost Analysis" would somehow be "discovered." I rather think the opposite would occur. In fact, Robert Lifton and his contemporaries did not "discover" brainwashing as some proponents of this position would like to suggest. They observed several different extreme control and influence processes that occurred under a very specific set of social and cultural circumstances (certainly not the least of which was coercion) and that yielded very mixed results. They chose to identify this set of processes with labels such as "brainwashing" and "coercive persuasion." How-

ever, it is critical not to reify those concepts as if they have a reality that transcends the context in which they occurred. "Brainwashing" is, after all, a metaphor. It is of no small significance that the brainwashing literature has been in circulation for considerable time, and as the review of theory and research presented above indicates, the analogy has been explored in other areas of theory and research. The fact that new religions scholars are not the first to find the approach unproductive should be a warning. The fact that descriptions of individual behavior and organizational practices converge much more closely than evaluations of them suggests the evaluative core of the "brainwashing" concept. The observation that many of the best examples of high demand organizations have been authorized by dominant order institutions while the term has been most successfully applied to organizations deemed subversive is telling. The reliance by proponents of "brainwashing" on data from groups deemed subversive rather than on the wealth of theory and research cited here is equally telling. Finally, the evidence on individual transformation across the range of totalistic organizations staffed by individuals fully steeped in cultural knowledge about how to produce control or change suggests results that are at once modest and complex. If there is a common theme in the reports from organizations that seek to change, reform, rehabilitate, or cure participants through their various regimens, it is frustration with lack of "success." These organizations certainly can have complex effects on individuals, sometimes traumatic and sometimes salutary, but apparently they often do not coincide with the results expected by organizational officials.

The agenda I have outlined would be a beginning, one that would yield generically useful sociological insight and would connect now disparate lines of inquiry. Why would a social scientist beg the very question that needs to be answered—that there is a qualitatively distinct and empirically verifiable "brainwashing" process—when the means for addressing the question are at hand? Why would a social scientist assert findings presumptively rather than allow them to emerge empirically? No permission or cooperation from anyone is required to undertake this research, and a synthetic statement engaging a number of what to date are discrete areas of inquiry can be fashioned. There is indeed a moderate position to be developed, and it might even yield some modest sociological thought reform.

ENDNOTES

[1] In drafting a response to the second article I have drawn on the original paper presented at the 1996 Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Nashville, Tennessee. I have, in addition, seen the first draft of "Exit Cost Analysis."

[2] Lewis Carter, "Carriers of Tales: On Assessing Credibility of Apostate and Other Outsider Accounts of Religious Practices," in *The Politics of Religious Apostasy*, ed. David Bromley (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997); Benjamin Zablocki, "Reliability and Validity of Apostate Accounts in the Study of Religious Communities" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, New York, 1996).

[3] James Beckford, "The Restoration of 'Power' to the Sociology of Religion," *Sociological Analysis* 44 (1983): 11-32.

[4] Mary Farrell Bednarowski, *New Religions: The Theological Imagination in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[5] Arthur Greil and Thomas Robbins, eds., *Between Sacred and Secular: Research and Theory on Quasi-Religion* (Greenwich, CT: Association for the Sociology of Religion and JAI Press, 1994).

[6] David Bromley, "Remembering the Future: A Sociological Narrative of Crisis Episodes, Collective Action, Culture Workers, and Countermovements," *Sociology of Religion* 58 (1997): 105-40.

[7] James Richardson, "Sociology and the New Religions: 'Brainwashing,' the Courts, and Religious Freedom," in *Witnessing for Sociology*, eds. Pamela Jenkins and Steven Kroll-Smith (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 115-34.

[8] There is ample critical assessment of brainwashing-based claims introduced into the legal system. See, for example, Dick Anthony, "Religious Movements and Brainwashing Litigation: Evaluating Key Testimony," in *In Gods We Trust*, ed. Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1990), 295-344; Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Law, Social Sciences and the 'Brainwashing' Exception to the First Amendment," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 10 (1992): 5-30; and James Richardson, "'Brainwashing' Claims and Minority Religions Outside the United States: Cultural Diffusion of a Questionable Concept in the Legal Arena," *Brigham Young University Law Review* (1996): 873-904.

[9] Thomas Robbins, *Cults, Converts, and Charisma: The Sociology of New Religious Movements* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1988); John Saliba, *Social Science and the Cults: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1990); David Snow and Richard Machalek, "Sociology of Conversion," *Annual Review of Sociology* 10 (1984): 167-90.

[10] John Lofland and Rodney Stark, "Becoming a World Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective," *American Sociological Review* 30 (1965): 862-75.

[11] The issue of incorporating opposed positions into one's work is not simply a matter of "collegiality" and "fairness." Sociologically, it is an issue of "voice." In my own work I have tried to incorporate positions with which I disagree in their own voice. For example, a recent book on anti-cultism includes a chapter by an anti-cult organization official and a deprogrammer/exit-counselor. See Anson Shupe and David Bromley, eds., *Anti-Cult Movements in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Garland Press, 1994). Correspondingly, a book assessing the probable success or failure of NRMs includes chapters by members of the Unificationist Movement and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. See David Bromley and Phillip Hammond, eds., *The Future of New Religious Movements* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987).

[12] There have been a number of theoretical critiques of "brainwashing" theory. See, for example, David Bromley and James Richardson, eds., *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy: Sociological, Psychology, Legal, and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983); James Richardson, "The Social Psychology of 'Brainwashing' Claims About Recruitment to New Religions," in *The Handbook of Cults and Sects in America*, eds. David Bromley and Jeffrey Hadden (Greenwich, CT: Association for the Sociology of Religion, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and JAI Press, 1993), 75-98.

[13] Benjamin Zablocki, *The Joyful Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[14] It also seeks to reduce the significance of the quite diverse research on affiliation/disaffiliation, which is far greater than is implied here. See Snow and Machalek, "The

Sociology of Conversion." To create a fourfold categorization of models that subsumes the diversity and complexity of research findings on NRMs, and to juxtapose it to a "calcium deficiency" model is not going to advance anyone's understanding.

[15] Eileen Barker, "Defection From the Unification Church: Some Statistics and Distinctions," in *Falling From the Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religious Apostasy*, ed. David G. Bromley (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1988), 166-84; Stuart Wright, *Leaving Cults: The Dynamics of Defection* (Washington, D.C.: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1987).

[16] Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice?* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); David Bromley, "Economic Structure and Charismatic Leadership in the Unification Church," in *Money and Power in New Religions*, ed. James Richardson (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 335-64.

[17] It should also be noted that some of the more radical brainwashing theory indicators (e.g., physiological characteristics, psychological disturbance, loss of free will, deceptive recruitment) also are disqualified in this formulation.

[18] Richard Moreland and John Levine, "Socialization in Small Groups: Temporal Changes in Individual-Group Relations," in *Advances in Experimental Psychology*, ed. Leonard Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1982), 137-92.

[19] See, for example, James Richardson, Robert Balch, and J. Gordon Melton, "Problems of Research and Data in the Study of New Religions," in *Cults and Sects in America* (Part B), eds. David Bromley and Jeffrey Hadden (Greenwich, CT: Association for the Sociology of Religion, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and JAI Press, 1993), 213-29.

[20] Egon Bittner, "Radicalism and Radical Movements," *American Sociological Review* 28 (1963): 928-40; Rose Coser, "Insulation from Observability and Types of Social Conformity," *American Sociological Review* 26 (1961): 28-38; Erving Goffman, *Asylums* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1961); Rosabeth Kanter, "Commitment and the Internal Organization of Millennial Movements," *American Behavioral Scientist* 16 (1972): 219-44; William Kornhauser, "Social Bases of Political Commitment: A Study of Liberals and Radicals," in *Human Behavior and Social Processes*, ed. Arnold Rose (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), 321-39.

[21] Robert Cialdini, *Influence: How and Why People Agree to Things* (New York: Quill, 1985).

[22] S. Perrin and C. Spencer, "Independence or Conformity in the Asch Experiment as a Reflection of Cultural and Situational Factors," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 20 (1981): 205-9.

[23] Dean Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 56-96.

[24] Abraham Cohen, "Group Cohesion and Communal Living," in *Group Cohesion: Theoretical and Clinical Perspectives*, ed. Henry Kellerman (New York: Gruene and Stratton, 1981), 375-91; Lewis Coser, *Greedy Institutions* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1974); Stanley Elkins, *Slavery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); Madeline Karmel, "Total Institution and Self-Mortification," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 10 (1969): 134-40; Henry Kellerman, "The Deep Structures of Group Cohesion," in *Group Cohesion: Theoretical and Clinical Perspectives*, ed. Henry Kellerman (New York: Gruene and Stratton, 1981), 3-22; Herbert Kelman and V. Lee Hamilton, *Crimes of Obedience: Toward a Social Psychology of Authority and Responsibility* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Takie Lebra, "Millenarian Movements and Resocialization," *American Behavioral Scientist* 16 (1972): 195-218; John Van Maanen, "People Processing: Strategies of Organizational Socialization," in *Organizational Influence Processes*, eds. Robert Allen and Lyman Porter (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman, 1983), 240-59.

[25] Helen Rose Ebaugh, *Becoming an Ex: The Process of Role Exit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Susan Rothbaum, "Between Two Worlds: Issues of Separation and Identity after Leaving a Religious Community," in *Falling from the Faith*, ed. David Bromley (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1988), 205-28.

[26] Theodore Sarbin and Nathan Adler, "Self-Reconstitution Processes: A Preliminary Report," *Psychoanalytic Review* 57 (1970): 599-616; J. A. C. Brown, *Techniques of Persuasion: From Propaganda to Brainwashing* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963); Jerome Frank, "The Dynamics of

the Psychotherapeutic Relationship," *Psychiatry* 22 (1959): 17-34; Theodore Long and Jeffrey Hadden, "Religious Conversion and the Concept of Socialization: Integrating the Brainwashing and Drift Models," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22 (1983): 1-14; Drew Westen, *Self and Society: Narcissism, Collectivism, and the Development of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Helen Rose Ebaugh, *Out of the Cloister* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984); R. Lynn, "Brainwashing Techniques in Leadership and Child Rearing," *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 5 (1966): 270-73; Thomas Rohlen, "Spiritual Education in a Japanese Bank," *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973): 1542-62; Robert Dolliver, "Concerning the Potential Parallels Between Psychotherapy and Brainwashing," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* 8 (1971): 170-74; Richard Ofshe, *et al.*, "Social Structure and Social Control in Synanon," *Journal of Voluntary Social Action* 3 (1974): 67-76; Jack Douglas and Frances Waksler, *The Sociology of Deviance* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982); Stuart A. Wright, "Reconceptualizing Cult Coercion: A Comparative Analysis of Divorce and Apostasy," *Social Forces* 70 (1991): 125-45; E. O. Boyanowsky, "The Psychology of Identity Change: A Theoretical Framework for Review and Analysis of the Self-Role Transformation Process," *Canadian Psychological Review* 18 (1977): 115-27.

[27] Howard Becker and Blanche Greer, "The Fate of Idealism in Medical School," *American Sociological Review* 23 (1958): 50-56; Fred Goldner, Richard Ritti, and Thomas Ference, "The Production of Cynical Knowledge in Organizations," *American Sociological Review* 42 (1977): 539-51; George Psathas, "The Fate of Idealism in Nursing School," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 9 (1968): 52-64.

[28] Kanter, "Commitment and the Internal Organization of Millennial Movements."

[29] George Hillery, "The Convent: Community, Prison, or Task Force?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 8 (1969): 140-51.

[30] Ola Barnett and Alyce LaViolette, *It Could Happen to Anyone: Why Battered Women Stay* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1993); Kathleen Ferraro and John Johnson, "How Women Experience Battering: The Process of Victimization," *Social Problems* 30 (1983): 325-35; Trudy Mills, "The Assault on Self: Stages in Coping with Battering Husbands," *Qualitative Sociology* 8 (1985): 103-23.

[31] Steven Morgan, *Conjugal Terrorism: A Psychological and Community Treatment Model of Wife Abuse* (Palo Alto, CA: R&E Associates, 1982).

[32] Peter Bourne, "Some Observations on the Psychosocial Phenomena Seen in Basic Training," *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes* 30 (1967): 187-196; Sanford Dornbusch, "The Military Academy as an Assimilating Institution," *Social Forces* 33 (1955): 316-21; Robert Endleman, "The Military as a Rite de Passage," in *Anthropology and American Life*, ed. Joseph Jorgensen and Marcello Truzzi (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), 282-89; Lawrence Radine, *The Taming of the Troops: Social Control in the United States Army* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977); Melford Weiss, "Rebirth in the Airborne," in *Sociological Realities*, eds. Irving Louis Horowitz and Mary Strong (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 195-97; Louis Zurcher, "The Naval Recruit Training Center: A Study of Role Assimilation in a Total Institution: Recruits in Boot Camp," *Sociological Inquiry* 37 (1967): 85-98; Louis Zurcher, "The Sailor Aboard Ship," in *Social Problems in a Changing World*," ed. Walter Gerson (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1969), 243-62.

[33] Amitai Etzioni, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations: On Power, Involvement, and Their Correlates* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).

[34] Donald Clemmer, *The Prison Community* (New York: Rinehart, 1958).

[35] Edward Driver, "Confessions and the Social Psychology of Coercion," *Harvard Law Review* 82 (1968): 42-61; Mike Hepworth and Bryan Turner, *Confession: Studies in Deviance and Religion* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); T. Shallice, "The Ulster Depth Interrogation Techniques and Their Relation to Sensory Deprivation Research," *Cognition* 1 (1972): 385-405; Philip Zimbardo, "Coercion and Compliance: The Psychology of Police Confessions," in *The Triple Revolution Emerging*, eds. Robert Perucci and Marc Pilisuk (Boston: Little Brown, 1971), 492-508.

[36] Goffman, *Asylums.*

[37] Perry London, *Behavior Control* (New York: New American Library, 1977).

[38] Robert Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Edgar Schein and C.H. Baker, *Coercive Persuasion* (New York: Norton, 1961).

[39] Roy Baumeister, *Identity: Cultural Change and the Struggle for Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[40] Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), 81, 133-34.

[41] The problem is obviously not a simple, dichotomous one but a holistic, interactive one as agency creates structure and structure empowers agency. But that is the point. These concepts invite the kind of complex analysis that is required for meaningful sociological understanding.

[42] Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

Reply to Bromley

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David Bromley divides his response to my two-part essay into three sections. In the first, he argues that my blacklisting allegation is exaggerated; in the second, that my definition of brainwashing is unscientific. I think he fails to support either of these contentions. However, in the third section, where he discusses strategies for theorizing about collective influence, I find his comments welcome and valuable.

What can I say about Bromley's contention that my allegations of blacklisting are exaggerated? Our disagreement is exactly what standpoint theory would lead one to predict.[1] Bromley is a past president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and a former editor of the *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* while I am a person who has begun to define himself primarily as a sociologist of religion only in the past few years. From where I stand, it looks as if Bromley underestimates both the hegemony of his faction's point of view and the tokenism of its receptivity to alternative points of view.[2] But we are fortunate in having to rely neither on his nor on my own structurally situated opinion. It is not an opinion but a fact that, in the last 36 years, the number of articles supporting the brainwashing perspective that have appeared in the two leading American journals devoted to the sociology of religion has been zero while more than a hundred have appeared in journals marginal to the field.[3] I rest my case.

In the next section of his article, Bromley goes on to label my concept of brainwashing controversial, provocative, essentialistic, normative, conclusionary, insular, exclusionary, evaluative, narrow, presumptive, limiting, alienating, back-end loaded, likely to abort empirical inquiry, and not analytic nor exploratory. I acknowledge the first three but I deny all the others. The fact that Bromley would use all these terms indicates to me that he is not adequately distinguishing between brainwashing as an analytic concept and brainwashing as a categorical label. If Bromley were right that I am using the term as a label to attach to groups whose practices I don't like, then his charges would be justified.

Frankly, I think that all this name calling is a waste of time. I'm not overly impressed with arguments about the connotations of words. Of course, the words we use must always be precisely defined. However, I think we worry too much about whether the words we use in our theories

are politically correct. Any well-defined word for a concept will do as long as there is general agreement as to its meaning.

Bromley seems to believe that the term "brainwashing" has become so inextricably linked with the Fu Manchu stereotype of the term that it can no longer be used scientifically. Maybe he has a point. But I would reply with a quote from a Joan Baez song:

> Then give me another word for it.
> You who are so good with words,
> and at keeping things vague.[4]

As I indicated in my article, if the academic community were to come up with a standard alternative term for this phenomenon, I would be among the first to adopt it. It is the idea not the word that interests me.

I have space here to deal with the preposterousness of only a few of Bromley's charges. One of these charges in particular reveals the extent to which he and I live in different methodological worlds. He ridicules my approach as follows:

> . . . if researchers are candid and negotiate with the subjects of their research about their objectives, what religious movement would be receptive to a research agenda constructed in [brainwashing] terms? Why urge on colleagues a model that is likely to abort empirical inquiry at the outset? . . . If . . . "brainwashing" may occur in some groups but not others . . . why adopt a model that is presumptive, limiting, and alienating from the outset?

Comments like this make me wonder if Bromley knows the first thing about how ethnographers conduct themselves in the field. Does he really think that I or any other ethnographer would knock on the door of a religious commune out in the woods and say, "Hi, I'm here from the University to find out if you brainwash your members"? I have had a long and successful career doing participant-observation and interviewing in a wide variety of religious and nonreligious communes, and I have never approached one thus.[5] This is not deception on my part. When I study a NRM, I don't know in advance what I'm going to find out nor how I'm going to interpret my findings. I have never gone into a group assuming I would find brainwashing. I begin a study expecting to observe action and interaction and to record what I observe. For me, theoretical explanations like brainwashing have entered the picture only after the data collection phase was completed.

