NOVA RELIGIO

The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions

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va Religio Symposium

Academic Integrity and the Study of New Religious Movements

Timothy Miller — *Introduction*

Massimo Introvigne — *Blacklisting or Greenlisting? A European Perspective on the New Cult Wars*

Thomas Robbins — *Objectivity, Advocacy, and Animosity*

James T. Richardson — *The Accidental Expert*

Stephen A. Kent and Theresa Krebs — *Academic Compromise in the Social Scientific Study of Alternative Religions*

Sandra Bell — *"Crazy Wisdom," Charisma, and the Transmission of Buddhism in the United States*

John F. Simmons — *The Forgotten Contribution of Annie Rix Militz to the Unity School of Christianity*

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Brian Britt — *Snapshots of Tradition: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Georgia*

John Bozeman — *Field Notes: The Family/Children of God Under the Love Charter*

Book Reviews and Book Notes

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Nova Religio Symposium:

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8 *Introduction*
TIMOTHY MILLER

16 *Blacklisting or Greenlisting? A European Perspective on the New Cult Wars*
MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

24 *Objectivity, Advocacy, and Animosity*
THOMAS ROBBINS

31 *The Accidental Expert*
JAMES T. RICHARDSON

44 *Academic Compromise in the Social Scientific Study of Alternative Religions*
STEPHEN A. KENT AND THERESA KREBS

Articles

55 *"Crazy Wisdom," Charisma, and the Transmission of Buddhism in the United States*
SANDRA BELL

76 *The Forgotten Contribution of Annie Rix Militz to the Unity School of Christianity*
JOHN K. SIMMONS

93 *Law and Minority Religions: "Positive" and "Negative" Uses of the Legal System*
JAMES T. RICHARDSON

108 *Snapshots of Tradition: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Georgia*
BRIAN BRITT

Field Notes

126 *The Family/Children of God Under the Love Charter*
JOHN M. BOZEMAN

Book Reviews

136 Gil Alexander-Moegerle, *James Dobson's War on America*
PETER J. HERZ

137 Norbert C. Brockman, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Places*
JOEL GEFFEN

140 Don Cupitt, *Mysticism after Modernity*
GEORGE ADAMS

142 Manfred Ernst, *The Role of Social Change in the Rise and Development of New Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands*
KLAUS HOCK

144 Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau, eds., *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*
JOHN O. HEDGES

145 Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam*
STEPHEN D. GLAZIER

147 John George and Laird Wilcox, *American Extremists, Militias, Supremacists, Klansmen, Communists, and Others*
LIN COLLETTE

148 Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler's Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth, and Occult Neo-Nazism*
JEFFREY KAPLAN

150 R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission*
BRENDA E. BRASHER

150 Rosalind I. J. Hackett, *Art and Religion in Africa*
REBECCA POWERS

151 Jean Holm and John Bowker, eds., *Women in Religion*
LYNDA SEXSEN

152 Timothy J. Knab, *A War of Witches*
JOEL GEFFEN

154 Maureen Korp, *Sacred Art of the Earth: Ancient and Contemporary Earthworks*
SEAN M. CONNORS

155 Gopi Krishna, *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man*
SCOTT LOWE

156 Robert Hinshaw, trans., *Talking with Angels*
LÁSZLÓ KÜRTI

158 Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium*
EUGENE V. GALLAGHER

159 Mark L. Mirabello, *The Odin Brotherhood: A True Account of a Dialogue with a Mysterious Fraternity*
SARAH PIKE

160 David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images*
LYNDA SEXSON

161 Jacob Needleman and George Baker, eds., *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching*
GEORGE ADAMS

163 Michael Niman, *People of the Rainbow: A Nomadic Utopia*
CHRISTINA M. LEMIEUX

164 Kerry Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate*
JEFFREY KAPLAN

166 Paul David Numrich, *Old Wisdom in the New World: Americanization in Two Immigrant Theravada Buddhist Temples*
CHRISTOPHER KEY CHAPPLE

167 Elizabeth Puttick, *Women in New Religions: In Search of Community, Sexuality, and Spiritual Power*
WENDY E. CHMIELEWSKI

169 Ane Marie Bak Rasmussen, *Modern African Spirituality: The Independent Holy Spirit Churches in East Africa, 1902-1976*
H. CHRISSIE STEYNE

Nova Religio Symposium:

Academic Integrity and the Study of New Religious Movements

Introduction

Timothy Miller

For the last two or three decades new and alternative religions have been at the center of heated controversy in the United States as various advocates have debated the desirability of curbing the operations of leaders and organizations that, many believe, have abused their followers and constitute a real threat to society.

This controversy has spread to the scholarly community that studies this relatively small byway in American religious life. The majority of the scholars involved in the debate have concluded that the fears and impressions prevalent among the general public and worried parents of "cult" members are overblown; their research has tended to debunk the widely held perception that many alternative religions engage in brainwashing and mind control, leading them to conclude that, although abuses do occur in some specific situations, by and large the alternative movements are, if unorthodox, worthy of the general protection of the First Amendment enjoyed by larger, more accepted faiths. Other scholars, however, have come to very different conclusions and argue that something like mind control *does* exist at least occasionally and that significant numbers of the nonconforming contemporary movements in question do present a real threat to the public. Both camps have among their adherents goodly numbers of social activists—defenders of nonmainstream movements against their critics, on the one hand, and, on the other, critics whose courses of action range from purely rhetorical combat to advocacy of forcible intervention, deprogramming, and legal restrictions on the activities of nonmainstream groups deemed abusive or otherwise unacceptable.