Even if I had prior suspicion that a religious group might be engaged in brainwashing, it would be neither methodologically wise nor ethically imperative to voice this suspicion at the outset. When I hang out with heroin addicts, I don't tell them I'm there to observe the frequency of needle sharing. When I spend time with families, I don't tell them that

I'm there to observe patterns of spousal abuse. When I sit in on classrooms, I don't announce that I'm there to see if the teacher calls on the boys more than the girls. The norms of informed consent do not require me to reveal my hypotheses in advance, and revealing them would very likely contaminate my findings. Why should the rules be any different for observing religious groups?

I'm disappointed that Bromley has devoted so much of his critique to a debate about words while failing to discuss at all what I consider the nub of my argument, the outlining of an agenda of "critical experiments" whereby future research might actually test the brainwashing conjecture against rival conjectures. I find this odd because it is in the delineation of this research agenda that I consider my paper most vulnerable to criticism. I think my comments are far from the last word on this subject, and I am eager to see this research agenda fleshed out with the contributions of other minds.

His counterargument appears to be that my research agenda is irrelevant because the research has already been done and all the results are in. This seems to me to be a misunderstanding of what science is all about. He argues that affiliation has been the most thoroughly researched single issue within the sociology of NRMs. In this he is correct, but that hardly means that the issue is now closed. More to the point, I was hoping he might have noticed that my essay was devoted not to the highly researched area of affiliation but to the under-researched area of disaffiliation. As I indicated in my essay, brainwashing is not a concept to be used to explain the way groups *obtain* members but rather the way they *retain* members.

It is upsetting to me that Bromley chooses for the most part not to engage in direct scholarly argument but prefers instead either to ridicule or to ignore. My paper contains a detailed, closely reasoned defense of the epistemological status of the brainwashing concept. If it contains logical or factual mistakes, I wish Bromley had pointed them out. I can do nothing with his vague complaints. Let it suffice to give one very specific example of what I believe to be Bromley's selective misreading of my article. He claims that I fail to address the epistemological issue of falsifiability. However, I devote an entire section of my paper to precisely that issue. If my argument is unconvincing, he should show how it is flawed. This is only one example of how evidence in my paper is neither accepted nor refuted but simply ignored.

To me, the useful part of Bromley's essay is the third and last section. Here he outlines a plan for a general theory of the uses of organizational power to resocialize individual participants. This is good stuff. I am impressed, as always, with Bromley's erudition and the catholicity of his scholarly interests. However, I am baffled that he does not perceive the extent to which he and I are on the same track. Again, he simply ignores

the section of my paper on convergent validity in which I cite a number of the same references that he cites.

I don't mean to imply that all of our differences are attributable to misreading. Real tactical differences do exist between Bromley and myself. I am an empiricist who likes to use theory sparingly. Bromley is a theorist who sometimes looks at data. I prefer to start with certain puzzling empirical regularities that have been repeatedly observed by students of NRMs. My tactics are to build from empirical generalizations to theoretical propositions. Bromley prefers to move the opposite way, from the general to the specific.

Bromley has been most at home in theorizing about the weak institutionalized human interactions that make most of the world go round. He is uncomfortable with the study of what Thomas Smith has called strong interactions, those pre-institutionalized passionate attachments that can sometimes drive people to collective murder or suicide.[6] However, it is precisely the pre-institutionalized aspects of NRMs that I find most intriguing. It is the opportunity that they give us to view religion *in statu nascendi*, with the blood on the altar not yet dry, that sustains my interest in these phenomena. I suspect that the bodies writhing on the ground around the pavilion at Jonestown signify something scarier than mere organizational resocialization. Strong interactions sometimes call for conceptual terms with strong connotative loadings. If Bromley can't stand the heat, he should get out of this particular kitchen.

Nevertheless, I hope for a future in which there can be fruitful interchange between scholars like Bromley who use data to test theory and scholars like myself who submerge themselves first in data and bring theory to bear only when something puzzling needs to be explained. We should not allow our tactical differences to hinder our continued collaboration in pursuit of knowledge about these elusive but important phenomena. He says "resocialize." I say "brainwash." But let's not for that reason call the whole thing off.

ENDNOTES

[1] Standpoint theory is a perspective within contemporary sociological theory based upon the assumption that one's view of reality is, in part, inescapably determined by one's position within the social system.

[2] I should add, however, that Bromley himself has always been a generous colleague and a fair-minded journal editor.

[3] I am speaking here of full-size regular articles in the journals that are now entitled *The Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion (JSSR)* and *Sociology of Religion (SR)*, formerly *Sociological*

Analysis. There have been a very few short comments or notes supporting brainwashing and one or two articles that were not entirely dismissive of it. Nor is it the case that articles showing evidence of brainwashing were never submitted. Although I am not at liberty to breech the confidentiality of the peer review process by citing specific cases, I know of a number of instances in which articles of the sort I am speaking of were rejected or "discouraged." However, I do agree with Bromley that the very fact that so much space was given to my arguments in this new journal is encouraging. Perhaps this is a sign that the worst abuses of this sorry period in our discipline's history may now be coming to an end.

[4] Joan Baez, "Diamonds and Rust," *Diamond and Rust*, A & M Records, 1975.

[5] Benjamin D. Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma: A Study of Contemporary American Communes* (New York: Free Press, 1980); Benjamin D. Zablocki, *The Joyful Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[6] Thomas Spence Smith, *Strong Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

"Equality of the Sexes, But . . .": Women in Point Loma Theosophy, 1899–1942

Evelyn A. Kirkley

In 1915, as World War I engulfed Europe, debates over women's rights raged in the United States. Led by Alice Paul's radical Congressional Union and the more conventional National American Woman Suffrage Association, the movement involved factory workers, bankers' wives, professionals, and temperance reformers. Although the Nineteenth Amendment was defeated in Congress in 1914, women's rights were nonetheless a controversial political issue.[1] They were certainly discussed at the 1915 Woman's International Theosophical League meeting in San Diego, California. Katherine Tingley, head of the Theosophical Society in America, declared, "I believe in the equality of the sexes, but I hold that man has a mission and that woman has also a mission, and that these missions are not the same; the difference is due in part to lines of evolution."[2] According to Tingley, if a woman is to "reach the dignity of ideal womanhood, she must cultivate her femininity. She was born a woman and she must *be* a woman in the truest sense; and the contrast between men and women exists in life."[3]

Tingley sought to implement this vision at the Point Loma Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society Homestead, popularly known as Lomaland, which she established in 1897.[4] Located in San Diego on the site of what is today Point Loma Nazarene College, Lomaland existed from 1899 to 1942 and was the most successful Theosophical commune in the United States. Hailed as a utopian community where individuals discovered their unique essence regardless of sex, Lomaland attracted both women and men; women outnumbered men by only sixty to forty percent.[5] Due to its female leadership, its vision of women's distinctive cosmic mission, and its presence when women's rights were publicly disputed, the construction of womanhood at Point Loma is a significant case study of gender issues in new religious movements.

Women's roles and treatment at Point Loma were shaped by a complex interplay of three factors: (1) prevailing cultural gender

ideologies, (2) women's attraction to alternative religious movements, and (3) understandings of femininity in Theosophy. These factors reveal two countervailing impulses—one toward hierarchy and gender distinctiveness, the other toward egalitarianism and gender blindness. These impulses were embodied at Lomaland in gendered divisions of labor and in Tingley's personality and leadership. She and other women sought to challenge contradictory societal gender expectations at Point Loma. Ironically, they exchanged one set of restrictions for another.

TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY IDEOLOGIES OF WOMANHOOD

By the end of the nineteenth century, assumptions about womanhood taken for granted before the Civil War were being increasingly challenged.[6] The dominant antebellum ideology of womanhood has been variously dubbed by historians "separate spheres," "domesticity," and the "Cult of True Womanhood."[7] Articulated in novels, advice books, and women's magazines, True Womanhood expected women to be pious, pure, submissive, and domestic. Endowed by God with a special spiritual sense, women were naturally religious and responsible for inculcating devotion in their husbands and children. They were paragons of chastity, demureness, and morality. Fragile and passive, they were nonetheless responsible for curbing men's desire and channeling sexual activity solely for procreation. Lacking man's superior strength, intellect, and aggressiveness, they subordinated themselves to their fathers, husbands, and ultimately sons. Men were natural leaders and women, followers. Their sphere was the home, their role to bear and nurture children and to provide domestic sanctuary for men. Although True Womanhood was held up as the divinely ordained standard for all women, it was achievable solely by white, middle-class, heterosexual women in the increasingly industrial and urban Northeast. Spokeswomen for True Womanhood included education reformer Catherine Beecher and her sister Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

Although True Womanhood was criticized by suffragists, working-class women, and women of color, a clear alternative ideology did not emerge until the 1870s.[8] Furious at the limited lives of their mothers and grandmothers and influenced by suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, a growing number of young women self-consciously repudiated True Womanhood, called themselves New Women, and sought self-fulfillment apart from men. The New Woman was a college graduate, unmarried, childfree, and economically self-supporting. Independent and autonomous, politically and socially radical, she asserted women's rights and the right to her own body. New Women included M. Carey Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr College,

and Jane Addams, founder of Hull House. Reviled as selfish, "mannish," and unnatural, they were told that too much thinking would shut down their reproductive systems and cause hysteria.[9] Ironically, in rejecting every aspect of "True Womanhood," New Women demonstrated the extent to which they had been influenced by it.

Contemporary with the emergence of New Women, True Women departed the domestic sphere for more public pursuits. Even before the Civil War, a few True Women augmented their housework with social causes including dress reform, children's rights, anti-prostitution, temperance, and abolition. After the war the trickle of women involved in social reform became a flood. In addition to their antebellum causes, they expanded beyond the domestic sphere and agitated for equal suffrage, civic improvement, anti-vivisection, divorce rights, and mental health reform. An example was Frances Willard, longtime president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. These "New True Women" used their presumed spiritual superiority to ameliorate social conditions, becoming moral guardians of the world as well as the home. Finding justification for their behavior in True Womanhood while at the same time violating its tenets, they were able to avoid the cultural disapprobation experienced by New Women.[10]

In short, women at the end of the century faced contradictory definitions of femininity characterized by both gender distinctiveness and gender blindness. True Womanhood asserted that women were virtually a separate species from men, angelic creatures in need of protection, a mop, and a frying pan. New Women claimed equal rights with men, arguing that women with opportunities comparable to men could achieve self-determination (and probably spinsterhood). New True Womanhood suggested that a life inside and outside the home was desirable and possible without quite explaining how.

WOMEN IN ALTERNATIVE RELIGIONS

In the United States, women have a long tradition of participation and leadership in alternative religious communities. Examples of leaders include Jemima Wilkinson (Society of the Universal Publick Friend), Ann Lee (Shakers), Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science), Emma Curtis Hopkins (New Thought), Myrtle Fillmore (Unity), and the majority of Spiritualist mediums. Women have also been leaders in outsider Christian movements. Examples include Phoebe Palmer (Holiness), Ellen G. White (Seventh-day Adventists), and Aimee Semple McPherson (Church of the Foursquare Gospel). This trend raises the question whether women are attracted to marginal movements because they are marginal or if those religions are marginal because women are attracted to them. The most common explanation for women's involvement in

alternative religions is their historical exclusion from leadership and authority in "mainstream" Christian groups.[11]

In analyzing reasons for this phenomenon beyond women's exclusion from leadership positions in the mainstream, scholars of religion have offered two opposing interpretations. One is that women sought a gender blind belief system, one that did not restrict them to secondary roles as women. Mary Farrell Bednarowski identifies four factors that attracted women to alternative religions: (1) a de-emphasis of the maleness of deity by affirming either feminine and/or gender free divine aspects; (2) a downplaying of original sin and denial of human depravity; (3) a denial of the necessity for formally ordained clergy; and (4) a resistance to marriage and motherhood as women's only means of fulfillment. Using Christian Science, Spiritualism, Theosophy, and the Shakers as examples, Bednarowski argues that women gained religious leadership and authority equal to men through distinctly different theological and sociological means.[12]

A second interpretation of women's attraction to alternative religions is that they stressed women's difference from men and hallowed distinctly feminine qualities. A quest for feminine spiritual identity enabled women's leadership based explicitly on their femininity. Ann Braude and R. Laurence Moore argue that women's culturally ascribed passivity and weakness legitimated their authority as Spiritualist mediums.[13] According to Braude, Spiritualism "made the delicate constitution and nervous excitability commonly attributed to femininity a qualification for religious leadership."[14] Thus, as was true with the societal expectations of True and New Womanhood, conditions of gender blindness and gender exclusiveness coexisted for women in alternative religions. These simultaneous impulses toward denying and affirming unique feminine qualities were also present in Theosophy.

FEMININITY IN THEOSOPHICAL BELIEFS

Gender issues have played a significant role in Theosophy ever since the 1874 meeting of founders Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott. In the time-honored tradition of woman-engineered encounters, she held out a cigar, and he rushed to light it for her. After establishing the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875, the mystical Russian with the hypnotic eyes and the New Jersey-born social-reformer-of-all-trades became known as the Theosophical Twins, alternately friend and foe (Olcott vigorously denied numerous rumors that they were lovers). After traveling to India in 1878, Blavatsky (or "HPB" as her followers referred to her) and Olcott articulated the aims of the Society: (1) to advocate the "Universal Brotherhood of Humanity," (2) to promote comparative study of the world's religions, and (3) to investigate psychic

phenomena. They preached Theosophy as a universal knowledge, the source of all world religions. HPB claimed to have recovered a tradition of ancient wisdom, a "secret doctrine" which she had received through direct communication with eastern "mahatmas," great souls who had attained enlightenment through the cycles of karma and reincarnation. Blending Eastern mysticism and Western occultism, Theosophy attracted prominent Americans such as Thomas A. Edison, inventor of the electric lightbulb, and Abner Doubleday, baseball pioneer.

Theosophy also attracted women. Bednarowski, Robert Ellwood, Catherine Wessinger, and James Santucci have identified five sociological factors that predisposed women to Theosophy: (1) substantive intellectual abilities; (2) unhappy or unfulfilling marriages; (3) middle- or upper-class socioeconomic status; (4) previous affiliation with an organized religion, especially Christianity, Judaism, or Spiritualism; and (5) a personal relationship with a Theosophist.[15] Moreover, Wessinger and Ellwood have painted a psychological portrait of women likely to become Theosophists. These women "do not look marginal, but . . . in some inner dimension of their being, experience themselves as precisely that" because of "pressures relating to status inconsistency, or . . . due to an inner sense of difference, rooted in personal autobiography." Moreover, the Theosophical Society opened leadership opportunities to women, "[allowing] its women and men leaders alike to travel the world lecturing and organizing. In it, women no less than men rose to the highest positions of responsibility."[16]

Theosophy appealed to a segment of white, middle-class, intellectual women who sought greater control over their lives, usefulness in the world, and spiritual power as women. These women did not fit True Womanhood; their unhappy marriages and superior intelligence created dissatisfaction with societal norms of femininity. Yet in affirming their need for spirituality, they did not toss out the True Girl baby with the bathwater. They did not adopt New Womanhood's complete repudiation of True Womanhood. Rather, they rejected what they saw as the restrictive aspects of True Womanhood without denying they were true women.

This dynamic extended to Theosophical beliefs. Some Theosophists affirmed the essential sameness of women and men due to inner divinity, karma, and reincarnation. The Theosophical God was immanent, transcendent, sexless, and impersonal.[17] Consciousness of the divine Absolute was available to all regardless of sex. Karma provided spiritual reasons for the circumstances of one's life; individuals reaped the consequences of their actions in this life and past ones, and they would be reincarnated as both males and females. According to Katherine Tingley, karma and reincarnation "attract the attention of humanity to a consciousness of the essential divinity [of humankind]."[18] Moreover, "if men and women could work together as one great universal body

towards this end they would be creators of a new order of ages, a Universal Religion verily—a true Brotherhood of Man."[19]

At the same time, Theosophical doctrine supported gender distinctiveness. Tingley believed that woman and man possessed unique cosmic missions: "Men and women have come from the same source, are seeking the same goal, are a part of the great universal life, are guided by the universal laws of being—each one of the two in place: the woman in her place, the man in his; the outward aspects different, with duties different, but the heart-hunger the same, and the spiritual will the same."[20] These understandings of woman's essential similarity to and difference from man were not necessarily irreconcilable, and both attracted women to Theosophy and to Point Loma.

GENDER ROLES AT LOMALAND[21]

Gender blind impulses were evident in Point Loma's educational endeavors, while gender exclusive ones were evident in divisions of labor within the community. Soon after the establishment of Lomaland, Tingley founded the Raja Yoga Academy, a holistic educational system that extended from three years of age through high school. "Raja Yoga" meant "royal union" and signified integration of the individual with the Absolute. By curbing base human instincts such as greed and selfishness, Raja Yoga aimed to nurture a child's unique divine essence regardless of sex.[22] Beginning in 1900 with five students, the school's enrollment peaked in 1910 at 300.[23] By 1919 so many students had graduated from the Raja Yoga Academy that Tingley established a Theosophical University chartered by the state of California. She hoped that Raja Yoga graduates would "aspire to the position of national benefactors, teachers and helpers, and so . . . become exponents of the truest and wisest patriotism."[24]

Although vocational education was gender specific, with boys learning horticulture and printing and girls studying cooking, spinning silk, and child-care, boys and girls followed identical academic curricula, for its time a remarkable educational advance. Classroom instruction was given in literature, grammar, poetry, mathematics, science, art, and modern languages. In addition, students did calisthenics, worked in the community garden, and learned music and drama. To become well-rounded individuals, they were required to participate in all activities regardless of skill. Instruction was coeducational until pre-adolescence, when girls and boys were separated except for chorus and orchestra. Raja Yoga alumnus Iverson Harris, Jr. remembered, "when we got to be dangerous teenagers, we were kept pretty much apart."[25]

Unlike the Raja Yoga Academy, Lomaland labor was segregated by gender. The community supported itself through collectively owned

cottage industries.[26] Men operated blacksmithing and carpentry businesses as well as a successful printing press. The Aryan Theosophical Press (later Theosophical University Press) published books, pamphlets, periodicals, graphic arts, and the first linotype Sanskrit printing in the United States. Women managed bee farming, cloth dying, and weaving, and they manufactured handicrafts to sell at the Women's Exchange and Mart, including raffia, reedwork, decorative netting, embroidery, tooled leather, painted china, batik, and tie-dying.

In addition to operating cottage industries at Point Loma, men supervised building projects, administered finances, and studied Theosophical doctrines with Tingley. Except for Tingley, nearly all Cabinet members were men, as were the officers of the Universal Brotherhood Organization. Considering her considerable institutional power, however, it is difficult to determine how much authority they actually had. Women held leadership positions deemed appropriate for their work: they headed the Raja Yoga Academy and directed the Women's Exchange and Mart.[27]

Domestic labor was the province of women. Most was communal, including cooking, laundering, apparel manufacturing, and caring for children. Virtually the only labor for which individual residents were responsible was cleaning their own apartments or bungalows. Lomaland was progressive, even proto-feminist, in collectivizing traditionally female housework. Women were freed from supervising individual households, managing servants, and other late Victorian middle-class duties. Some women loved the system. One commented to a journalist in 1907, "You don't know what it means . . . to escape all cares of the kitchen and of servants. It is heavenly! And there is nothing to equal it in making free women!"[28] This freedom was fleeting, however, since women were now responsible for both collective and individual domestic chores. These expanded labors were divided among more women, but drudgery was multiplied on a larger scale.

Point Loma's division of labor was based on Tingley's conviction that women and men had distinctive yet complementary spiritual natures. In her version of Theosophical True Womanhood, woman's domain was the home, and Lomaland was a large home. Future resident Rose Winkler wrote in 1898 that Theosophy "teaches the true woman to make of the home a sacred place—the place of Peace, a vestal temple of the hearth watched over by household gods—and that her office and dignity, place and power, as I understand it, is in the home."[29] According to Michael Ashcraft, the ideal Point Loma woman was "intuitive, attuned to her emotions, maternal, committed to making the home a place of rest and growth."[30]

Girls and women received contradictory messages about femininity. The Raja Yoga Academy taught them that they had intellectual abilities

equal to boys, yet those abilities served different ends. They were cosmic homemakers and were instructed that self-sacrifice, compassion, and moral guardianship were their contributions toward humanity's spiritual evolution.[31] Ironically, however, Tingley herself was removed from these duties. She hailed wifely and motherly roles as woman's highest spiritual calling, but she herself had no children, was divorced twice, and lived separately from her third husband. And while a few Raja Yoga girls recalled learning how to baste a goose from Tingley, she seldom participated in the domestic management of the community. She spent her days writing, answering correspondence, fund-raising, lecturing, and fighting lawsuits.[32]

KATHERINE TINGLEY'S LEADERSHIP

The harmonies and dissonances of gender blindness and distinctiveness were epitomized in Katherine Tingley's autocratic leadership of Point Loma. Community structure and governance were established on her unquestioned authority. She made all major decisions in the community and most minor ones: she determined residents' jobs and living arrangements, oversaw curriculum and conduct at the Raja Yoga Academy, and supervised community business. Her decisions were often based on an individual's wealth and loyalty to her. One of the finest residences in Lomaland, for example, was built for wealthy sporting goods magnate Albert Spalding, who was not a devout Theosophist, and his wife Elizabeth, who was.[33]

Tingley unhesitatingly intervened in personal relationships among residents, often in an attempt to prevent divorce. Although she usually counseled women to remain with their husbands, in the 1901 case of Grace and John Bohn, she supported Grace's decision to leave her abusive husband and offered her financial resources after she lost custody of her children.[34] In another case, when Fritz Darrow, a married resident, fell in love with Alice Pierce, Tingley intervened. Although Tingley, Darrow's wife, May, and Pierce (who did not return Fritz's overwrought affections) tried to persuade him to remain with his wife, he refused to stop pursuing Alice and was forced to leave the community.[35] Tingley was named a corespondent in these and other divorce lawsuits and gained an unjustified reputation as a home wrecker.[36]

In supervising residents' relationships with one another, Tingley enforced a conservative sexual morality and worked tirelessly to preserve a respectable public facade for her community. Her aim was passionlessness, pruning bodily urges to enable the soul to flourish. She required celibacy for unmarried people, both male and female, and encouraged periodic abstinence during marriage for spiritual

refreshment. Extramarital relationships were categorically forbidden. To Tingley, excessive libido was spiritually dangerous. Sexual indulgence might lead to retro-evolution, such as reincarnation as an earthworm.

Tingley opposed the double standard: the same morality applied to women and men. Iverson Harris, Jr. called her "a Puritan," commenting that her

> standards as regards promiscuity and any association between the sexes would be considered very square today. But she was going to keep Point Loma above reproach in that regard and she did. I mean to say in our teens, we boys could perhaps meet the girls at a supervised social once a month, something of that kind, otherwise we had to admire them at a distance.[37]

Tingley promulgated the single standard for specific purposes. It was mandatory that men learn to suppress their base instincts, while women must prepare to become mothers. Thus, Lomaland girls were reported to "have that purity which is virtue's impregnable support and shield. . . . In their hearts has been awakened a deep and undying love for all that lives, a tender and compassionate regard for all others."[38]

Protecting motherhood was also Tingley's motive for opposing woman suffrage. She believed that woman's spiritual superiority elevated her above sordid politics.[39] To allow her to vote would debase her natural intuition and maternalism. Woman's sacred work was domestic; as a role model for her husband and children, she should persuade them through her example to act morally.[40] Yet while Tingley and Point Loma spokespeople opposed it, many residents privately endorsed woman suffrage. Wessinger and Ellwood have commented that while Theosophy "as a whole has not promoted any particular feminist program," it "has consistently affirmed and practiced gender equality, and has provided a spiritual home for many actively feminist women."[41]

Beyond Lomaland, Tingley also used her authority to influence national and international Theosophical developments. Throughout her career she clashed with a second group of Theosophists headquartered in Adyar, India and led by British citizen Annie Besant. In 1902 Tingley became convinced that the Adyar group was trying to sabotage her authority by encouraging an investigation of Point Loma's treatment of children. She determined to retaliate. Her opportunity came when she discovered that the head of the American branch of the Adyar group, Alexander Fullerton, was homosexual and had had a sexual relationship with a teenage boy. She quickly reported Fullerton to the authorities. He was adjudged insane and committed to an asylum, and the Adyar group was widely discredited.[42]

Assessments of Tingley's leadership varied. Supporters praised her charisma and admired her vigorous leadership. Like a New Woman, she was assertive and commanding, able to persuade successful

businessmen like Albert Spalding and New York diamond broker August Neresheimer to follow her. A "forceful, innovative, and sometimes mysterious woman," she "brought a combination of pragmatism, dedication, administrative skill, and a sense of the theatric into the leadership of the Point Loma community."[43] Before his move to Lomaland, Iverson Harris, Sr. asked, "Do you not feel the impression of the grand thoughts and ideas which flash from her scintillating mind, do you not feel the force as it comes from the sparkle and radiance of her eyes?"[44] His son Iverson, Jr. remembered her as "an organizer and a boss" who "had much about her that was inspirational."[45]

Tingley also had vehement detractors. Outside Lomaland, she was regarded as anti-Christian, dictatorial, and immoral. Disparagingly nicknaming her "The Purple Mother" and her dog "The Purple Inspiration" because of her fondness for the color, the press reported her hostile remarks about Christianity, antagonizing clergy and devout believers. A 1901 *Los Angeles Times* story reported that Lomaland residents were "starved and treated like convicts" and forced to engage in "gross immoralities."[46] Tingley filed a lawsuit against the newspaper, alleging the story was "false, malicious, libelous and untrue."[47] Although she won the case, the story reflected public perceptions of Point Loma. She reportedly held disciples such as Neresheimer as virtual slaves and had a "fierce maternal grip on the affections of her other followers."[48] She "brooked no opposition within the community, often imposing unpopular rules on a whim."[49] Toward the end of her life, she "tyrannised [*sic*] over her own intimates while making them take responsibility for her follies" and forced them to participate in rituals to glorify her.[50]

At least some of this negative evaluation was due to Tingley's sex. The confidence and decisiveness that were praiseworthy qualities in a male leader were condemned in her as unfeminine. The traits that made her successful were precisely those that earned her opprobrium. Penny Waterstone argues that she was aware of this double standard and used it to her advantage. According to Waterstone, Tingley "quite skillfully created a public image that emphasized her reluctant acceptance of the role of leader and her personal self-sacrifice," promoting an "image of an essentially private woman who was chosen to serve humanity, without pay and without any desire for public notoriety."[51] Like Mary Baker Eddy and Aimee Semple McPherson, she exploited assumptions that women were passive and retiring to become a forceful leader.

As a leader, Tingley was both True Woman and New Woman, simultaneously preserving and subverting the status quo. She believed women were morally and spiritually superior to men, and she upheld rigid standards of sexual purity. She endorsed marriage and motherhood as women's cosmic destiny and encouraged them to advance human evolution by creating a loving and spotless home. Denying any desire

for power, she claimed authority based on self-sacrifice. At the same time, she was an aggressive leader who refused to share decision-making power outside her inner circle, most of whom were men. Again like Mary Baker Eddy and Aimee Semple McPherson, she claimed exclusive authority, establishing herself at the top of a tight organizational structure. Identifying herself apart from other women, she acted independently, autonomously, and at times ruthlessly. She used her charismatic power to protect and preserve the community as she determined was necessary.

CONCLUSION

Femininity at Lomaland was shaped by American culture, Theosophy, and other religious perspectives which stressed gender blindness and distinctiveness. The True Woman, the New Woman, and the New True Woman vied with one another as the American ideal. Women were attracted to and claimed leadership in alternative religions based on their likeness to or difference from men. Theosophical doctrine melded beliefs in an impersonal, sexless divine principle, non-sex-discriminatory karma, and reincarnation with an affirmation of woman's unique cosmic mission to uplift the human race. From the interplay of these beliefs emerged ambiguous understandings of womanhood at Point Loma. Gender roles in the community conveyed that women and men had essentially the same capabilities and that they had to develop distinctly different traits and skills for evolutionary progress. Tingley's leadership uneasily combined self-abnegation with authoritarianism.

I am not arguing that one of these messages was preferable to the other, that either gender blind or distinctive approaches should have predominated. Nor am I arguing these two approaches are necessarily irreconcilable or inherently either sexist or feminist. I am saying, however, that this duality existed and that it created ambiguity in understandings of womanhood at Point Loma. Furthermore, I conclude that this ambiguity was precisely why middle-class, educated, white women were attracted to the community.

Lomaland's ambiguous femininity enabled women in the community to negotiate the complexities of New and True Womanhood. The at times bewildering combination of gender blindness and distinctiveness mirrored tensions in their upbringing as turn-of-the-century women and paralleled the experiences of women in other alternative religions. Point Loma's protected environment afforded them the opportunity to explore gender boundaries without transgressing them. Although unsure of the degree of freedom and equality they wanted, they sought greater autonomy so long as it did not jeopardize their presumed moral and

spiritual superiority. At Point Loma they could both safeguard their culturally ascribed privileges as wives and mothers and admire Tingley's decisive leadership with its lack of constraints by husband or children.

Although largely unconscious, this strategy was an innovative means of exploring empowerment without being ostracized as social deviants. And yet it carried a high price tag. Ironically, Point Loma women sought liberation from restrictive societal gender roles by consigning themselves to a rigidly structured and authoritarian community.

Admittedly, this conclusion must be teased from the available evidence. Few Lomaland women recorded why they became Theosophists and moved to Point Loma. Those who did so did not explicitly declare that they wanted to expand their freedom while protecting their feminine privilege; they stated that Theosophy was the avenue to spiritual enlightenment. I am suggesting, however, that they saw Theosophy as enlightening in part because it addressed their conflicted and conflicting feelings about womanhood. Point Loma offered an alluring but inadequate vision of women fulfilling their cosmic potential and anticipated similar ambiguities in the contemporary women's spirituality movement. Tingley's 1915 statement, "I believe in the equality of the sexes, but . . ." articulates the "equal but separate" dilemma that still besets women aspiring to both social and spiritual empowerment.

ENDNOTES

[1] Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of American Feminism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).

[2] Katherine Tingley, *et al., Woman's Mission: Short Addresses by Katherine Tingley and Other Officials of the Woman's International Theosophical League, . . . February 7, 1915* (Point Loma, CA: Woman's Theosophical League, 1915), 24-5.

[3] Ibid., 25.

[4] The classic study of Point Loma Theosophy is Emmett A. Greenwalt's *The Point Loma Community in California, 1897-1942: A Theosophical Experiment* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1955; rev. ed., San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1978). It is an institutional history, chronicling the rise and decline of the Point Loma community. Greenwalt concludes that, despite its weaknesses, Point Loma had a profound effect on the religious landscape and ethos of California.

After forty years of scholarly inattention, two 1995 dissertations place Lomaland in the context of late Victorian culture, U.S. religious historiography, and gender roles. In "'The Dawn of the New Cycle': Point Loma Theosophists and American Culture, 1896-1929" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1995), W. Michael Ashcraft argues that "Point Loma Theosophists blended Victorian middle-class culture with an occultic worldview" (p. iii). In "Domesticating Universal Brotherhood: Feminine Values and the Construction of Utopia, Point Loma Homestead, 1897-1920" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 1995), Penny B. Waterstone argues that "the women of Point Loma Colony embraced an ideology

of woman's morally superior nature, and used that ideology to expand woman's 'natural' sphere of influence" (p. 6). They conclude that Lomaland gender roles expanded but did not radically change ideologies of womanhood among middle-class, educated, white Americans. Although I agree with their conclusions, Ashcraft and Waterstone tend to describe Point Loma gender roles rather than analyze them.

Besides recent interest in Point Loma, there has been a resurgence of scholarly interest in Theosophy and constructions of gender in it in the last fifteen years. See Mary F. Bednarowski, "Outside the Mainstream: Women's Religion and Women Religious Leaders in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48 (1980): 207-31; Mary F. Bednarowski, "Women in Occult America," in *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*, eds. Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 177-95; Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Robert Ellwood, "The American Theosophical Synthesis," in *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*, eds. Kerr and Crow (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 111-34; Robert Ellwood and Catherine Wessinger, "The Feminism of 'Universal Brotherhood': Women in the Theosophical Movement," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream*, ed. Wessinger (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 68-87; Stephen Prothero, "From Spiritualism to Theosophy: 'Uplifting' a Democratic Tradition," *Religion and American Culture* 3 (Summer 1993): 197-216; James Santucci, "Women in the Theosophical Movement," *Explorations: Journal for Adventurous Thought* 9 (Fall 1990): 71-94; Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: A History of the Mystics, Mediums, and Misfits Who Brought Spiritualism to America* (New York: Schocken, 1995).

[5] In 1900, Point Loma was 64% adult female, compared to 48% in the U.S. adult population and 43% in the California adult population. In 1910, adult women composed 56% of the total Point Loma population, and in 1920, 61%, compared to 49% of the U.S. adult population in both 1910 and 1920. Throughout its history, Point Loma had a higher percentage of single women and men and a lower percentage of children born to residents than the national average (Waterstone, "Domesticating Universal Brotherhood," 215, 295).

[6] For interpretations of late nineteenth-century womanhood from varying perspectives, see Margaret Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Karen Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980); Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981; repr. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: Beacon, 1989); Jane Camhi, *Women Against Women: American Anti-Suffragism, 1880-1920* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson, 1994); Betty DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Lori Ginzburg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1976).

[7] Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973); Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," in *Dimity Convictions*, 21-41. Although "True Womanhood" and "separate spheres" have been adopted by many historians as interpretive frameworks for analyzing nineteenth-century women's lives, they have not gone unchallenged. The most significant criticism is that these frameworks tend to become reified, undermining their fragility, flexibility, and difficulty of application with different regions, classes, races, and sexual orientations. However, no alternative framework has been widely adopted, and I argue that "separate spheres" is still useful, albeit with care.

See Nancy Hewitt, "Beyond the Search for Sisterhood: American Women's History in the 1980s," in *Unequal Sisters*, eds. Ellen C. Dubois and Vicki L. Ruiz (New York: Routledge, 1990), 1-14.

[8] While antebellum woman suffragists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Amelia Bloomer, Lucretia Mott, and Julia Ward Howe articulated new understandings of womanhood, a clearly defined, uniform alternative ideology did not emerge until after the Civil War. In particular, these suffragists struggled with the meanings of marriage and motherhood for women. See Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Disorder and Gender Crisis, 1870-1936," in *Disorderly Conduct*, 245-96.

[9] Smith-Rosenberg, "The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Disorderly Conduct*, 197-216.

[10] See Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist*; Bordin, *Woman and Temperance*; Ginzburg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*; Barbara Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1981); Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); Anne F. Scott, *Making the Invisible Woman Visible* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

[11] Catherine Wessinger, "Going Beyond and Retaining Charisma: Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions*, ed. Wessinger, 1-19.

[12] Bednarowski, "Outside the Mainstream," 207-31.