This still-new journal has quickly been drawn into the scholarly fray. Central to the ongoing controversy has been the debate over brainwashing/mind control, and, in a two-part article published in *Nova*

Religio's two previous issues, a proponent of the mind-control hypothesis not only argued that brainwashing does exist, but accused the academic majority—nonbelievers in the brainwashing model—of closing the debate prematurely, of actually shutting the minority point of view out of a fair hearing.[1] For some time scholars have also debated the propriety of receiving support, compensation, or favors from groups being studied. As long ago as 1978, Irving Louis Horowitz fired a major salvo, contending that scholars who accepted free travel to conferences sponsored by the Unification Church were unwittingly legitimating the work of Sun Myung Moon, the unsavory (in Horowitz's view) founder of the movement.[2]

Two decades after Horowitz's article, controversies over alternative religions still rage within the community of scholars. As an early project, the editors of *Nova Religio* decided to address some of the simmering issues in a multilateral academic forum. If nothing else, we demonstrated that the disputes of yore are still with us and that tension among persons of differing outlooks remains high; we received submissions from polemicists on both sides of the argument, the more extreme of them engaging in name-calling and accusations of malfeasance that seemed at least as much based on point of view as on the set of facts in question, given that a particular set of facts could be subject to more than one interpretation. The editors quickly determined that shouting matches and finger-pointing would not move the debate forward and would perpetuate what was obviously a large reservoir of bad blood—something we had, perhaps naively, been hoping to help overcome. After a good deal of editorial consultation, we have finally fused four of the papers, along with this introduction, into a tempered forum that, we hope, conveys useful information and thought-provoking reflections, even if it does not mark a truce in the cult wars.

Each of the authors of the four featured articles has been involved in the study of alternative religions—and, to a greater or lesser extent, in some of the disputes that have raged in the profession—for many years. Massimo Introvigne, in the lead article, provides a synopsis of current battles over "cults" in Europe that will be eye-opening to many American scholars. What is a somewhat marginal debate among competing private interests in the United States has taken on much larger dimensions, including governmental involvement, in several European countries. The give-and-take that Americans would normally expect has yielded, Introvigne tells us, to the virtual adoption of a countercult ideology as official policy by various governments. Introvigne then explores, again from a European perspective, the thorny matter of financial interrelationships among scholars, religious movements, and governmental agencies.

The charged public debate on "cult" matters has contributed to a strong polarization of opinion among academics. Thomas Robbins

explores that polarization and examines distortions that it has introduced into the larger debate, including name-calling and the rise of double standards by which the larger society regards one side of the professional debate as truer than the other, a bias that can have important implications for legal proceedings involving marginal religions.

James T. Richardson has been at the forefront of the academic and legal debate over nonmainstream religions, and here he supplies an autobiographical account of the path by which he was drawn into work as an expert witness in court cases involving such groups. Richardson and several other academics ultimately became the defendants in a multimillion-dollar lawsuit brought by their ideological opposites, and here he recounts the events that led him into that unenviable situation.

If many academics believe that unusual religions are widely and unfairly maligned, Stephen A. Kent and Theresa Krebs contend that many scholars themselves are insufficiently critical of the groups they study. Lack of critical distance can result from any of several circumstances; among them are being taken in by masterful public relations efforts and accepting financial support or hospitality from a group a given scholar is studying. Kent and Krebs argue that scholarly inquiry sometimes turns, perhaps unintentionally, into advocacy work for a religious movement.

* * *

What has emerged as perhaps the most contentious issue in this discussion—the acceptance by investigators of financial support and gifts from groups they are studying—has certainly not been resolved, and the issue remains in need of a much more thorough plumbing than it has so far received in these pages or elsewhere. In other disciplines, sponsorship and outside control of research, including some from dubious casts of characters, are well accepted. Private corporations support a good deal of research in the sciences that has to do with their business interests, and it is not unusual for them to exercise control in one way or another over the direction of research or, at least, over the author's freedom to publish unwanted findings. Tobacco and pharmaceutical companies, to name two prominent examples, both spend a good deal of money on university research and exercise some control over it and its dissemination. One recent report found that one out of three published scientific articles had at least one author with a vested interest in his or her research. This finding does not even include the lucrative consultancies and honoraria that abound.[3] In many cases special-interest support of research is never publicized; indeed, the critics of the compromised status quo typically do not suggest that the

sponsorship of research by interested parties is inherently wrong, but only that full *disclosure* of funding sources should become the norm.