[13] Braude, *Radical Spirits*; R. Laurence Moore, *In Search of White Crows* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[14] Ann Braude, "The Perils of Passivity: Women's Leadership in Spiritualism and Christian Science," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions*, ed. Wessinger, 57.

[15] Ellwood and Wessinger, "The Feminism of 'Universal Brotherhood'"; Bednarowski, "Outside the Mainstream"; Santucci, "Women in the Theosophical Movement."

[16] Ellwood and Wessinger, "The Feminism of 'Universal Brotherhood,'" 74, 68-9.

[17] Mary F. Bednarowski, *New Religions and the Theological Imagination in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 36.

[18] W. Emmett Small, ed. and comp., *The Wisdom of the Heart: Katherine Tingley Speaks* (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1978), 90.

[19] Ibid., 76.

[20] Ibid., 137.

[21] The following brief history of Point Loma is from Greenwalt, *The Point Loma Community*, 12-144, 170-94; Waterstone, *Domesticating Universal Brotherhood*, 78-199, 282-93, 295; and Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 141.

Katherine Tingley was born in 1847 in Newbury, Massachusetts into a family of Puritan lineage. Her father was a merchant, hotel keeper, and city marshall. During the Civil War, she lived in Alexandria, Virginia and briefly attended a convent school in Montreal. In the 1870s, little is known of her activities; reportedly she traveled with a theatrical company as an actress. After two unhappy marriages, she wed her third husband, Philo Tingley, in 1888. He played no role in her career, and the two lived separately for more than twenty years. Unsurprisingly, they had no children.

By the 1880s, Tingley was a Spiritualist and social reformer in New York City, often giving mediumistic readings to support her causes. She founded the Ladies Society of Mercy in 1887 to visit prisons and hospitals, the Emergency Society in 1891 to aid the poor, and the Do-Good Mission in 1892 to feed and clothe families of striking factory workers. While working there in the winter of 1892-93, she met William Q. Judge, general secretary of the American Section of the Theosophical Society. In 1895 the American Section seceded from the larger international society in a dispute over leadership after HPB's death, and Judge became the head of the new Theosophical Society in America (TSA). Tingley was attracted by Judge's charisma, the ideal of "Universal Brotherhood," and the karmic explanation for suffering and its end. Theosophy became a vehicle for her philanthropy.

When Judge died in 1896, Tingley succeeded him as head of the TSA. Although she had only been a member a few years, Tingley convinced key leaders that Judge had contacted her from the spirit world and named her as his successor. Once officially installed, she moved quickly to consolidate her power. She streamlined the organization, making it more centralized and autocratic, and renamed it the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society. She titled herself "Leader and Official Head" and empowered herself alone to appoint officers of the Society, approve all amendments to the constitution, and call constitutional congresses. Over the next decade she closed most Society lodges across the country and concentrated its work at its new headquarters at Point Loma. She envisioned a utopian community there, which she called the White City and School for the Revival of the Lost Mysteries of Antiquity.

The cornerstone for Lomaland was laid in 1897, and Tingley and other residents began living there in 1899. They built a worship structure called the Temple of Peace or Aryan Temple, a residential facility known as the Homestead, and a school called the Raja Yoga Academy. Under her energetic leadership, Lomaland became a regional center for the arts. Tingley loved ritual, and the community staged elaborate pageants that echoed ancient mystery religions—at least late Victorian versions of them. Raja Yoga students formed an orchestra in 1905 and performed weekly concerts. The Amphitheater at Point Loma was the first open-air Greek theater in the United States. Greek and Shakespearean dramas, including *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, received favorable reviews in the San Diego newspapers. Open to the public, these productions nurtured positive public relations with San Diegans and encouraged them to visit Point Loma. Renowned for the beauty of its architecture and gardens, it became a popular picnicking spot. According to historian Dennis E. Berge ("Reminiscences of Lomaland: Madame Tingley and the Theosophical Institute in San Diego," *Journal of San Diego History* 20, no. 3 [1975]: 2), Point Loma brought an "aura of Camelot" to San Diego.

Tingley also galvanized Lomaland for social reform. She established the International Brotherhood League in 1897, the Sisters of Compassion in 1898, and the International Theosophical Peace Congress in 1913. She organized relief work for soldiers and Cuban refugees after the Spanish-American War. She supported children's education and aid to the destitute, and opposed vivisection, capital punishment, and war. Through her vision and enthusiasm, Point Loma became a southern California tourist destination long before Disneyland and the Crystal Cathedral. During its heyday in the 1910s and 1920s, tours were regularly conducted of the Homestead and Temple. Visitors were treated to a musical program, a brief orientation to Theosophy, and a visit to the gift shop run by the Women's Exchange and Mart to purchase books and souvenirs, all for a nominal ten-cent admission fee.

Lomaland also attracted residents. Census figures indicate that from a population of 95 in 1900, the community grew to 357 in 1910 and declined only slightly in 1920 to 320. At its height in the 1910s, 500 adults and children lived in the community. Most adult residents were white, educated, and middle- or upper-middle class, and most were Theosophists prior to relocating to Point Loma. Many were unmarried and/or childless. They included Albert G. Spalding, sporting goods magnate; Clark Thurston, president of the American Screw Company; Iverson Harris, a successful attorney from Macon, Georgia; and August Neresheimer, a New York diamond broker who bankrolled much of the enterprise. Gertrude Van Pelt left a career as a physician to live at Point Loma, and Sara Levy was a schoolteacher. These professionals often continued their work at Lomaland, but received only subsistence wages for their labor. Several lived on inherited or previously earned wealth.

As donors died or became disenchanted, the community began to decline. Expenses were high, and the community was often in debt. Tingley's sudden death in 1929 from injuries received in a car crash and the stock market crash were devastating blows. She was succeeded by Tingley disciple and longtime Point Loma resident Gottfried de Purucker. He inaugurated sweeping changes to try to resuscitate the community. He changed the name from Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society back to simply the Theosophical Society, and he revived local lodges across the country that had languished

during Tingley's tenure. A more liberal constitution was passed at Lomaland, and the austere lifestyle eased. De Purucker lifted the rule of silence in the Raja Yoga Academy and stopped requiring students and residents to wear uniforms. Expenses were drastically cut, concerts became infrequent, and pageantry and drama ceased all together.

These efforts to save Lomaland failed. In 1941 only 130 residents remained; of these, more than half were over 60 and a third older than 70. That year the property was foreclosed and the community moved to Covina near Los Angeles. Besides foreclosure, a second reason given for the move was that activity at the nearby Naval Training Center had intensified in anticipation of U.S. entry into World War II and de Purucker feared for the security of residents. But a more significant problem than finances or local military build-up was that Lomaland had not adapted to changing times. Its pageantry, philanthropy, esotericism, and austerity seemed archaic as the twenties roared and the thirties collapsed. In Covina, in 1942, the residential community dissolved, and in 1951 the Society moved to Altadena, where it still maintains administrative offices and a library.

[22] Greenwalt, *The Point Loma Community*, 77-98.

[23] Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 137.

[24] Small, *The Wisdom of the Heart*, 94. The most controversial aspect of the Raja Yoga system was that children lived apart from their parents. By the age of six months, infants were taken to live in a communal nursery. Thereafter parents were allowed to visit their children two to three hours every Sunday afternoon. Breast-feeding was deemed unhealthy, and it was forbidden. Children began observing Academy classes as early as eighteen months and attending at three. When they outgrew the nursery, children lived in group homes, segregated by gender and supervised by female teachers who acted as surrogate mothers. This practice was condemned as unnatural by outsiders to the community, although all commented that the children seemed healthy and happy. Tingley defended it as the highest expression of mother love and family union. Parents who complied were criticized by others and felt personal anguish. Alfred Robinson and his wife brought their daughter Larona to the nursery at six months because they believed so fervently in Tingley's methods. He reported that they "stifled the ache at their hearts with the thought that it sprung from selfishness" (Alfred Robinson, *The Book of Larona* [n.p: privately printed, 1910], 10-11).

Besides separation of children from their parents, other aspects of Raja Yoga were attacked by outsiders. In 1902 the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children investigated Point Loma before permitting the emigration of Cuban children. Tingley was accused of calling herself a second Christ and her dog "The Purple Inspiration," teaching that plants marry and have babies, requiring children to stand and salute her when she entered the room, and forbidding them from expressing dislike of the school. She was vindicated by inspectors, and the children were allowed to live at Point Loma. Initially they lived separately from other children; Tingley stated she wanted to nurture distinctive ethnic traits. Observers also criticized Raja Yoga's atmosphere as repressive. Discipline was military—strict and swift. Children wore uniforms, marched to classes, and saluted their teachers. They sat rigidly upright during classes and meals. They maintained silence at all times except for necessary conversation. Tingley believed that silence nurtured the soul. To others, the practice verged on cruel (Paul Kagan, "Eastern Thought on a Western Shore: Point Loma Community," *California Historical Quarterly* 52, no. 1 [1973]: 7, 9-11).

[25] Berge, *Reminisces of Lomaland*, 25.

[26] Greenwalt, *The Point Loma Community*, 137-44.

[27] Waterstone, *Domesticating Universal Brotherhood*, 280-81.

[28] Ray S. Baker, "An Extraordinary Experiment in Brotherhood: The Theosophical Institution at Point Loma, California," *The American Magazine* 63, no. 3 (January 1907): 234.

[29] Rose Winkler, "Woman's Sphere," *New Century* 1, no. 48 (17 September 1898): 7.

[30] Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle*, 153.

[31] In 1901 a public program was held on the subject "True Womanhood" at the Fisher

Opera House in San Diego. Conducted by the Daughters of Lomaland, it featured musical performances and lectures on "Woman in the Home Life," "Woman's Relation to Posterity," and "The Divinity of Womanhood" (Lauren R. Brown, public meeting broadside, *The Point Loma Theosophical Society: A List of Publications, 1898-1942* [La Jolla, CA: Friends of the UCSD Library, 1977]). In 1906 Tingley founded the Woman's International Theosophical League as a forum for discussion of femininity.

[32] Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle*, 176, 180.

[33] Greenwalt, *The Point Loma Community*, 50.

[34] Waterstone, *Domesticating Universal Brotherhood*, 228-41.

[35] Ibid., 305-16; Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle*, 184-90.

[36] Waterstone, *Domesticating Universal Brotherhood*, 235.

[37] Berge, *Reminisces of Lomaland*, 25.

[38] "The Future Womanhood," *New Century* 11 (26 July, 1908): 15.

[39] Waterstone, *Domesticating Universal Brotherhood*, 99-100.

[40] Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle*, 174.

[41] Ellwood and Wessinger, "The Feminism of 'Universal Brotherhood,'" 82.

[42] Greenwalt, *The Point Loma Community*, 57-66.

[43] Berge, *Reminisces of Lomaland*, 2-3.

[44] Iverson Harris, Sr., "Speech," Nashville Convention, February 2, 1898, *New Century* 1, nos. 21-22 (5 March 1898): 15.

[45] Berge, *Reminisces of Lomaland*, 22.

[46] "Outrages at Point Loma; Exposed by an 'Escape' from Tingley. Startling Tales told in this City. Women and Children Starved and Treated Like Convicts. Thrilling Rescue," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 October 1901, 1.

[47] Katherine Tingley vs. *Los Angeles Times*, 339-40 of court transcript, San Diego Historical Society Archives.

[48] Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon*, 110.

[49] Ibid., 113.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Waterstone, *Domesticating Universal Brotherhood*, 79, 137.

On Politics and Transcendence: The Fleeting Reflections of a [Female] Academic Observer at the 4 October 1997 Promise Keepers Rally in Washington, D.C.

Brenda E. Brasher

"Why are you here?" I was asked by countless people as I arrived at the Washington Mall on the day of the Promise Keepers (PK) national rally. In response, I would briefly explain my situation—that I am a college professor who recently finished a book on Christian women's ministries and who now was researching a book on men's ministries focused on the Promise Keepers movement.[1] This introduction worked quite well as a legitimator of my presence. When I gave it, I was accepted by men who willingly talked with me at length about their participation in PK men's ministries.

When I queried PK attendees regarding why they were there, I generally received one of two answers. The first was that coming to Washington was part of a spiritual journey. This answer frequently was given by father/son, brother/brother, teacher/student attendee pairs and was coupled with an expression of commitment to bonding among men. The second answer I typically received was that men were there because their wives had sent them. Eventually I concluded that this second response was something of an in-joke among Promise Keepers. Most obviously, it was an attempt to subvert the extensively covered National Organization for Women (NOW) criticism of PK. Yet it also hinted at the dissonance I detected among PKers between NOW's claim that PK is problematic for women versus their own perceptions that their spouses consider PK a blessing. Every heterosexual, married man I spoke with at the rally (and all but two fit this description; all claimed to be heterosexual, but only two indicated they were single) described their spouses and children as supportive of their involvement in PK.

What was the rally like? No one answer suffices. At the level of event, it was a carefully orchestrated religious gathering organized around multiple themes that included the home, parenting, the (Christian) church, and the problem of racism. Each theme was introduced by a series of short sermons (each approximately five minutes in length). These instructional messages were followed by a related song or hymn. Attendees were then asked to pray and confess together in small groups and sometimes individually regarding their complicity in the topic being addressed. What did the rally mean? Again, no one answer suffices. The Washington PK rally was a physical and spiritual experience. It was a revelatory moment in U.S. social-gender-race relations. And, contrary to the disavowal of PK leaders, it was also a major political event. I will reflect briefly upon each of these assertions in turn.

As a physical, spiritual experience, the content of the relatively contradictory messages communicated from the platform at times distracted from the transcendent sense of place that arose among attendees. Speeches about the end times and the physical appearance of Jesus were a regular part of the platform fare. One speaker enjoined attendees to "look up," because Jesus could appear any second; however, the PK men sitting around me already seemed to be in a world with Jesus in it. I unexpectedly experienced a taste of this transcendence myself when at one point I needed to leave the small patch of ground where I was sitting and walked off, leaving my briefcase to mark the spot with nary a reflective twinge (a briefcase that contained, among other things, my billfold, my money, my credit cards, and my return plane ticket). It literally never occurred to me not to leave almost everything of value I had brought with me there on the ground in downtown Washington, D.C. amid strangers. And I am a seasoned urban dweller who took a PhD at the University of Southern California. Still, while the rally was underway, this did not seem especially remarkable. In fact, it did not occur to me until late that evening to check and see whether my belongings were intact. (They were.) Though my field is religion (social ethics) and not psychology, the best way I can describe what happened is that my consciousness was altered by the ethos of the event. I was not alone in experiencing this alteration. After the rally's conclusion, several men I interviewed indicated that they, too, had experienced a heightened sense of physical safety as well as a lack of concern over personal property during the day and were surprised by how natural it seemed at the time. Theoretically, I left with a new appreciation for Durkheim and his heirs whose ideas of group effervescence and the distinct viability of the social will figure more prominently in my future analytic work.

The Washington, D.C. Promise Keepers rally also was a revelatory moment in U.S. social-gender-race relations. On the problematic side, the event raised serious questions about the state of gender relations in the U.S. As one who has studied the Christian evangelical subculture

for years, I am aware of the extent to which gendered ministries permeate that subculture, and I consider it grossly unfair that the PK movement at times has been criticized as if it alone practiced gender separation. As those familiar with evangelicalism realize, women's participation in gendered ministries outnumbers men's participation by a factor of at least ten to one. Yet when the PK rally is considered against the backdrop of religious rallies and revivals that regularly mark religious life in the U.S., startling differences become evident (except for the early twentieth-century movement of Muscular Christianity which PK closely resembles). In the U.S., religious revivals typically have been designed around an appeal to individuals that cuts through traditional group alliances. At the Cane Ridge revival in 1801, for example, the combined presence of slave and free, women and men was deemed a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. By drawing upon the language of revival to describe their movement but limiting participation to men, PK leaders call attention to the disturbing divisiveness of gender issues in our time—so much so that even people who attribute wonders to the divine do not perceive the Holy Spirit as possessing the capacity to overcome it. On my return plane trip, one exultant PKer loudly proclaimed that he hoped the D. C. gathering would be repeated each year and serve as an annual Christian [Protestant] Mardi Gras. My response was to think how troubling it is that someone could envision an annual religious celebration devoid of the presence of women and not grasp the monumental exclusion and loss this entailed.

With regard to themes of liberation, the rally showcased some of the most fervent anti-racism speeches of recent times in a religious context. The complicity of white churches in American racism was denounced by speakers from the main podium, after which PKers were asked to confess their own racism and to pray for forgiveness for their participation in it. Attendance at the rally could be construed as reflecting this unusually inclusive stance on race; based on my own assessment, between 10 and 15 percent of those in attendance were people of color. When compared to the racial/ethnic composition of most religious groups in the U.S., the PK rally in Washington was quite possibly the most racially integrated religious event in modern times.

The claim by PK leaders that the Washington, D.C. rally was not a political event is disingenuous. It is true that no overt political statements were made from the platform. It is also the case that platform speakers encouraged those in attendance who had political agendas not to bring them up during the day. Yet the absence of overt political speech did not keep the rally from fulfilling an important political agenda. Siting the rally in Washington, D.C. on the mall made it a political event. The absence of explicit political speech at the PK rally simply made the event a blank political token that anyone could inscribe with meaning. And which group will most readily be able to inscribe this token as

representing its agenda? Might it not obviously be the Christian Coalition? Until PK leaders not only eschew political aims but overtly disavow any connection with the Christian Coalition, their activities will be construed as lending support to the New Christian Right. Beyond that, a Washington, D.C. rally by this or any organization *is* a political event, something PK's leaders should—to borrow their own terminology—confess.

Now the rally is over. I am back in my smallish assistant professor's office, teaching classes, grading papers, and negotiating for the funds necessary to get my taped interviews transcribed. While the media's cultural process of digesting the rally is nearly complete, it may be a year before I compose my definitive interpretation of what transpired, long after the event's "hotness" has faded away. The rhythms of knowledge associated with academic life are different from those of the public at large, and these fleeting reflections are merely a rippling hint of the later critical work which must follow.

ENDNOTES

[1] Brenda Brasher, *Godly Women: Fundamentalism and Female Power* (Rutgers University Press, 1998).

Field Notes: Radical Reorganization in the Church Universal and Triumphant

John M. Bozeman

Welcome to the second Nova Religio Field Notes column. With this issue, Jeffrey Kaplan assumes his new role as book review editor, and John Bozeman commences as the new Field Notes editor. We will continue the format set in the first issue and spend the first section of the column examining a particular theme or trend. Following this will be various notes, news, and announcements. Please send news and notices to John Bozeman, Department of Religious Studies, Cocke Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903, e-mail: jmb5b@virginia. edu.

The Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT) is perhaps one of the most significant, yet understudied, new religions in the United States. While drawing much of its theology and practice from mainstream Protestantism and Catholicism, the church also draws heavily from ideas found in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Gnosticism, Kabbalah, and Western metaphysical and esoteric traditions. The church is most closely related to Guy and Edna Ballard's "I AM Religious Activity"; it also shares a common ancestry with Theosophy, Christian Science, Divine Science, and the Unity School of Christianity. Since its founding in 1958, the church has grown considerably; CUT now claims some 233 congregations, about half of which are in the U. S. Most of the rest are located in Central and South America, Western Europe, and Western Canada, with a few more in Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Although the church does not release membership statistics, J. Gordon Melton has placed the number of adherents as of 1993 at between 30,000 and 50,000 (for a synopsis of the church's beliefs and past controversies see http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/nrms/cut.html; this site is maintained by sociologist Jeffrey Hadden).[1]

What draws our attention to the church in the present column is CUT's recent move toward a complete reorganization along a business model. In 1993 the leader of the group, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, and

her chief deputy, Edward Francis, became concerned that the church was becoming stagnant. These concerns were confirmed by the Ascended Masters, the spirit beings with whom Prophet is allegedly in contact. After a period of consultation during 1995, management expert and long-time CUT member Gilbert Cleirbaut was elected to the church's presidency in July 1996. Since then he has begun to implement a number of far-reaching changes within the organization. These include:

1. The separation of "spiritual leadership" from "executive leadership." The spiritual leadership is charged with proposing what the church needs to do to carry out its mission, while the executive branch is charged with determining how, when, where, and perhaps most fundamentally, *if* these goals will be carried out. Under the new system, Prophet is the Vicar of Christ and Chairman of CUT, while Cleirbaut is the President of the Executive Board.

2. An increased accountability of both leadership branches to the "customers." These customers include the rank-and-file church members as well as nonmembers who buy the church's literature and attend its seminars. In particular, church leaders have become aware that many of the church's members desire a "servant style of leadership" rather than an authoritarian style; members also wish for more trained ministers and missionaries in the field, along with a greater role for local congregations and a more clearly defined place for family life. Furthermore, church elders and board members are now to be elected democratically. The church is also becoming more committed to building up local congregational life worldwide and to providing a stronger focus on personal empowerment for members. A greater emphasis is to be given to the role of family and youth ministries, and a commitment has been made to produce more accessible, easy-to-read devotional literature. New church-style buildings containing chapels, community rooms, kitchens, and similar facilities are now being operated or are under construction in Livingston (Montana), Minneapolis, and Chicago. The church's important quarterly conferences are now held in places other than its Corwin Springs, Montana headquarters; recent conferences have been held in San Diego and Norfolk, Virginia. Future conferences will be held in San Antonio at the end of 1997, in Chicago at Easter, 1998, and in San Diego the following July.

3. A complete restructuring of the CUT organization. At the church's headquarters the staff is being downsized or, in the group's new management-oriented vocabulary, "right-sized," with some 35 departments being condensed down to four "core processes." Several large divisions, particularly the print shop and the construction department, have been eliminated; printing and construction are now

"outsourced" to external contractors. CUT's farming and ranching enterprises are also being subleased, and its on-site elementary school is being sharply reduced in size. However, persons whose jobs are being eliminated are generally leaving voluntarily to pursue other vocations, and it is hoped that some, perhaps many, will be able to serve as either spiritual or executive leaders in local congregations elsewhere. The salaries of the remaining staff are being increased.

4. The construction of a formidable telecommunications infrastructure. One particularly intriguing development is CUT's decision to take some of the money generated by the sale of construction equipment and to invest it in state-of-the-art computer and networking equipment. The church has placed considerable importance upon attendance at its quarterly conferences, which are often held at the Corwin Springs headquarters. However, in a move similar to the Latter-day Saints (i.e., the Mormons), efforts are now being made to provide a live audio link of the conference to local congregations worldwide. A live video link is to follow. Serious discussion is also underway about the possibility of providing real-time audio and perhaps video of conferences via personal computers equipped for audio and video streaming. The church now maintains an Internet web page (http://www.tsl.org). Furthermore, Prophet now has a weekly hour-long radio show, "Heart to Heart with Elizabeth Clare Prophet," episodes of which are archived on the church's web site. In addition, CUT now operates a cable TV ministry.

5. A move toward greater openness with regard to both members and the general public. In a policy decision that is somewhat unusual for a new religious movement, CUT has now adopted "open book management." This means that CUT is making its finances public; the church now releases annual financial statements which have much the same appearance as an annual corporate report. CUT is also cultivating better relationships with the local press and with environmental groups; the church has frequently drawn criticism for development plans that some felt could be disruptive to the wildlife and geothermal activity in nearby Yellowstone National Park. CUT has now offered to do a "land swap," allowing the church to consolidate some of its vast, undeveloped land holdings, while removing certain environmentally sensitive parcels of land from the prospect of development.

As Max Weber pointed out, charismatic religious groups eventually find themselves confronted with the need to adopt some degree of bureaucratic organization and institutionalization. Such steps are often taken reluctantly and, at least at the outset, on an ad hoc basis; often there is a fear among laity and clergy that rationalization will stifle religious inspiration and expression. The Church Universal and

Triumphant, however, has undertaken the process of institutionalization with unbridled enthusiasm. We thus have an intriguing situation: a large religious group voluntarily choosing to embrace formal bureaucratization along business lines, a move which was instigated by the group's prophetic figure and confirmed by revelations from the Ascended Masters. At the same time, this transformation is seen by members as making the group less authoritarian and more responsive to rank-and-file concerns. Perhaps we are witnessing what Weber once called the "transformation of charisma in an anti-authoritarian direction," even though Weber himself seems to have felt that populist movements generally oppose, rather than promote, economic and bureaucratic rationalization.[2] If so, we are seeing an instance in which institutionalization contributes to, rather than detracts from, charisma.

This institutional transformation is made doubly intriguing by the group's parent tradition and ancestry. CUT comes in large part from an esoteric tradition, which typically means that teachings are transmitted secretly to small groups of initiates rather than through large public congregations. Yet the church, already large, is hoping to take its message and make it truly popular with, as group literature suggests, "'Ascended Masters' [becoming] a household word."[3]

It will be interesting to see how and if CUT is able to carry out its vision and become the mainline New Age faith of the common person, accepted within American denominationalism. On the one hand, leaders within CUT seem to be aware of the difficulties that they face in bringing their vision to fruition. While their recent literature is upbeat, conversations suggest that they are well aware of the problems that schism or the passing of an inspired leader can bring. They are also aware that their group, at least as of the mid-1990s, was stagnating with regard to both membership and revenue growth—traditionally a bad sign for a new religious movement.

Yet CUT has also proven itself to be remarkably innovative and adaptable. The group's decision to adopt a business model explicitly patterned after a corporate turn-around—where a company with flagging growth and market share brings in new management to refocus and reinvigorate the enterprise around its core strengths, often spinning off money-losing divisions in the process—is extraordinary. While other religious groups have incorporated concepts drawn from the world of business (such as concern for customer satisfaction), few have done so with such thoroughness or openness.

The church's reorganization plan may also be interpreted as something of a symbolic acceptance of, and request for acceptance by, the American mainstream. In the past, the church felt that a nuclear war was a very real threat and to that end made its community as self-sufficient as possible. The group's strong intra-communal emphasis, weapons stockpile, and independent industrial, electrical, agricultural,

and educational facilities, however, became a cause for worry among neighbors and state officials. This, combined with allegations that the church was using high-pressure tactics to garner contributions, threatened to undermine the group's credibility. Recent changes within the church may be interpreted in part as a demonstration of an increased level of sensitivity to neighbors' concerns plus a greater willingness to share in the life—and the fate—of the American nation. Such a demonstration can only be welcomed by neighbors, as well as by national, state, and local officials.

It must be noted, however, that the current reorganization is not all there is to the church. CUT is significant in that it embodies, and to some extent reconciles, a number of (often unrecognized) themes found in the American psyche. These include elements of traditional Christian imagery, both Catholic and Protestant; pietism and devotionalism; continuing revelation; a firm but not extreme moral code; universalism; a doctrine of reincarnation; a strong emphasis on personal growth and self-transformation; and touches of popularized Theosophy and occultism. It is also led spiritually by Prophet, a woman who took over a small organization from her husband in 1973 and in twenty years turned it into a significant religious force. Indeed, if CUT's current restructuring "takes," we could be looking at the emergence of a new international faith of American origin, one which with time could prove to be as significant as the Mormons.

BRIEFLY NOTED:

UNIFICATION CHURCH WEDDING AND REORGANIZATION: On November 29, 1997, Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (better known as the Unification Church [UC], or sometimes simply as "the Moonies") held a Family Festival for World Peace, an event which included a mass wedding blessing for some 2500 Unificationist couples. The blessing took place in the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium in the Washington, D.C. area. Estimates of attendance ranged from 25,000 to 40,000 persons. While some of the persons who attended the ecumenical service were there to see a promised concert by singer Whitney Houston (who canceled at the last moment due to illness), many others were non-Unificationists wishing to reaffirm their marriage vows and to receive a blessing from Reverend Moon and from representatives of several other faiths. The participants vowed to reject both divorce and adultery; to teach their children "sexual purity" before marriage; to create marriages of "true love centered on God"; and to help build peace in both local communities and the world. Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan was among the speakers at the event.

In related news, the Unification Church appears to be reorganizing so that it can focus more on "True Family Values" and interfaith outreach. On November 24, 1997, the *Washington Post* reported in a front-page article that Rev. Moon now intends to disband the UC and to replace it with a new organization, the Family Foundation for World Peace and Unification. The goal of this new organization is to promote world peace, interfaith cooperation, and high moral standards, including fidelity within marriage, sexual purity, and "community welfare." Chris Corcoran, Public Affairs Director of the church, affirmed the basic veracity of this report in a telephone interview with the editor of this column, though Corcoran also expressed reservations about parts of the *Post* article. Corcoran states that the new organization will replace the old one. The Family Foundation is intended to be a pan-denominational, "supra-church" entity that will have more of an interdenominational and interreligious focus. Both groups, however, are expected to exist simultaneously, at least for a few years, as current UC members adjust to the new situation. The aim of the new organization, according to Corcoran, is not to secure converts, but rather to help associations form between like-minded groups. However, as the reorganization is only in the earliest stages at the present time, it is difficult to know exactly what form the new group will take. The UC representative also notes that while the adult membership of the church is stable, the group is experiencing a very high birth rate. More information about the Unification Church, the new Family Foundation, the Festival, and the wedding blessing can be found on various Unification web sites and links, including http://www.unification.org, http://www.unification.net, and http://tfvm.org.

ANTON LAVEY DIES: Anton Szandor Lavey, founder of the controversial Church of Satan, died on October 29, 1997. He was 67. Lavey is survived by longtime companion Blanche Barton, a high priestess in the church; by daughter Karla, also a high priestess; by a second estranged daughter, Zeena; and by a four-year-old son, Xerxes. According to the San Francisco medical examiner's office, Lavey died of pulmonary edema caused by a heart attack. A private funeral was held, after which his remains were cremated.

Prior to founding his religious organization, Lavey had worked as a circus lion-tamer, a police forensic photographer, an oboist, and a professional organist. Later known for his mordant sense of humor as well as for his unconventional religious activities, Lavey published a number of books, including the best-selling *Satanic Bible* and several musical and spoken-word records. He also played the Devil in the 1968 occult thriller, "Rosemary's Baby."

NEW WACO DOCUMENTARY RELEASED: Numerous attempts have been made to analyze and interpret the events that occurred at Waco, Texas, in April of 1993, when a standoff between a Branch Davidian sect and FBI agents ended in dozens of deaths. "Waco: The Rules of Engagement," directed by William Gazecki and produced by Dan Gifford, Amy Gifford, William Gazecki, and Michael McNulty, is a recent and very welcome addition to these efforts.

The makers of the film propose a thesis which has been voiced by other investigators: that the U. S. government created a problem where none really existed and then, as things began to go wrong, misled the public in order to save face. What sets this film apart, however, is the wealth of primary source material presented. Rather than relying primarily on brief sound bites and arm waving to make their points, the film's editors provide lengthy clips of congressional testimony; infrared footage from reconnaissance aircraft; telephone conversations with the Branch Davidians, including the 911 call to the police at the beginning of the raid; an interview with the local sheriff; and even home movies made inside Mount Carmel by sect members during the siege. Some attempt is also made to describe the beliefs and history of the Branch Davidian movement, including the link between the group and the Seventh-day Adventists.

"Waco: The Rules of Engagement" runs about two and one-half hours long. The film has won several awards, including the Independent Documentary Association Features Award. The work has recently been made available on video tape. For more information about the movie, theatrical showings, reviews, and ordering information, see http://www.waco93.com.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES:

Biennial Australian Historical Association Conference/Millennium Meeting—July 5-10, 1998. University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Information about conference registration, accommodations, and travel is posted at http://www.newcastle.edu.au/department/hi/mill/.

International Sociological Association (ISA)—July 26-Aug. 1, 1998. Montreal, Canada. The Research Committee on Sociology of Religion has scheduled a number of sessions on the sociology of religion. Information is posted at http://www.ucm.es/info/isa and at http://www.ucm.es/OTROS/isa/rc22c.htm.

Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR)—August 20-22, 1998. Holiday Inn Golden Gateway, San Francisco, California. For more information

contact Bryan Froehle, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. 20057. E-mail: froehleb@guvax.georgetown.edu; phone (202)687-8086; and fax (202)687-8083. Session proposals are due by Jan. 15, 1998, with abstracts due by February 15.

Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR)—September 10-12, 1998. Torino, Italy. This is CESNUR's 12th International Congress. Topics will deal mainly with new religious movements and other spiritual and philosophical minorities and their relations with public authorities, anti-cultists, mainline religions, and the press; the current status of magic, esoteric, and gnostic groups; and Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, and other non-Christian minorities in the West. Papers will be accepted in English, Italian, and French. Plenary sessions will be in English and Italian, with simultaneous translation. One-language workshops will take place in English, Italian, or French. Papers by faculty members, graduate students, and independent scholars are welcomed. Only proposals received by March 31, 1998 will be considered. For more information contact CESNUR, Via Juvarra 20, 10122 Torino, Italy. E-mail: cesnurto@tin.it; fax 011-39-11-539-563. For more information see web site http://web.tin.it/cesnur_org.

Communal Studies Association—October 8-10, 1998. Zoar Village State Memorial, Zoar, Ohio. This meeting will be the 25th annual CSA meeting and also mark the 100th anniversary of the dissolution of the Zoar Society. Paper proposals and author's biographical statement due April 15, 1998. For more information contact William Gates, Curator of History, Ohio Historical Society, 1982 Velma Ave., Columbus, OH 43211. Phone (614)297-2607 or (800)251-2492.

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion/Religious Research Association (SSSR/RRA)—November 6-8, 1998. Hotel du Parc, Montreal, Canada. SSSR session proposals and abstracts should be sent to Michele Dillon, Program Chair, Dept. of Sociology, P.O. Box 208265, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06520-8265. E-mail: michele.dillon@yale.edu; phone (203)432-3340; and fax (203)432-6976. RRA session proposals and abstracts are to be sent to Ken Bedell, RRA Program Chair, Center for the Study of Communications and Culture, St. Louis University, P.O. Box 56907, St. Louis, MO 63156-0907. Phone (after January 1) (314)977-7290. Proposals for both SSSR and RRA are due January 15, 1998, with paper abstracts due March 15, and completed papers due by September 15. Information is to be posted at http://fhss.byu.edu/soc/sssr/index.html.

American Academy of Religion (AAR)—November 21-24, 1998. Orlando, Florida. Information concerning the conference is posted at http://scholar.cc.emory.edu and http://www.aar-site.org.

ENDNOTES

[1] J. Gordon Melton, "The Church Universal and Triumphant: Its Heritage and Thoughtworld," in *Church Universal and Triumphant in Scholarly Perspective*, eds. James Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Stanford: Center for Academic Publication, 1994), 20.

[2] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, eds. and trans. A. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1964), 363-73, 386-92.

[3] Church Universal and Triumphant, *Portrait of an Organization in Transition: Business Plan/Annual Report* (Corwin Springs, MT: Church Universal and Triumphant, 1997), 9.

Book Reviews

The Sociology of Religious Movements. By William Sims Bainbridge. Routledge, 1997. 474 pages. $74.95 cloth. $24.95 paper.