Nor is the situation restricted to the hard sciences. The DARE anti-drug educational program that operates in thousands of schools nationwide has, according to recent popular-press accounts (and a lively Internet debate), financed research about itself and then has interfered with the dissemination of findings that DARE is ineffectual or even counterproductive despite its lavishly financed operations.[4] In religious studies, sponsorship and concomitant outside control by "established" religions is well accepted; the Catholic Church, for example, funds a good deal of Catholic-related research, and Jewish studies would go into deep remission without support from Jewish-related funding sources. The Mormons—as recently as half a century ago virtually anathema to mainline religionists—have long heavily supported extensive research on themselves, and the growing acceptance of Mormonism in American society probably stems in significant part from that undertaking. But the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints regularly controls the dissemination of research findings, access to Church archives, and lines of inquiry at Church-owned institutions of learning. In a round of crackdowns on intellectuals in the 1990s, the Church decided that papers written by scholars employed by Church-run institutions would have to be cleared by censors before they could be published or even read at academic meetings. Academic response to that heavy-handedness has been muted, even though it constitutes a more drastic incursion on academic freedom and intellectual integrity than any junket for academics sponsored by, say, the Unification Church ever would.

Of course one could argue that the bottom line should be the quality of the work itself, not who paid for it or under what conditions it was conducted. Let the work be put out for public inspection; let those in a position to judge it perform that task. The problem is that that seems to be a generally acceptable system when support from mainline religions is involved, but not when controversial religious minorities supply the money. If that distinction is to stand, some omniscient arbiter must draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable religions—an impossible task.

* * *

In drafting the call for papers for this symposium, I suggested a number of topics as worthy of exploration. Some of those have been addressed by the papers here assembled, but others had no takers or at least were not examined in depth. I would suggest, therefore, that some issues having to do with ethics and academic integrity still merit

examination, and I hope that reflection on them may take place in the pages of this journal in the future.

Only one of the essays, for example, directly addresses the matter of privacy for new religious movements, and it does not address the issue comprehensively. Some religions have asserted sweeping rights to privacy for many years, even centuries. Cloistered Catholic sisters are largely cut off from the outside world, and their right to be left alone has never been seriously challenged, however much some individuals—including members of sisters' families—might dislike the enforced estrangement cloistering entails. Freemasons have conducted their rituals in secret since their founding. Mormons have successfully asserted their right to privacy in their Temple activities for over 150 years. Although an occasional apostate tells Temple secrets, and thus outsiders over time have been able to compile a fairly comprehensive picture of Temple activities, few have suggested that Mormon Temple secrecy has no place in an open society. Such a presumption of a right to privacy, however, has not always been granted to less influential religions. NRM scholars have in a number of cases infiltrated various groups covertly for the purpose of studying them. Is such infiltration ever justifiable? If so, under what conditions is it so? At what point should a private organization be able to assert its right to control access to its private activities? At what point does the public's right to know and the necessity of exposing illegal or abusive behavior supersede the presumptive right to privacy?

Neither do any of the essays here address, fundamentally, the propriety of scholarship that has a prior agenda. Some academics have argued that one should not only have no participatory relationship with what one studies, but no strong political or social convictions that bear on the subject. By such a standard some precincts of academia are nearly entirely out of bounds; women's studies, for example, is populated mainly by persons of feminist conviction, and African-American studies is inseparable from an agenda of combating racism. In several fields a body of scholarship conducted by scholars with no strong personal convictions on the subject at hand would change the face of the discipline greatly. In any event, does the study of alternative religions have space for scholars who come to the field with a conviction that all groups claiming to be religious should be free of substantial restriction or criticism, or for scholars with similarly substantial countercult sympathies? If one develops passions and convictions as a result of one's scholarship, should one then abandon one's field of study and turn to other work?

Even if we permit scholars with political and social dispositions relevant to their work to toil in the field, should they be expected to limit their behavior? That is, are we to be only passive observers, or should we feel free to be activists? Should a scholar with a countercult

outlook refer the distraught parents of a NRM member to deprogrammers? Should a scholar with sympathies for a particular religious movement be shunned if s/he were to join the movement? To what extent is scholarship compatible with advocacy?

Must everyone who explores the world of new religious movements do so under the same rules? Do the rules change with individual circumstances? Mentioned only briefly in the pages that follow is the fact that the study of alternative religions embraces a phenomenon perhaps not found in every venue in the academy—that of fully credentialed professionals whose financial support comes from their academic work alone, not from any educational or ecclesiastical institution. Such persons make their livings in a variety of ways; some have become paid professional witnesses in court cases, some have joined the lecture circuit, and others have lived off earnings from their writing. Many who have tried it have found freelance academic work financially unrewarding, and earning a living from scholarly writing is a particularly difficult undertaking, as any academic author knows. Should those persons who have real survival needs operate under different rules of conduct than others more comfortably situated? If so, should the evaluation of their work and their opinions be handled differently than it is for scholars more conventionally employed?

Even sponsorship of research has dimensions that are not pursued here. Scholars have been criticized for receiving travel money, entertainment, or even paychecks from organizations on which they do research, but should support from the other side of the cult-wars fence not also be scrutinized? Would it be proper for a scholar's investigations to be supported by a countercult organization or by a government agency that exhibits a decidedly countercult outlook in its work? Should American scholars accept funding for the provision of expertise that will help the governments of Japan and several countries in Europe crack down on nonmainstream religions? Outside support is a sticky issue, one that we have hardly exhausted in these few pages.