This ambitious volume draws on diverse evidence to present an encompassing analysis of religious movements. Bainbridge focuses on movements in America and adroitly combines descriptive history with an analytical perspective informed by relative deprivation theory and Stark and Bainbridge's theory of religious compensators. Inevitably, the historical material is selective, but it is effectively deployed to illustrate distinctive variants among new religions. Bainbridge's categories are innovative. For example, under the heading of "the dynamics of schism," he brings together movements as diverse as Holiness and Adventism and religious communes such as the Shakers, Oneida, Zoar, and Harmony. Under "the dynamics of innovation," Bainbridge reviews imported Asian religions, beginning with the impact of the World Parliament of Religions. However, he pays greatest attention in this section to the Children of God and The Process Church of the Final Judgment—the subject of Bainbridge's earlier monograph. Given the density of the subject matter, this change of key between history and sociological analysis promises to make this work both accessible and stimulating to undergraduates who use it as a text.

It would be captious to complain about omissions when the inevitable condensation of historical evidence has been generally handled with skill and sensitivity. Still, despite an extensive bibliography, there is perhaps too much reliance on Charles Nordhoff's early account of communes, while references to more recent works, such as Karl Arendt on Harmony and Robert Fogarty on communes in general, are surprisingly lacking. Bainbridge attaches great weight to the experiences of the founders of religious movements, although it is worth noting that the biographies of movement recruits often differ greatly from those of their leaders. There is also a distinct difference in treatment: Mother Ann Lee of the Shakers suffers from lengthy reiteration of the allegations of her critics, while Sun Myung Moon escapes with little mention of the negative criticism he has garnered. Such considerations aside, this is clearly a book which sociologists of religion will need to read and re-read when seeking to explain the emergence of religious movements.

Bryan Wilson, All Souls College, Oxford University

America's Communal Utopias. Edited by Donald E. Pitzer. University of North Carolina Press, 1997. 537 pages. $60.00 cloth. $24.95 paper.

"Long awaited," too often a meaningless cliché, appropriately describes *America's Communal Utopias.* It is a compilation of clearly focused and well crafted essays by seventeen scholars of communal studies, each a foremost authority on their particular topic. Contributors include Jonathan Andelson, Lawrence Foster, Carl Guarneri, Robert V. Hine, Gertrude Huntington, and J. Gordon Melton.

No scholar is better qualified to edit this volume than Donald Pitzer. For over a quarter century he has developed associations with scholars and communalists, helped found and lead major national and international communal organizations, and visited countless functioning and historic communal sites. These essays explore Pitzer's concept of "developmental communalism." He contends that communal groups are not static but evolving entities, their impact often continuing on, albeit in different form, after formal communal aspects have disappeared. Some writers, among them Pitzer (New Harmony), Guarneri (Fourierists), and Robert F. Sutton (Icarians), more successfully fulfill the developmental communalism theme than others.

This brief review allows little room to comment on all the book's essays; most are excellent, none are poor. Several essays should hold particular interest to students of religious groups: Donald T. Durnbaugh skillfully portrays various Germanic communities of colonial America; Priscilla Brewer outlines the continuing Shaker experience; Dean L. May emphasizes communal aspects of Mormonism; Andelson brings insightful perceptions to the Amana colonies; Huntington relates the enduring Hutterite experience; Lawrence McCrank emphasizes traditional religious orders and monasticism; and Pearl Bartelt discusses various nineteenth-century Jewish communities. Other essays—such as James Landing's account of Koreshanity and Robert Weisbrot's discussion of the communal aspects of Father Divine's movement—concern short-lived, specific groups. Inevitably, not all possible groups are included, and much activity following the 1960s has been omitted.

Each chapter is followed by a pertinent chronology, endnotes, and a select bibliography. Pitzer concludes the volume with a general bibliographical essay and the most comprehensive listing of communal ventures available to date. The dedication honors the late Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., the founder of the "opening era of communal scholarship" (p. xxi). This reviewer would have preferred well-spaced maps, additional pictures, and a more inviting cover. However, these reservations do not lessen the value of a book that will quickly become essential to any student of communal movements.

Charles P. LeWarne, Edmonds, Washington

Congregation and Community. By Nancy Tatom Ammerman. Rutgers University Press, 1996. 434 pages. $24.00 paper.

In this monumental "sequel" to H. Paul Douglass's *Church in the Changing City* (1927), Nancy Tatom Ammerman and her team of researchers investigate the interaction between congregations and social change from 1970 to 1990. The twenty-three congregations (in nine communities) studied face a number of social changes, including the increasing visibility of gay and lesbian communities, new immigrant populations, economic restructuring, and suburbanization. The researchers examine each congregation across three organizational dimensions—resources, structures of authority, and culture—and discern four general strategies as responses to social change: persistence, relocation, adaptation, and innovation.

The book's researchers apply an ecological metaphor in studying congregations and their role in the local community's institutional infrastructure. The birth, resurgence, or decline of a congregation depends upon the congregation's response to social change and its use of the community's resources and organizations. As in other voluntary organizations, individuals serve as the primary resource for congregations. Thus, social capital—the skills and connections of individuals and the sense of trust and obligation embedded in webs of social relations—facilitates the coordination of resources among organizations and therefore becomes an important tool in developing strategies for survival and in creating new organizations that reshape the local community. That adaptive and innovative congregations replace dead and declining congregations in relatively equal proportion points to the vitality of the congregational ecology. In short, congregations provide a "space of sociability" that undergirds the dynamic and complex institutional infrastructure of modern communities (p. 354).

In the book's conclusion, Ammerman contests the claims made by social theorists who posit unilinear theories of modernization (e.g., traditional to modern) and bipolar visions of modern life (e.g., the rise of individualism versus the decline of community, progressive versus orthodox). Instead she asserts that everyday concerns, not the culture wars, remain the center of congregational life and that in spite of segmented social relations and individual choice, congregations foster commitment and encourage civic participation. In other words, the traditional and the modern, individualism and commitment, and concerns for social justice and a religious life exist synchronously. Congregations therefore function as "pockets of communal solidarity" in a modern society of "anonymous relationships and bureaucratic structures" (p. 363). Lastly, Ammerman reminds us that, as sacred places, congregations provide for the moral and spiritual integration of

their members and for the transformation of individuals and communities.

In this extensive study a wide range of communities, congregations, and social changes are represented in various combinations. I found especially interesting the complex conception of community that the researchers piece together as the study proceeds. I would have benefited, however, from a more comprehensive and coherent statement of that conceptualization. The study also suffers from an insufficient depth of analysis. For example, the authors' analysis of the social networks that support integrated congregations fails to account for contributions particular to racial groups. Rather, contributions of diverse racial groups in a congregation are lumped together, and any notion of diversity succumbs to generalization. These criticisms notwithstanding, this study is insightfully conceived, well organized, and accessible. It will interest nonacademics and become a staple in sociology of religion courses.

Jonathan Cordero, University of California, Santa Barbara

A Poisonous Cocktail? Aum Shinrikyo's Path to Violence. By Ian Reader. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 1996. 116 pages. n.p.

This book may seem surprisingly short for such a complex and puzzling topic, but Ian Reader deserves congratulations for losing no time in producing a well-documented, readable account of Aum Shinrikyo's descent into terrorism. In hindsight, we know that the death of twelve people from the effects of inhaling sarin gas in the Tokyo subway was only one twist in a vicious spiral of violence perpetrated against the movement's members, former members, opponents, and investigators between 1989 and 1995. The movement's leader, Shoko Asahara, is currently on trial (along with 104 accomplices) for his complicity in twenty-two murders as well as injuries to more than 6,000 people. Given the paucity of information about Asahara and his movement outside Japan (and Russia, where 30,000 members were allegedly recruited), Reader rightly gives priority to a detailed account of the movement's origins, developments, activities, and controversies. Yet there is also an underlying explanation of this movement's spectacular trajectory in terms of an "escalating cycle of conflicts and tensions [which] contributed greatly also to its own escalating cycle of violence" (p. 49). Comparisons with the disintegration of the Rajneesh commune in Oregon in the late 1980s and the violent implosion of the Japanese terrorist movement Rengo Sekigun in 1972 support Reader's argument up to a point. However, this comparative argument sits uneasily with his other claim that Asahara's apocalyptic prophecies meant that a cataclysm "had to

occur" because the movement "was locked into a scenario from which it had little way out" (p. 93). In other words, Reader's suggestion that Asahara was deliberately trying to provoke millennial mayhem in defense of his prophecies is demonstrably untrue in the cases of Rajneesh or Rengo Sekigun.

Some of Aum's leaders have already been convicted of serious criminal offenses, but Asahara's trial seems likely to last several years. Meanwhile, on a recent visit to Japan, I was surprised to discover that Aum is still recruiting new members in spite of being formally proscribed as a subversive organization. Thus, while his book is indispensable reading, Reader wisely acknowledges that we are a long way from hearing the last word on the Aum affair.

James A. Beckford, University of Warwick

Prime-Time Religion: An Encyclopedia of Religious Broadcasting. By J. Gordon Melton, Phillip Charles Lucas, and Jon R. Stone. Oryx Press, 1997. 413 pages. $76.75 cloth.

Lewis B. Whittmore, an associate pastor of Pittsburgh's Calvary Episcopal Church, was assigned to lead the evening vespers service to be broadcast on January 2, 1921. That he was assigned this role because radio broadcasting in general, and especially the broadcasting of religious services, were but "passing fads" is one of the ironies of modern religious history. Not only did this "fad" fail to pass, but, as this encyclopedic work demonstrates, religious broadcasting, whether by radio or television, became a pervasive religious force.

In a concise and masterful introduction, J. Gordon Melton briefly reviews the history of radio and television religious programming. Highlights of this history include the efforts of mainstream denominations to control fundamentalist churches' access to the airways and the role of academics in supporting these efforts. Free air time, called "sustaining time," yielded to commercial pressures that allowed the more fundamentalist and evangelical sects to purchase air time on independent networks and gradually to achieve an undisputed dominance of the airways. In an ironic turn, the free market economy allowed small religious groups successfully to oppose the censorship directed at them by the religious mainstream.

The encyclopedia contains 396 entries, most under a page in length. Included are the pioneer preachers, the most successful programs, and the major broadcasting companies. Each entry ends with a list of references. If the encyclopedia emphasizes white male Christians, it does so realistically, for such persons have dominated the airwaves. Yet also present are significant women and African-American preachers, Muslims, and Rosicrucians. Moreover, while much of the material is

from American television and radio, media production and distribution outside the United States is represented, as are influential non-American programs and personalities.

There is a wealth of information here—information necessary for research libraries and for all those concerned with the powerful role of telecommunications in the transmission and expression of the sacred. The criteria by which entries are selected include historical importance, range of impact, success in terms of longevity, and ministries that are exemplary of important dimensions of religious broadcasting. Eight appendices provide additional information. For instance, one is a listing of Christian colleges with programs in religious broadcasting. There is also a helpful index. From "Adib Eden Evangelistic Missionary Society" to "John Zoller," the reader is stimulated to pursue research into the wide range and scope of religious broadcasting. The editors have done an excellent job in creating a necessary and useful reference work, one that they intend to update with information on new ministries and developments in future editions.

Ralph W. Hood Jr., University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Radical Religion in America: Millenarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah. By Jeffrey Kaplan. Syracuse University Press, 1997. 245 pages. $16.95 paper.

Kaplan's book is a comparative study of four radical religions in America: Christian Identity, many of whose adherents believe that white Christians are the biblical Israelites, Jews are the offspring of Satan, and people of color are subhuman animals; Asatrú and Odinism, both reconstructions of Norse/Germanic paganism, with Ásatrúers opting for tolerant diversity and Odinists allying with National Socialism; and B'nai Noah (Children of Noah), who reject the divinity of Jesus, observe the seven Noachite commandments, and seek out the tutelage of rabbis. Kaplan also describes anti-cult movements (ACMs) and discusses the symbiotic relationships between the ACMs and these four religions.

The movements that are the focus of this study each embrace a form of millennialism. Christian Identity posits that we are living in the end-time tribulation predicted in the Bible. Thus, many Identity Christians withdraw to rural communities where they prepare to defend themselves from attack. A minority of Identity Christians have become terrorists waging war against people they believe represent ZOG (the Zionist Occupation Government), which is identified with the United States federal government. The Ásatrúers and the Odinists believe in Ragnarök, the Norse "twilight of the gods" battle myth. Ásatrúers claim that the Norse/Germanic gods went into eclipse as a result of Ragnarök, but that now they are progressively returning. Going one step further, the

Odinists advocate a solitary warrior ethic of violence against perceived enemies of the white race, especially Jews, and expect that the gods will be victorious in the second Ragnarök battle. The B'nai Noah have close ties with such messianic Jewish groups as the Lubavitchers and the Temple Institute in Jerusalem. According to Kaplan, the B'nai Noah see themselves as "at once a sign and an agent of the Last Days" (p. 106). However, Kaplan focuses more on the Identity Christians' fears of the B'nai Noah than on the latter's millennial beliefs.

Under the category of ACMs Kaplan includes watchdog groups that monitor the racist and anti-Semitic right, and he warns against the tendency of people in ACMs to demonize the groups they track. This stigmatization, he argues, results in the increased estrangement of these groups from mainstream society and increases the likelihood that only extremist personalities will convert to the despised groups. He warns that simplistic stereotypes promulgated about marginal groups do not accurately represent the diversity of views in any group; not all Identity Christians and Odinists, for example, are racists and anti-Semites. Kaplan points out that the covert tactics of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) have convinced Identity Christians that "the ADL—and Jewish power behind it—is a ubiquitous fact of their lives" (p. 149).

The author's great strength is his ability to discern and describe the humanity on both sides of highly polarized conflicts. He reminds us of the folly of demonizing people whose views we do not share and of the need to avoid mutual demonization through respectful face-to-face dialogue.

Throughout his book, Kaplan refers to Colin Campbell's "cultic milieu" concept and Martin Marty's "religious map" metaphor. However, he eschews the pejorative term "cult" in "cultic milieu" in order to avoid the pitfalls of oversimplification and demonization. Kaplan describes several instances where these milieus overlap and share personnel. Extending the metaphor of the religious map, we can say that there are numerous religious neighborhoods: some are adjacent or integrated with each other, while others are dispersed. Kaplan maps for us the connections between fundamentalist Protestant Christianity, Christian Identity, and the B'nai Noah. He also delineates the connections between the occult and neopagan movements, Ásatrú, and Odinism. Racism and anti-Semitism are the streets connecting Christian Identity and Odinism with other white supremacist groups.

Kaplan's book maps in detail a particular cluster of currently small religious neighborhoods in America. Though presently marginal and isolated, he suggests that they have the potential to grow and to extend their influence into America's larger religious culture.

Catherine Wessinger, Loyola University, New Orleans

America's Alternative Religions. Edited by Timothy Miller. State University of New York Press, 1995. 474 pages. $74.50 cloth. $24.95 paper.

America's Alternative Religions offers ample evidence that religious innovation has been a constant factor in American history and culture. Religion, after all, encourages creativity in its members, and alternative religions offer a viable outlet for the expression of this energy. If there is reason for alarm concerning alternative religions, it must be in response to particular groups at particular times. The generalized hostility towards religions outside the mainstream that has long characterized American society is unjustified.

The book's forty-three chapters are divided into seven categories: Established Christian Alternatives, Contemporary Christian and Jewish Movements, Religions from Asia, Religions from the Middle East, African-American Freedom Movements, Ancient Wisdom and New Age Movements, and "Many More," which includes an analysis of the anti-cult movement. Appendix I offers a bibliographic guide that includes additional alternative religions, and Appendix II lays out a chronology of founding dates and major events. In his helpful introduction, Timothy Miller outlines criteria for the selection of groups and the process of categorization. He reminds readers of the necessary fluidity of definitions and boundaries in the study of alternative religions: Dynamism is a central theme of this volume.

Most of the authors place an emphasis on history, belief, and identity issues and analyze the relationships that exist between alternative religions, larger religious bodies, and American society at large. The variety of categories insures that scholars whose work is focused in one discipline or primary historical context will be exposed to groups outside of their normal range. Thus, the book serves well as both an introduction to new religions and an additional resource for those already knowledgeable in the field. It is up to the reader to construct a larger framework for interpreting the place of alternative religions in American culture. The means for doing so are certainly available in this text.

Mary Farrell Bednarowski, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements. Edited by Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer. Routledge, 1997. 334 pages. $69.95 cloth. $18.95 paper.

This work is a diverse collection of case studies and theoretical essays that takes present-day apocalypticism (the religious sense that the end of this world is imminent) as its organizational focus. Case studies of

explicitly religious apocalyptic groups include Seventh-day Adventists, Mormons, Christian Reconstructionists, American Catholic apocalyptic groups, Baha'i, Branch Davidians (Waco), Christian Identity, Order of the Solar Temple, and Aum Shinrikyo. Also included are chapters on Earth First!, the militia movement, technology, and modernity as secular apocalyptic vehicles.

Robbins and Palmer have divided this eclectic assortment of essays into four sections: Theories of Apocalypticism, Secularizing the Millennium, Apocalypticism and the Churches, and Violence and Confrontation. In addition, they provide a brief introduction which furnishes the reader with essential background on apocalypticism and clarifies that the book is concerned with patterns of contemporary apocalypticism in North America.

With sixteen chapters and twenty-one authors, this volume's multivocal look at contemporary apocalyptic groups at times verges on a Tower of Babel experience. Like most academic specialties, apocalyptic studies has developed its own argot. In nearly every chapter, the author/s laudably take the time to define their terms. However, with the important exception of Catherine Wessinger's contribution, the definitions they pose vary from chapter to chapter without any accompanying explanation of whether the nuanced definition introduced represents an intentional or stylistic variation from the scholarly consensus. As a result, nonresearchers and nonspecialists may be somewhat confused by the cacophony of terms presented in these articles.

Though the chapters vary in quality, one of the better articles is Wessinger's "Millennialism With and Without the Mayhem," a relatively short, well-argued essay which offers an insightful criticism of Western biases that have marred scholarly efforts to understand apocalypticism. Examples include the insistence that apocalypticism is integrally tied to a linear view of history and an unwarranted focus on apocalypticism's manifestation in catastrophic groups (a bias which, ironically, is reproduced in the present volume). Drawing examples from Eastern and Western religious traditions, Wessinger demonstrates that a plethora of progressive and catastrophic millennialisms exist, and that both are "fully compatible with a cyclical view of time." Wessinger couples her critique of the systemic bias in traditional studies of apocalyptic movements with a poignant call—reminiscent of Jonathan Z. Smith's challenge for religious academics to provide viable analyses of Jonestown—to those studying apocalypticism to speak with greater clarity when addressing religious developments that involve the loss of human life.

One flaw in this volume is the acknowledged but inexcusable absence of case studies on African-American, Native American, and Jewish apocalyptic movements, and the equally inexcusable but unacknowledged absence of Mexican or Mexican-American apocalyptic groups in a book

that claims to be analyzing patterns of apocalyptic movements in North America. Another flaw is the inclusion of Susan Palmer's essay, "Woman as World Savior: The Feminization of the Millennium in New Religious Movements," under the book's secularization section. All Palmer's examples of women's leadership feature involvement in overtly religious groups. In categorizing the increasing number of women leaders in apocalyptic movements as a secularizing trend, Robbins and Palmer silently separate contemporary women's movements from a legitimate religious/spiritual basis—a move with which some contemporary scholars of religion, including all feminist theologians, would disagree. A less sexist and more useful approach would have been to place Palmer's essay under Section One, Theories of Apocalypticism. Furthermore, the article could have interpreted the historical male domination in apocalyptic groups as a patriarchal secularization of the millennium and suggested that increasing female involvement in apocalyptic movements is either a resacralization or a secularization of the millennium, depending upon which cultural paradigm is acknowledged as normative.

Brenda E. Brasher, Mount Union College

AIDS as an Apocalyptic Metaphor in North America. By Susan Palmer. University of Toronto Press, 1997. 199 pages. $18.95 paper.

Marginal and new religions offer their members protection from the threat of AIDS, according to sociologist Susan Palmer, but they are also likely to stigmatize People With AIDS (PWAs) with metaphors of pollution, disintegration, and apocalypse. In this book, Palmer surveys the range of creative religious responses to AIDS and the extent to which religious movements use the AIDS epidemic to clarify their sexual and racial boundaries.

Religious movements ranging from the Worldwide Church of God to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) respond to the dangers and disorders posed by AIDS by increased policing of sexual behavior. Palmer argues that mandatory AIDS testing and the threat of AIDS are used by religious leaders "to reinforce the particular sexual program of the community" (p. 69). Even religious movements advocating "free love" (Rajneesh movement, the Family) respond to AIDS by purifying their ranks and securing their boundaries against outsiders. Through group discourse about AIDS, the religious community is distinguished from the infected world. At the same time, however, parallels are drawn between the human body and the social body, which Palmer explains with the help of anthropologist Mary Douglas' theories of "body as symbol."

Palmer observes that conservative evangelical Protestants respond to AIDS by emphasizing body and community purity as well. In the evangelical subculture, however, purity is defined by monogamous, heterosexual marriage, rather than experimental sexual relationships. Premillennialist Christian leaders such as Louisiana evangelist Moody Adams warn that "AIDS is turning into an Apocalyptic Armageddon in our arteries as deadly and as prophetic as any battlefield weapon" (p. 25). For Adams and others, AIDS is a double-edged sword; it is deadly in that it poses a threat to all uninfected humans, but it also prophesies the end times—something to look toward with hope instead of fear.

While Palmer promises that her study of apocalyptic metaphors will reveal these religions' "deepest concerns," she devotes only one to five pages to each religious leader or community, raising more questions than she is able to answer. Many of the religions Palmer mentions are not apocalyptic and do not use AIDS metaphors as a strategy for boundary maintenance. She neglects to explain what they share beyond a religious response to AIDS, and her choice of religions seems arbitrary. For instance, a fascinating discussion of positive spiritual responses to AIDS—the Kashi ashram in Florida and gay "enspiritment" in San Francisco—is completely out of place in the book but merits closer analysis elsewhere. What Palmer's book suggests most convincingly is that religious responses to AIDS are ambiguous and contradictory. The disease can be salvific or satanic, bringing out the best—healing and nurturing—and the worst—demonization and exclusion—that religious communities have to offer.

Sarah Pike, California State University, Chico

American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity. By Paul K. Conkin. University of North Carolina Press, 1997. 336 pages. $55.00 cloth. $18.95 paper.

Sandwiched between less than nine pages of preface and an even briefer afterword, Paul Conkin offers six substantial chapters on what he considers to be the most significant (in terms of size and influence) "original forms of Christianity in America" (p. viii): Christians and Disciples, Unitarians and Universalists, Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Christian Science and Unity, and the Holiness and Pentecostal movements.

Each chapter is panoramic in scope—Conkin searches for possible precursors, relates the beginnings of each movement, discusses their key leaders, and quickly scans more contemporary developments. The history of each movement is written in a lively yet authoritative tone (it

has the feel of well-honed lectures) laced with Conkin's personal interpretations. The absence of footnotes both adds to the magisterial quality of the writing and precludes the interested student or critic from retracing Conkin's steps. Still, a reading guide of books that are considered both accessible and reliable does at least allow the interested reader to dig deeper. The criteria of accessibility, he explains, is why unpublished PhD dissertations are excluded, "even when they were very useful to me" (p. 53).

Conkin is correct in observing that "to write a book on American originals is to confront all manner of definitional and boundary problems" (p. vii). He defines "originals" as American Christian movements which have strayed from the path of European state church orthodoxy or that of their nonestablished transplanted cousins, all of which at least shared the doctrines of the Apostles Creed (pp. x-xi). In a sense, he understands these originals to mirror orthodoxy. They could not have emerged or sustained themselves without a received tradition over and against which to define themselves. Reaction against "Calvinism" (understood in various ways) and heterodox views of the Trinity are reoccurring themes among most of these groups. In the end, however, doctrinal distinctions fall short. These defining marks could just as easily describe the prominent mainstream liberal preacher Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969), who makes many Adventists and Pentecostals today appear quite orthodox in comparison (Oneness Pentecostals notwithstanding).

The preface and chapter headings—namely, restoration, humanistic, apocalyptic, Mormon, spiritual, and ecstatic Christianity—reduce each movement to one defining essence. If Conkin set out to create something akin to Weberian ideal types, he never reached his destination. While these categories may indeed serve as useful heuristic guides, the striking thing about the history of these movements is the complex way in which they overlap and act upon both each other and mainstream religious culture and society. The early Pentecostal movement is a case in point—it combines restorationist impulses and apocalyptic expectation with a new perspective on healing and its own ecstatic dynamic. This complexity is what makes the main chapters valuable fodder for thinking about the emergence of new religious movements in the American cultural context.

Douglas Milford, Wheaton College

Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería, Obeah, and the Caribbean. Edited by Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert. Rutgers University Press, 1997. 312 pages. $50.00 cloth. $17.95 paper.

Sacred Possessions examines neo-African religions of the Caribbean from comparative, socio-historical, and literary perspectives. It deserves to be read simply because it treats religions for which there is otherwise such a dearth of material.

Some chapters are superb. Dayan's opening chapter on Vodou, for example, is an excellent introduction to the religion and clearly outlines how Vodou changes in different social, economic, and political milieus. Barnet's chapter on Santería could be a core component of any world religions course because of how well it traces the connections between Yoruba religion and Santería. Delgado's photo essay on Santería is a beautiful complement to Barnet's chapter and presents similar ideas through photography.

On the other hand, chapters on Obeah and other traditions are so loaded with jargon that they obscure the religions they are meant to clarify and abruptly shift the focus of the book from Caribbean religions to *our views* of Caribbean religions. Ostensibly, the collection explores the cross-cultural dynamics of these religions, so the change of focus is appropriate; since these chapters are not overtly linked, however, and are not introduced separately, we must find their significance on our own. I am not convinced that readers unfamiliar with these issues would be able to do so.

This criticism aside, some of these essays, though not adding much to our understanding of Caribbean religions *per se*, make excellent "stand alone" chapters. For example, Paravisini-Gebert's analysis of film representations of women as zombies helps us understand how Hollywood has mediated our understandings of Vodou and co-opted its revolutionary political significance.

The last chapters of the book focus mostly on relationships between Caribbean women writers and neo-African religions. They range from interesting to misleading. To cite one example, Savory's article on Jean Rhys is thick with interesting literary analysis of Rhys' work, but thin in locating Rhys culturally and historically. Ironically, in a book that tries to break stereotypes, this paper furthers stereotypical images of Catholicism instead of presenting it, and Rhys' relation to it, in its full Caribbean complexity.

This book is at its weakest when it drifts inexplicably towards literary criticism and away from the religions themselves. It is similarly weakened when it tries to prove that neo-African religions are both authentically meaningful and different than their representations in past literature and pop culture. This thesis need not be proven, for it is writ large in

the neo-African religions themselves. Instead, the value of *Sacred Possessions* lies in telling us how these religions have made meaning and preserved the sacred for oppressed Caribbean populations.

Richard C. Salter, Indiana University Northwest

Entheogens and the Future of Religion. Edited by Robert Forte. Council on Spiritual Practices, 1997. 183 pages. $15.00 paper.

Literature about entheogens (substances that help bring about personal religious experiences, also known as psychedelics or, less accurately, hallucinogens) and the entheogenic religious experience suffers from a fundamental problem: you can approach the subject from any number of angles, but unless you have experienced entheogenic states yourself, you cannot fully understand it. Books on the topic thus inevitably fail to convey fully the phenomenon being written about. As R. Gordon Wasson asks in the volume at hand, "How do you tell a man born blind what seeing is like" (p. 40)?

That inherent limitation noted, this volume is an excellent compilation of writing about entheogens over the last several decades. Robert Jesse provides a concise description of the substances at issue, distinguishing them from more harmful drugs and framing the argument that the entheogen-assisted exploration of consciousness and spirit should be a constitutionally protected form of free exercise of religion. Albert Hofmann, the discoverer of LSD, writes engagingly of the ancient Eleusinian mysteries and of the entheogenic potion that seems to have engendered an experience deemed profound by reputable ancients. Hofmann also proposes that modern seekers after transcendental experience set up Eleusis-like centers as a step toward improving the condition of the contemporary world. Terence McKenna argues for the creation of a psychedelic society that would abandon belief systems in favor of direct religious experience.

The volume provides information on the life and work of Wasson, the pioneer of entheogenic mycology, as well as a lengthy interview with him. Thomas Riedlinger's essay presents an engaging comparison of Wasson's Mexican "mushroom experience" with Pentecostalism. Eric Sterling closes the volume with a spirited argument for freedom of religion that includes the freedom to experience entheogenic states. Several other chapters provide similarly useful descriptions and arguments. Most of the book's polemics and observations have been made before, and some of the articles are not of recent vintage.

In a society that ignorantly calumniates entheogens as "dangerous drugs," one hopes that this volume will help rationalize a discussion long overdue for serious consideration.

Timothy Miller, University of Kansas

Secrets of the Golden Dawn Cypher Manuscript. Deciphered and annotated by Carroll "Poke" Runyon. The Church of the Hermetic Sciences, 1997. 247 pages. $24.05 paper.

When Dr. Wynn Westcott took steps to found the influential Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1887, he claimed to be doing so on the basis of an occult manuscript in cipher which had come into his hands. Stories as to exactly how Wynn obtained the manuscript vary, as do theories about the origin of this mysterious text. This volume presents a facsimile reproduction of the text's 58 pages, a fully deciphered version in plain English with detailed commentary, and essays presenting Runyon's views on the origin and history of the manuscript, which he believes was composed around 1877 by the Masonic scholar Kenneth Mackenzie. The book also contains a foreword by Pat Zalewski and an afterword by R. A. Gilbert, both distinguished Golden Dawn scholars.

While *Secrets of the Golden Dawn Cypher Manuscript* will be of primary interest to specialists in the complex history of the Golden Dawn order, persons with a more general interest in Western occultism or in late-Victorian social history may find the historical chapters particularly significant. This elegant book is clearly a labor of love on the part of Carroll Runyon, who is himself the leader of a contemporary ceremonial magick order that falls broadly within the Golden Dawn tradition.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts. By Ali Kose. Kegan Paul International, 1996. 216 pages. $76.50 cloth.

This short work is based on an interview study of 70 native British converts to Islam. Kose begins with an introductory chapter on the history of Islam in Great Britain. He then examines the phenomenon of conversion to Islam in chapters dealing with factors leading to conversion, the actual conversion experience, and the post-conversion adjustment. The book concludes with chapters on Sufism in England and the author's final observations.

Kose structures each chapter in a similar way: first, he gives a summary of the general literature and theory regarding a particular aspect of the

conversion process; next, he presents the findings of his survey as they relate to the aspect of conversion under consideration; and finally, he discusses how the findings of the study compare to general theories of conversion.

Given the small size of the sample (70), Kose's work has limited validity as a social-scientific study. However, the introductions to the book's three main chapters (on pre-conversion influences, the conversion experience, and post-conversion adjustment) offer excellent summaries of current work in these important areas. In addition, the many anecdotal accounts of the experiences of British Muslim converts provide insight into the conversion process that statistics generated from a survey cannot convey.

Most significantly, Kose presents a strong argument for recognizing that religious conversion is a complicated phenomenon which cannot be explained by reductionistic models of personal and/or social stress and dysfunction. Kose argues, for instance, that the nature of the conversion process varies significantly depending upon the type of religion to which the individual is converting. Much of the literature on conversion focuses on the individual's conversion to new religious movements and portrays the convert as in some sense "driven" to convert by various social and psychological factors. Kose contends that conversion to Islam (and, by implication, to other traditional religions) is an intentional, cognitive act which the individual typically chooses after a long process of testing and deliberation. The converts interviewed by Kose tended to be socially and psychologically healthy individuals whose decision to convert was more the result of their disillusionment with secularized Western culture than any sort of psycho-social pathology.

This is a very useful book for graduate students and scholars in Islamic studies and the sociology of religion.

George Adams, Susquehanna University

Mormon Identities in Transition. Edited by Douglas J. Davies. Cassell, 1997. 246 pages. $55.00 cloth.

Mormon Identities in Transition provides readers with a broad array of essays examining various components of historical and contemporary boundaries and identities in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The work is an edited collection of presentations from an academic conference on Mormon Studies (University of Nottingham, 1995) and joins works on theology, world religions, and the sociology of religion in Cassell's religious studies series.

An excellent opening piece by Armand Mauss expands upon his earlier examination (using rational choice theory) of the construction

of Mormon identity in the face of widespread international evangelical success. Chapters by Holman on factors influencing mate selection among Latter-day Saints and by Underwood on the evolution and peculiarities of Mormon millennialism will interest both sociologists and religious studies scholars of Mormonism. Also of interest to sociologists are chapters by Christie Davies on the importance of Mormon food proscriptions for boundary maintenance; by Knowlton on the socioeconomic status of Mormon converts in Chile; by Judd on Mormonism and mental health; and by Douglas Davies on Mormonism and magic.

Contributions of interest to Mormon Studies scholars include Embry's examination of "place" mediation for ethnic Americans in Mormonism, Thorp's analysis of childhood in Britain as portrayed in early nineteenth-century Mormon sources, and Hammarberg's discussion of Mormon disciplinary councils and excommunication as boundary-maintaining instruments. Chadwick and Garrett's study of Mormon women's responses to the prophetic prohibition of wage labor participation and Whittaker's outline of Mormon Studies source materials are other articles of note.

Chapters by Lebaron, Keller, and Thomas may prove less useful to scholars. These pieces—on the successes and challenges of Mormon evangelism (Lebaron and Keller) and on the foretelling of the restoration of Mormonism by the English Romantics (Thomas)—presume the truth of Mormonism in a way that renders the discussions and their conclusions dubious to those not among Mormonism's faithful. Thomas, for example, explains that English Romantics were "unquestionably inspired" to poetic prediction of the "restoration which Mormonism proclaims to the world" (p. 152-53) and Lebaron extols Africa's "latter-day pioneers" who "add strength and testimony to the church as the gospel is spread to every nation, kindred, tongue and people" (p. 86).

The essays in *Mormon Identities in Transition* range in content and approach from sociological to testimonial. The work sets as its explicit goal to examine Mormon identities. While never abandoning that goal, the essays at times seem more to profess than to explicate. Though the book contains several chapters that provide important contributions to Mormon Studies, its articles often become mired in discussion irrelevant to any but the most dedicated Mormon Studies enthusiasts. Further, the book at times seems unsure of its intended audience. As a result, it may fully satisfy neither the scholar nor the saint.

Laura Vance, Georgia Southwestern State University

The End of Time: Religion, Ritual, and the Forging of the Soul. By Richard K. Fenn. The Pilgrim Press, 1997. 256 pages. $24.95 paper.

Time—does it have a life of its own? Does it exist independently of the human mind, which uses it to locate and measure the duration of events? Is time fungible? Is it like Franklin's penny in that a unit saved is a unit earned? Richard K. Fenn, in *The End Of Time: Religion, Ritual, and the Forging of the Soul,* puts forth a complex scheme of arguments that answers all of the above questions affirmatively. According to Fenn, "time is the matrix of social life," meaning that time gives social life its shape and form. He argues further that "Societies and individuals are always running out of time," creating panic whenever external or internal influences threaten survival, continuity, or individual or national integrity. Fascist movements, Fenn contends, arise from and exploit this social panic over running out of time.