One final note: as sociologist of religion Bryan Wilson has occasionally reminded us, we should overestimate neither the social dimensions of alternative religions in Western society nor our own influence in the debate over them. While all of us in the field believe that we are delving into issues of mighty social import, in reality the controversial, marginal groups in question number probably at most in the low hundreds and typically have small membership rosters. Media-fueled fears notwithstanding, they on the whole do not seriously threaten to change the center of gravity of the world's religious life. The number of persons seriously abused by alternative religions in a year would probably not add up to a day's domestic-violence docket in the court system of a single major American city. Some specific groups may eventually grow large and influential, but by prevailing social theory they will do so only by

moving into (or at least closer to) the religious mainstream, as the Mormons did by abandoning polygamy and racial exclusivity and by generally downplaying their distinctiveness. And if the actual social position and influence of alternative religions is small, that of the scholars who study them is probably smaller still: witness the fact that the majority academic view that the public cult scare is overblown has had remarkably little influence on prevailing opinion. Groups that have paid for scholars to examine their activities may have wasted their money. A great many academic journals circulate only a few hundred copies each, and those go mainly to specialist scholars and research libraries where they are little read. The larger public seems to know what it thinks and doesn't much care to seek out jargon-laden academic treatises for a contrary point of view.

I am reminded of an anecdote I read in some long-forgotten place of a researcher who had spent decades studying the intelligence of dolphins. The subject had great public appeal, and the researcher received frequent speaking invitations from people who believed that dolphins are extraordinarily intelligent animals—people who sometimes contended that, but for an opposing thumb or some equivalent minor refinement, dolphins might have built great civilizations. The researcher, after years of painstaking study, had come to conclude that it just wasn't so. Yes, dolphins are intelligent as animals go, but their brainpower is by no stretch "nearly human"; dolphins may be friendly to humans, but they are just slightly higher on the intelligence scale than many other species. At every talk he told audiences his honest conclusions, but rarely did he convince many of his listeners. They *knew* that dolphins were incredibly smart, and this guy was just some foggy academic who had missed the forest for the trees. He lamented that he was apparently forever condemned to have his good research disregarded by a public with a mind of its own. And thus it seems to be for research into alternative religions.

Nonmainstream religions have always been with us and show no signs of vanishing. People will continue to fear the new, condemn the different, digest sensational media reports, and jump to conclusions without much regard for what the most eminent academic authorities have to say. Our scholarly conversations seem condemned to be largely with each other.

Nova Religio's editors and I thank the many individuals who have helped to develop this symposium and especially the participants themselves, who have engaged in a lively internal debate and strengthened each other's papers as a part of the editorial process. We hope that the discussion will continue, and therefore we solicit responses to what we are presenting here as well as additional essays in this general subject area for consideration for publication in future issues of *Nova Religio*.

ENDNOTES

[1] Benjamin Zablocki, "The Blacklisting of a Concept: The Strange History of the Brainwashing Conjecture in the Sociology of Religion," *Nova Religio* 1 (October, 1997): 96-121.

[2] Irving Louis Horowitz, "Science, Sin, and Sponsorship," in *Science, Sin, and Scholarship: The Politics of Reverend Moon and the Unification Church*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), 260-81.

[3] Daniel Zalewski, "Ties That Bind: Do Corporate Dollars Strangle Scientific Research?" *Lingua Franca* (June/July, 1997): 52.

[4] See, for example, Stephen Glass, "Truth and D.A.R.E.," *Rolling Stone* no. 781 (March 5, 1998): 42-43, 81.

Blacklisting or Greenlisting? A European Perspective on the New Cult Wars

Massimo Introvigne

In a number of Western European countries, and in virtually all of Eastern Europe, private anti-cult organizations enjoy an unprecedented degree of power, wealth, and public support. In the wake of the Solar Temple suicides/homicides, not only have anti-cult groups managed to become funded by taxpayers' money, but they have succeeded in converting their ideas into the backbones of parliamentary reports on "cults" produced in France (1996)[1] and Belgium (1997),[2] and in influencing the report of the German parliamentary commission (1998).[3] (I am normally opposed to the use of the word "cult," and will only use it here in a derivative sense, referring to how it is used in the European context. Also, in Europe the four-letter word translated by the English "cult" is the word literally meaning "sect.") In France the first yearly report (December 1997) of the Prime Minister's National Observatory of Cults, instituted after the 1996 parliamentary report, includes the proposal that anti-cult organizations may become parties in cult-related controversies and collect damages from cults. This legal monstrosity has been hailed by a part of the French press as a sort of final solution to the cult problem in France. A structure similar to the Observatory is on its way in Belgium.

The anti-cult ideology now receiving so many official blessings in Europe includes four main tenets: (1) Cults are not religions. International and constitutional guarantees of religious liberty do not apply to cults. (2) Cults are distinguished from religions because the former use brainwashing, thought reform, or mind control[4] while the latter respect their converts' and members' free will. (3) Although most scholars find brainwashing theories misguided, we may come to know that these theories are "true" by interviewing ex-members. These ex-members know "the truth" and are by definition more reliable than scholars. The latter are, more often than not, cult apologists or hired guns for the richest cults. (4) Not all ex-members reconstruct their experience in the cults focusing on brainwashing. Only some of them are "apostates," ex-members turned bitter enemies of the movement

they have left. Many ex-members are not "apostates."[5] As a consequence, we need private agencies to tell us which ex-members are reliable. These agencies are the anti-cult movements.