The author believes that through the use of rituals, societies are able to "buy time" by manufacturing moments that endure. He writes that "ritual is a device for making all members of society, living and dead, present to each other." Four rituals are described: (1) rituals that transform individuals from one status to another—i.e., child to adult, single to married; (2) rituals that avert or forestall imminent danger; (3) rituals that remove disruptive influences from the social order; and (4) rituals that restore the solidarity of a people by reviving a sense of continuity with their past. Fenn argues that rituals of transformation "guarantee the future," rituals of aversion "buy time," rituals of purification "renew time," and rituals of restoration "make up for lost time." When these rituals fail, fascist movements result. To validate this view, a disparate grouping of historical and contemporary movements are gathered under the umbrella of fascism and presented as documentation. David Koresh, the Hitler Movement, the Free Spirits, the militias, the Christian Coalition, and Billy Graham all serve parallel functions in Fenn's comparative perspective.

Fenn believes that fundamentalist and evangelical Christians are "anxious about the future of the Christian community and are thus obsessed with time." He views a millennial religious movement as a social means to escape severely intense time pressures and warns that fundamentalists, in their effort to achieve a radically new future, may "spill their anxiety about time into the mainstream of American society sufficiently to unleash fascist impulses."

It is no small error to interpret culture in terms of time and ritual instead of viewing time and ritual in terms of culture. Neither time nor ritual has been perceived the same historically or cross-culturally. The concept of past, present, and future time has not always been universal, even in so-called advanced societies.

In his arguments and his conclusions, Fenn leaves unseen and unexplored much of recent human history. Unexplained, for example, are the fascisms of the radical left and of Communism. Government agencies regularly violate citizens' personal and property rights without accountability. Totalitarian leaders such as Hitler, Lenin, and Stalin sought to transform their societies and create a radically new future through control of government, church, and academia. Millennial movements of both the right and left are arguably pursuing the same agenda in the contemporary world.

Christina M. Lemieux, Kutztown University

Dissonant Worlds: Roger Vandersteene Among the Cree. By Earle H. Waugh. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997. 360 pages. $39.95 Cloth.

Dissonant Worlds is a careful account of Flemish priest Roger Vandersteene (Oblates of Mary Immaculate), who spent the last thirty years of his life among the Cree people of northern Alberta. The portrait that emerges is of an energetic and colorful priest, "a kind of religious Ernest Hemingway," who sympathized with the Germans in World War II (in the hope of Flemish independence), left Belgium for Canada against his family's will, enjoyed sparring with authority figures, and immersed himself in Cree culture so that a Cree Catholic Church could be born. The missionary is also described as a gifted poet, an artist, a horticulturist, and "Christ's Sorcerer."

Vandersteene opposed Cree assimilation into Canadian culture and thus many policies of the Canadian government and church. He eventually became more opposed to assimilation than most of the Cree people he sought to protect. Vandersteene's vision did not become a reality, but he helped foster a deeper appreciation of Cree culture and had a significant influence on Canadian/Indian relations.

Most of Waugh's book is in narrative form and includes well-researched chapters on Vandersteene's Flemish background and family, his departure from his homeland, and his life among the Cree. Waugh also includes twenty-one of Vandersteene's paintings (one is on the front of the book jacket) and many of his poems. Four appendices offer a chronology of Vandersteene's life, testimonies from close acquaintances, an ode to him written by a friend, and the names of the author's informants.

In a "Theoretical Epilogue," Waugh analyzes Vandersteene's life and work and interprets him as an agent of interstitial religion. Such religion exists "when the old forms, that is, European Christianity, are seen to be unable to carry the message, and before the proposed modifications have formulated a new and recognizably different religious expression."

Dissonant Worlds is a thorough and readable study of one man's noble attempt to relate two cultures for the sake of Christian mission.

Paul F. Blankenship, Memphis Theological Seminary

The Work of Their Hands: Mennonite Women's Societies in Canada. By Gloria Neufeld Redekop. Vol. 2, Studies in Women and Religion. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996. 172 pages. $24.95 paper.

This well-documented book helps to uncover the women's societies of two Russian Mennonite Conferences in Canada—the Conference of Mennonites in Canada and the Canadian Mennonite Brethren. It joins a growing body of literature that speaks to the primary place of religion in the experience of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Canadian women.

Redekop examines the religious experiences of ordinary church women, whom she finds led a dual religious life: "[T]here was a life within the institutional church, predominantly male controlled, and another life within the context of women's societies" (p. 18). She tells the story of these societies in four parts: "Background and Precedents," "Emergence and Establishment: 1874-1952," "Growth and Development: 1953-1969," and "Change and Decline: 1970-1995." This reviewer found of particular interest the European background of the societies and the centrality of Vereine to their early growth in Canada.

In general, the narrative is an account of the struggle for a voice in the church, a struggle that ultimately meets the mid-twentieth century women's movement with some ambiguity. Ironically, as change and decline begin to mark the struggle during the 1970s and 1980s, "the institutional church made a greater effort than they had in the past to acknowledge the work of Mennonite women's societies" (p. 99).

A brief review can not adequately convey the rich and rewarding content of this book. In addition to her research in scholarly works and archival sources, Redekop utilized a questionnaire, a copy of which appears in the appendix. A more than satisfactory return of these forms enabled her to put human faces on her narrative and to fulfill her intent to "tell the story of Mennonite women's societies from the point of view of Mennonite women."

Doris Pieroth, Seattle, Washington

Finding the God of Noah: The Spiritual Journey of a Baptist Minister From Christianity to the Laws of Noah. By J. David Davis. KTAV Publishing, 1997. 224 pages. $25.00 cloth.

Finding the God of Noah is a spiritual biography that fits comfortably into the vast literature of religious conversion. The book, as the subtitle indicates, chronicles the gradual transformation of an evangelical Baptist preacher and his followers in a small Tennessee town into the core leadership of a new religious movement, the B'nai Noah (the Children of Noah).

Scholars will be somewhat disappointed in the book's lack of theological depth. The B'nai Noah—a group of Gentiles determined to follow the precepts of the Noachian covenant under the guidance of Orthodox Jewish rabbis—see themselves as the spiritual heirs of the God Fearers, a sect of Gentile followers of Jewish teachings who may have existed in the second century C.E. B'nai Noah theology is deceptively simple. Members take upon themselves the obligation of obedience to the Seven Laws of Noah (establish courts of justice and avoid blasphemy, idolatry, sexual sins, murder, theft, and eating the limb of a living creature). However, a study of the religious instruction in Torah and Talmud given to the Noachians by learned rabbis coupled with the scholarly insights of James Tabor reveal that the evolving theology of the B'nai Noah is considerably more complex than these simple commandments would suggest. The book alludes to this complexity only in passing (pp. 200-203). In addition, *Finding the God of Noah* offers too little information on the connections the movement has forged with the Sephardi half of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate, with the Third Temple movement, and with the Jewish Settlement movement.

Having said this, however, the text's primary strength tends to outweigh these problems. *Finding the God of Noah* provides the record of a fascinating spiritual journey in which an evangelical Baptist minister and his congregation began to question such central dogmas of Christianity as the Virgin Birth and the divinity of Jesus. Following the logic of their study, the nascent movement began a quest for the historical Jesus which resulted in the conclusion that Jesus was a Jewish spiritual leader and reformer upon whom "divinity" was posthumously thrust. The book chronicles the powerful local opposition that these teachings aroused. Given these pressures, the original Athens, Tennessee congregation dwindled—an exodus that was hastened when an article in the *Wall Street Journal* shined a national spotlight on the B'nai Noah. The publicity spurred national interest in the movement, but at the cost of mobilizing anti-cult opposition.

Finding the God of Noah ends on a note that many fledgling religious communities would find familiar—the dearth of marriage partners for

the faithful from within the community, making hopes for the institutionalization of the B'nai Noah through natural increase distant at best.

Jeffrey Kaplan, Ilisagvik College

New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought. By Wouter J. Hanegraaff. State University of New York Press, 1997. 593 pages. $24.95 paper.

The author, currently a Research Fellow at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, is an accomplished young scholar in the field loosely called "esotericism." This book was developed out of his doctoral thesis, written under the supervision of Antoine Faivre and others. Faivre, a professor at the Sorbonne, is the doyen of esoteric studies and has labored to make this field academically acceptable. While Faivre has delineated, defined, summarized, and bibliographed the subfields of esotericism (especially Hermeticism and theosophy), Hanegraaff has taken on the equally daunting task of proving that the New Age movement is also a valid object of academic study. The first requirement of this proof is a clear definition of what the movement is. The New Age movement, however, has proven both protean and slippery for scholars who have attempted to interpret it.

Hanegraaff has read a wide cross section of Anglo-American material, supplemented by Dutch, German, and French writings. Part One describes the "major trends in New Age religion" by way of fifty representative sources. This is very welcome to those who balk at actually reading the books of Edgar Cayce, Ken Wilber, Fritjof Capra, Shirley MacLaine, Matthew Fox, and the rest, but who want a fair and critical summary of what they are about. Part Two is an attempt at doctrinal definition, with chapters on topics such as the mind, the past, the future, good and evil, death and survival, and divine beings, as seen through the writings of various New Age teachers and groups. Naturally, there is no single doctrine here, but certain constants, which Hanegraaff extracts and discusses with all the advantages of his philosophical and theological training, recur. This prepares for Part Three, the most ambitious and original section, which relates the New Age to traditional esotericism. Paying generous respect to the few scholars who have worked in this field, Hanegraaff uncovers the historical and doctrinal roots of the New Age movement. He shows that they lie in a perennial underground current of Western culture, which has given rise in the past to the work of Swedenborg, to nineteenth-century occultism and spiritualism, to

Boehmian theosophy and the Theosophical Society, to elements of Carl Jung's thought, and to much more.

Just as Faivre has defined esotericism on several occasions (e.g. in *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*) as manifesting four intrinsic and two frequent components, so Hanegraaff gives five skeletonic constituents of New Age religion. They are: (1) this-worldliness, generally of the "weak" variety (i.e., not denying other realities); (2) holism; (3) evolutionism; (4) the psychologization of religion and the sacralization of psychology; and (5) expectations of a coming New Age. Hanegraaff admits that these "are extremely vague and general umbrella terms . . . insufficient for defining *any* concrete historical movement" (p. 366). But they are sufficient to mark the fences that divide New Age religion from the Christianity of the churches, from various other forms of esotericism, and from what the world knows as "the cults."

Hanegraaff's conclusion is encapsulated in the book's subtitle. Here is one of his explanatory glosses on it:

> All New Age religion is characterized by the fact that it expresses its criticism of modern western culture by presenting alternatives derived from a secularized esotericism. It adopts from traditional esotericism an emphasis on the primacy of personal religious experience and on this-worldly types of holism (as alternatives to dualism and reductionism), but generally reinterprets esoteric tenets from secularized perspectives. Since the new elements of "causality," the study of religions, evolutionism, and psychology are fundamental components, New Age religion cannot be characterized as a return to pre-Enlightenment worldviews, but is to be seen as a qualitatively new syncretism of esoteric and secular elements. Paradoxically, New Age criticism of modern western culture is expressed to a considerable extent on the premises of that same culture (pp. 520-21).

Still endemic to academia is the belief that anything "irrational" is "regressive" to the state of humanity before the so-called Enlightenment. Hanegraaff, writing with an eye to his colleagues, has to address the widespread academic naiveté and prejudices with regard to his subject matter, both of which stem from the conviction that such things as occultism and the New Age are not worth serious study. He has to pacify the theologians on the one side and the secularists on the other, both of whom have reason to dislike the New Age intensely. His determination to make a "scientific" study sometimes leads to ponderous and over-abstract writing. But his straight-faced presentation of New Agers does not prevent the reader from perceiving the comedy inherent in much of this subject matter.

After reading Hanegraaff's book, it is clear that the New Age is indeed a religion, though one without dogma, scripture, clergy, or buildings. It is a thoroughly exoteric religion, liberal and credulous at the same time, resting neither on the hard-won principles of rationalism nor on the

metaphysical foundations of esotericism. The dominant gene in its ancestry descends through Blavatskian Theosophy—a blend of up-to-date science, ancient occultism, and one-world aspirations. The combination of ancient and modern modes of thought and belief is not new by any means. We have seen it in the Rosicrucians, in Mesmer, in the "occult chemistry" of Besant and Leadbeater, and now in an entity such as Ramtha, who uses the channel of J. Z. Knight to explain quantum physics. Only the popularity of the larger movement is cyclical, which makes it seem new to every generation. As the first great synthetic overview of the movement as it flourished in the 1970s and 1980s, Hanegraaff's book comes at exactly the right moment,.

Looking to the future, the movement that Hanegraaff describes is already transforming itself in response to the coming Millennium. This transformation will need a fresh chronicle once the trauma is laid to rest. But the work he has done here will not need to be done again. To achieve so much with one's doctoral thesis is phenomenal and presages an influential international career to come.

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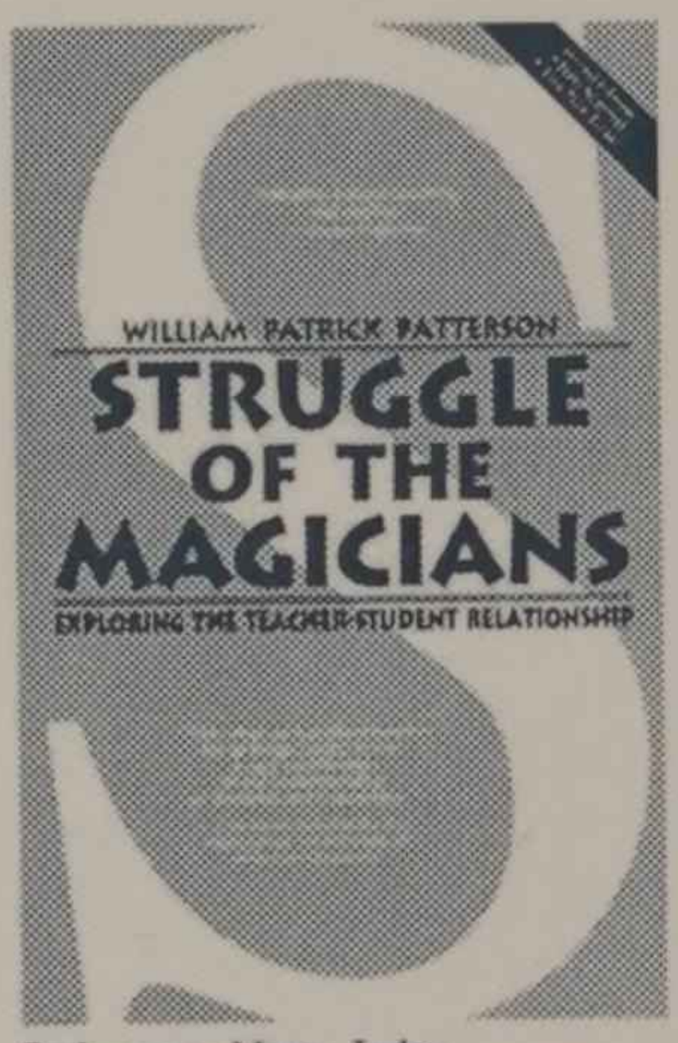
Struggle of the Magicians

Exploring the Teacher-Student Relationship

by **William Patrick Patterson**



References, Notes, Index
$19.95 354 pp. 5.5" x 8.5"
ISBN: 1-879514-02-8

Of all relationships, that between teacher and student is the most mysterious, most rewarding. That between Gurdjieff and Uspenskii, two of the seminal spiritual figures of the twentieth century, was titanic, archetypal. By closely observing their interaction, we come to understand the pattern of discoveries, resistances and rebellions—the deep inner and outer struggle that marks every teacher-student relationship, whatever the path.

How and why a student of Uspenskii's caliber broke with his teacher, his slow descent, but ultimate breakthrough, offers a deep and profound study that reveals the defining moments and trigger events intrinsic to the process of transformation. The material here, much of it new and drawn from original sources, published and unpublished, along with the author's insights and original reading of documents, provides a new and revolutionary dimension to the understanding of Gurdjieff, Uspenskii and Fourth Way work. Δ

• "Yes, what an excellent book—full of things I didn't know. A real contribution to our understanding of Gurdjieff and Uspenskii."

—Colin Wilson, author, *The War Against Sleep*

• "*Struggle of the Magicians* will fascinate anyone interested in the Fourth Way. I could hardly put it down."

—Charles T. Tart, Ph.D., Prof. Psychology, UC Davis; author, *Waking Up*

• "*Struggle of the Magicians* is an important contribution to the history of alternative spirituality in the West. The tension between the richly contrasting personalities of Gurdjieff and Uspenskii is a cameo of the problems with which the personal transformation tradition has had to contend, while at the same time their story illumines in real life context the powerful vistas its visions have opened. It is the finely-told chronicle of a classic event in occult history, set against the backdrop of overwhelmingly dramatic historical events, effectively set into the narrative as datelines.

"For many of us, Gurdjieff and Uspenskii have remained mysteriously attractive but dauntingly difficult to grasp. *Struggle of the Magicians* is a hard to put down exception to much of the literature available about Gurdjieff, presenting his life and work almost like a play against the panoramic backdrop of his turbulent times, from World War I and the Russian Revolution through World War II."

—Robert Ellwood, Chairman, Department of Religion, USC

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Email: telos9@aol.com Fax: (510) 848-0159
Distributors: Bookpeople, New Leaf, Partners, Baker & Taylor

Write for a free issue of Telos, The Quarterly of The Fourth Way

ISSN: 1092-6690

Printed on recycled paper