Combined, these four tenets mean that the anti-cult movements have the power to decide what groups will be blacklisted as cults. Unfortunately, this is by no means a metaphor. Both the French and Belgian reports include lists of suspicious groups (172 in France and 189 in Belgium). These lists include *inter alia* Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'is, Zen Buddhists, Seventh-day Adventists, Quakers, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and most Pentecostal churches. Baptists have also been mentioned as a cult, although possibly not a dangerous one. In April 1998 the cultural supplement to the well-known French daily newspaper *Le Monde* commented that "religious groups classified as 'cults' here [in Europe] would not receive the same treatment elsewhere. Bill Clinton, a Baptist, would be regarded as a cultist in France."[6] The Belgian list even includes the YWCA (but, for some reason, not the YMCA). Being on the list means being subject to a number of discriminatory actions. In France, for example, large cities have decided not to rent public halls to groups included on the list of cults.

Any different opinion held by scholars is regarded as irrelevant or worse. The French parliamentary commission heard a number of witnesses, but none of these were scholars or faculty members at the Sorbonne or any other institution of higher learning. When a number of scholars objected to the report, they were not only insulted as cult apologists by the tabloids but also harassed in many ways by the authorities. In the meantime the president of the largest French anti-cult organization, ADFI (Association pour la défense des familles et de l'individu), was awarded the Legion d'Honneur, the highest French public honor. Although anti-cult pressure is minimal in some Western European countries, including Italy and Holland, the situation is even worse in Eastern Europe. There Western anti-cultists have joined forces with the Eastern Orthodox churches to draft laws severely restricting any form of religious liberty. The best-known example is the 1997 Russian law on religions.

In most European countries anti-cultists are not blacklisted but greenlisted (to use a term referring to money). They have access to almost unlimited sources of institutional support. In France, the academics who are *not* anti-cult are the ones who are blacklisted, producing a situation exactly contrary to the one depicted by Benjamin Zablocki in his essay "The Blacklisting of a Concept" in the first issue of this journal.[7] Some anti-cultists contend that non-anti-cult scholars still receive money from the cults; they point to court cases such as the 1996 Lyons criminal trial of a number of French Scientologists in which several scholars (including Bryan Wilson, Karel Dobbelaere, and myself) were heard as witnesses. The American reader should, however, note that in

continental European law there is no such a thing as the familiar American "expert witness." In continental Europe experts and witnesses are different figures. *Experts* may only be designated by the parties in order to counter a report produced by an official expert designated by the judge. These experts normally render their counter-reports in writing and are paid by the parties. *Witnesses*, on the other hand, are deposed orally before the judges. In most continental European countries, including France, there is neither direct examination nor cross-examination by the attorneys for the parties. Only the judges are entitled to ask questions. In most countries, a witness (unlike an expert) cannot receive an honorarium for his or her deposition. In cult-related cases, mental health scholars sometime produce reports as experts, but social scientists are almost invariably called as witnesses. This means that in a number of countries they receive no honorarium.

Skeptical anti-cultists may object that, although they are not paid for a specific court case, scholars who serve as witnesses for a cult may be rewarded in other forms. The Church of Scientology, for example, asked a number of scholars to produce monographs on the religious nature of Scientology, which were later published by one of its publishing houses. I was not among the scholars who agreed to write monographs, but, from conversations with colleagues who did, I have concluded that the money involved was minimal.[8] This assessment is made in comparison not only with normal honoraria for consultation activities paid to academics by governments or corporations, but also with money available for lecturers on the international anti-cult circuit. For some reason, when discussing cult-related court cases nobody asks who pays the anti-cultists who invariably appear as witnesses.

One may also argue that scholars would fare better if they simply stayed away from court cases, an idea I find attractive. In fact, in sixteen years of activity in this field, I have appeared only three times as a witness in a court of law.[9] The problem is perhaps different from country to country. On 8 October 1997, the Italian Supreme Court rendered an important decision, recognizing Scientology as a genuine religion and including a lengthy discussion of whether religion can be defined. The Supreme Court argued that, on issues such as the evaluation of Scientology, courts should be guided by the "common consent of the scholars." By contrast, the "common consent" of "public opinion," the Supreme Court said, is irrelevant. "Public opinion" is normally not familiar with minorities and may easily follow biased media reports.[10] How is a court supposed to ascertain the "common consent of scholars" if it does not interview scholars? On the other hand, there are countries other than Italy in which the attempt to use scholars as witnesses by the parties has produced only minimal results. The courts have decided that the opinion of scholars is less relevant than other sources.

But are the scholars offering their opinions on new religious movements unbiased? Or are they, in fact, hired guns? Perhaps the answer is both complex and simple. Scholars produce narratives or pieces of secondary reality from observation (as ostensibly do reporters and other categories of observers). As social scientists, we know that there is no such thing as an absolutely objective, value-free observation or narrative. The most elementary sociology of knowledge tells us that all narratives are socially constructed, culturally conditioned, and politically negotiated.[11] In the social-scientific study of religion, direct funding by the religious group being studied is but a part of the possible conditioning. Besides, conditioning a study is something different from determining it.

A case in point is the much maligned field trip to Japan in April 1995 by a team of American experts to investigate Aum Shinrikyo after the gas attack of 20 March 1995. Their plane tickets and hotel accommodations were paid for by Aum Shinrikyo, although they received no honoraria. One scholar initially concluded that Aum Shinrikyo was being framed. Most of its leaders, he suggested, had no responsibility for the gas attack and the other crimes of which they were accused.[12] The other scholar soon prepared a paper (read in absentia at the yearly conference of CESNUR held at the University of Rome on 10-12 May 1995) in which he suggested that Aum's top leaders were not only guilty of the gas attack, but probably also part of a much larger criminal scheme, involving dealing in drugs and consorting with local organized crime. Both scholars concurred in denouncing human rights violations against hundreds of members of Aum who, unlike the leaders, were certainly neither guilty nor aware of any criminal activity. Otherwise, however, their analyses were quite different. Often cited by anti-cultists in the European debate as the ultimate evidence that scholars are hired guns for the cults, this Japanese experience proves in fact quite the opposite. The fact that two scholars, both with return tickets to Japan paid for by Aum, reached opposite conclusions on Aum's involvement in terrorist and criminal activities is strong evidence that funding from the movements may *influence* but does not necessarily *control* the results of research.

In addition to money, other factors also influence scholarly research. Scholars are conditioned by their academic affiliations. In the wake of the French report, some scholars were told in none-too-subtle terms that the French government they were criticizing was, after all, their employer. (Most universities are government-owned in France.) Scholars are also conditioned by their religious affiliations. Stories abound of scholars being called by their bishops or equivalent when their findings appear not to be faith-promoting. Moreover, European scholars in religious studies and other fields are often funded by foundations connected to large transnational corporations. Would they not be

conditioned by the corporations' own agendas? For instance, a number of large transnational pharmaceutical corporations are at war with the Church of Scientology over the issue of psychiatric drugs. Corporations that produce or promote alcoholic beverages or tobacco do not like Mormonism and other alcohol- or tobacco-free religions.

Many scholars in Europe and elsewhere write op-ed pieces in mainline newspapers and normally receive payment for their work. Would they easily oppose a crusade (for example, an anti-cult crusade) dear to the heart of the publisher or editor? What about scholars who are members of political parties or contemplate running for office? What about the larger publishing houses where scholars may hope to be published? What about a spouse, a loved one, or a friend whom a scholar may risk offending? Or sexual preferences—would a gay scholar not be prejudiced against homophobic religions? Instances of possible conditioning are potentially infinite, so direct funding is not perhaps the main issue. After all, losing an occasional honorarium is less serious than losing a spouse, being excommunicated, or jeopardizing a career.

One would need a Sherlock Holmes or a James Bond to compile the endless list of possible conditioning factors behind any scholarly research or paper. They may range from spousal influence to a more or less friendly call by the scholar's dean, pastor, or bishop. Are these investigations—and these invasions of scholars' privacy—really necessary in order to evaluate their research? There are three possible answers to this key question. Religionists of all kinds would claim that it is acceptable to be influenced or funded by legitimate religious organizations (meaning their own). On the other hand, they would say it is scandalous to be influenced or funded by heretical religious organizations or by secular humanists. The German Lutheran Church surely regards as legitimate the inviting of foreign scholars supporting the brainwashing model to be wined and dined in Germany by church-affiliated anti-cult agencies. Yet German Lutherans and other anti-cultists have used "sock puppets" and worse terminology for scholars who testified before parliamentary commissions and courts in Europe and criticized the German campaign against Scientology and other cults. (Name-calling is directed at the scholars because of their opinions, whether or not these scholars have accepted funds from the cults themselves.[13])

Alternatively, the Church of Scientology presumably regards it as entirely acceptable for scholars to write monographs on its behalf but would likely regard as criminal scholars cooperating with foundations sponsored by pharmaceutical industries dealing in psychiatric drugs. Secular anti-cultists would declare it acceptable to receive money from worthy organizations defending the victims (perhaps even from deprogrammers, although most of them have a

criminal record). It is another thing to receive money from the "perpetrators," i.e. the cults.

The large majority of social scientists normally do not adopt either a pro-cult or an anti-cult approach. They regard it as inappropriate—and impossible—to establish a preliminary distinction between influences by good guys and those by bad guys. They also know that they cannot conceivably know to what influences the author of a paper has been subject. But they simply do not very much care. They rather resort to the time-honored strategy of peer review and scholarly evaluation of each paper, book, or piece of research on its own merit. Since it is by definition impossible to know in full to what kind of conditioning or influence a scholar has been exposed, the result of his or her research can only be evaluated apart from what is known—or not known—about the author. In most academic journals, partisan papers will usually be rejected within the frame of the normal peer review process as poorly researched. There would be no need for analyzing in depth the author's sources of income, religious affiliation, or sexual preferences. Some journals posing as academic may have adopted a one-sided policy of consistently rejecting papers criticizing the journal's hidden or open agenda. Such journals are easily identified as partisan in the academic community, and scholars know their shortcomings. The few books authored or edited by scholars that are obviously partisan or which include partisan chapters (a minority among hundreds of excellent studies) in turn have normally not been saved by academic solidarity from the wrath of bitter reviewers in the leading scholarly journals.

Imre Lakatos, an influential philosopher of science, proposed the distinction between the external and internal history of scientific theories. The internal history deals with how theories are proposed, accepted, or rejected within the community of scholars and how they contribute to the advancement of knowledge. The external history deals with the private lives of scholars who propose theories.[14] External history may make for entertaining reading—a good example being the paradoxical and reactionary book by E. Michael Jones, *Degenerate Moderns*.[15] Jones argues that the most influential scholarly theories of our century arise from the "sexual misbehavior" of the scholars who proposed them and from their covert attempts to rationalize or justify such activities. Lakatos would counter that, even if it were true, the argument would hardly be relevant. Scholars have no tools to evaluate external history, and they would do better to leave it alone. Internal history is more than enough to occupy a productive scholarly life.

ENDNOTES

[1] *Les sectes en France. Rapport fait au nom de la commission d'enquête sur les sectes* (Paris: Les Documents d'information de l'Assemblée Nationale, 1996). For criticism by scholars and by the mainline churches see Massimo Introvigne and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Pour en finir avec les sectes. Le débat sur le rapport de la commission parlementaire*, 3d ed. (Paris: Dervy, 1996).

[2] Chambre des Répresentants de Belgique, *Enquête parlementaire visant à élaborer une politique en vue de lutter contre les pratiques illégales des sectes et le danger qu'elles représentent pour la société et pour les personnes, particulièrement les mineurs d'âge*, 2 vols. (Brussels: Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, 1997).

[3] Deutscher Bundestag, 13. Wahlperiode. *Endbericht der Enquete-Kommission "Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen"* (Bonn: Deutscher Bundestag, 1998). There is also a report by a commission of the Canton of Geneva: *Audit sur les dérives sectaires. Rapport du groupe d'experts genevois au Département de Justice et Police et des Transports du Canton de Genève* (Geneva: Suzanne Hurter, 1997).

[4] Since the word "brainwashing" has been somewhat discredited also in Europe, parliamentary reports and other documents use words such as "mental manipulation" or "mental destabilization," but these are largely synonymous with "brainwashing." In the current European debate, brainwashing theories are used in order to distinguish cults from religions. Thus, by necessity, theories of brainwashing claim to explain both affiliation and life in the cults. They are different from the theories advanced by Benjamin Zablocki and others that, while attempting a difficult rescue of the *word* brainwashing, in fact use it with a different meaning and focus on techniques allegedly used to maximize exit costs. See the debate between Zablocki and David Bromley in *Nova Religio* 1 (April 1998) on this point.

[5] David G. Bromley, "The Social Construction of Contested Exit Roles: Defectors, Whistleblowers, and Apostates," in *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements*, ed. David G. Bromley (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 19-48.

[6] Marc Couty, "Sectes, le dernier des cultes?" *Le Monde de l'éducation, de la culture et de la formation* 257 (April 1998): 82.

[7] Benjamin Zablocki, "The Blacklisting of a Concept: The Strange History of the Brainwashing Conjecture in the Sociology of Religion," *Nova Religio* 1 (October 1997): 96-121.

[8] Occasionally, anti-cultists argue that money changes hands when this is simply not the case. I contributed a chapter to *Sex, Slander, and Salvation: Investigating The Family/Children of God*, eds. James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Stanford, CA: Center for Academic Publication, 1994). Whatever the shortcomings of some papers in that book, I surely did not receive any money from The Family (or from any other source) for my contribution. This book also came under criticism for ignoring material offered by ex-members. Again, this is not the case as far as my paper is concerned. Most of my information on The Family in Italy in fact comes from the most prominent Italian ex-member.

[9] One was the Lyons Scientology case. The other two actions were brought respectively by Jehovah's Witnesses and by the Unification Church against media and anti-cultists who had accused them of "prostitution," in both cases confusing different movements with the early Children of God and their "flirty fishing" activities. I have also assisted Italian law enforcement agencies in prosecuting several small Satanist groups accused of a variety of felonies.

[10] Corte Suprema di Cassazione, *Bandera e altri*, unpublished decision of October 8, 1997.

The case has now been sent back (for the second time) to the Court of Appeal of Milan for re-evaluation.

[11] See David G. Bromley, "Organized Opposition to New Religious Movements," *Handbook of Cults and Sects in America*, eds. David G. Bromley and Jeffrey K. Hadden (Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press, 1993), 177-198.

[12] In a number of private conversations, the researcher in question later explained to the undersigned (and to many other scholars) that he subsequently changed his mind.

[13] I am managing director of CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions). In Germany (and France) conspirational anti-cultists have accused CESNUR of being a front for, *inter alia*, Freemasonry, a "Methodist cult," the Roman Catholic Church, and a number of Catholic organizations, including Opus Dei and Alleanza Cattolica. In turn, on 5 April 1998, members of the Raelian Movement protested against a CESNUR seminar in Torino, Italy, featuring the undersigned and J. Gordon Melton as speakers. The Raelians carried signposts accusing us of being part of a Catholic anti-cult conspiracy. By a common *non sequitur*, individual affiliations of scholars serving in the board of directors of CESNUR are attributed to the whole organization. While no director of CESNUR International (as far as I know) is a member of Opus Dei or of Freemasonry, one of the directors, J. Gordon Melton, is an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, and I am a member of Alleanza Cattolica. The latter is a lay Catholic organization, enjoying a good relationship with a number of Italian Catholic dioceses where it is established, about which much nonsense has been written in Germany (perhaps based on the limited knowledge of Italian of some local anti-cultists). CESNUR's only institutional funding comes from the government of the State of Piedmont. CESNUR does not receive funds from any religious organization or institution, including the Roman Catholic Church and Alleanza Cattolica. As part of its normal activities, CESNUR has provided speakers to events organized by a number of Catholic and Protestant organizations (including Opus Dei, the Italian Catholic Bishops' Conference, and Alleanza Cattolica as well as the Italian Waldensian-Methodist Church, Evangelical colleges, and secular organizations such as Italy's largest cultural leftist group, Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana).

[14] See Imre Lakatos, "History of Science and Its Rational Reconstructions," in *PSA 1970. In Memory of Rudolf Carnap. Proceedings of the 1970 Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, eds. Roger C. Buck and Robert S. Cohen (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1971), 91-124.

[15] E. Michael Jones, *Degenerate Moderns: Modernity as Rationalized Sexual Misbehavior* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993).

Objectivity, Advocacy, and Animosity

Thomas Robbins

Singin' songs and a carryin' signs,
Mostly sayin' "hooray for our side!"
Buffalo Springfield

I was a post-doctoral trainee in sociology at Yale from 1979 to 1981. One day our post-doctoral group was addressed by the eminent Yale sociologist Kai Erikson. Erikson discussed his involvement as an expert witness who testified in civil suits against corporations arising from environmental disasters. Testifying on behalf of plaintiffs about the psychological costs to victims of such episodes, Erikson continually faced off against sociologist Russell Dynes and his colleagues, who regularly testified for the other side. Erikson stressed that these courtroom confrontations never disturbed the collegial courtesy and amity that existed among Erikson, Dynes, et al.

The contrast between this situation and the animosity which pervades conflicts involving "cults" and "experts" who regularly testify for or against controversial religious movements is striking. On two occasions experts who regularly testified in court against "cults" brought civil suits against opposing experts! Why this level of hostility exists between experts supporting or opposing cults poses a problem in what used to be called the "sociology of knowledge." As Erikson's comments indicate, the same level of negative intensity is not always present in other areas of litigation.

Some proposed explanations for this intensity are clearly flawed. Responsibility has been assigned to two civil suits which were filed in the early 1990s against the American Sociological Association and the American Psychological Association plus various individual scholars by two experts who regularly testified against cults. Individual defendants included eminent scholars such as James Richardson, Dick Anthony, Rodney Stark, Newton Malony, and J. Gordon Melton, who had defended embattled movements in and out of court. But the filing of these unsuccessful suits *reflected* as much as it exacerbated pre-existing polarization and bitterness. Certainly the plaintiffs Richard Ofshe and

Margaret Singer would maintain that the suits merely responded to the pernicious manipulations and machinations of pro-cult scholars, who had influenced the APA and ASA to intervene in a key California "brainwashing" court case on behalf of the defendant (the Unification Church), and who influenced a federal judge to exclude testimony by Ofshe and Singer from the trial of an ex-Scientologist whose diminished capacity defense was to be based on mind control claims.

Sometimes the translation of scholarly disputes over "brainwashing" and "cults" to courtrooms and the explosion of litigation in this area are said to be key factors in polarizing scholars. There is surely something to this argument, but the comments of Erikson as I remember them indicate its limitations. Even the "tobacco wars" probably involve less intense "interexpert" animosity than the cult wars.

The origins of the partial alliance of scholars studying religion and embattled movements may be germane here. Students of religion appeared initially to become involved in defending controversial new religious movements (NRMs) in the early 1970s when the key issue was *coercive deprogramming*. It appeared shocking to us that young adult converts were actually being physically abducted and imprisoned to receive counterindoctrination. Courts appeared to accept this practice too frequently, in part because clinical "experts" were telling judges and juries that these intrusive actions did not really contravene the autonomy and free will of the devotees, whose very capacity to exercise freedom had been destroyed by powerful and sophisticated psychological conditioning in cults that produced depersonalization, dissociation, infantile regression, and other ills. Many scholars were horrified by the use of blatant and sometimes thuggish physical coercion to redress alleged (and probably ambiguous) psychological coercion. They thought that the material being presented to courts was distorted. They were also deeply apprehensive of the persecutory potential inherent in the characterization of spiritual intensity, including the intolerance, dogmatism, and authoritarianism that had long characterized "religious sects" and "revivalism" throughout (particularly American) religious history, as a medical problem. They feared an undermining of religious liberty.

Simultaneously parents, clinicians, and concerned citizens were shocked and outraged that their efforts to "rescue" children or to punish seemingly vicious and phony organizations for "menticide," false imprisonment (via mind control), and other novel crimes and torts were sometimes frustrated through the courtroom appearances of scholars whose testimony conferred legitimacy on seemingly sinister and dangerous groups, and who were thus perceived as sleazy fellow-travelers or at best well-meaning dupes.[1] Thus the hot dispute over alleged cultic "brainwashing" appeared to originate in the intensely emotional controversy over coercive deprogramming (and over which side was guilty

of "kidnapping") and subsequently expanded into other areas such as ex-member civil suits.

The former dominance of the emotional and dramatic issue of abductive deprogramming may partly but cannot fully explain the particular intensity of scholarly and interexpert recriminations in cult conflicts, however. The question needs to be pursued further. The issue of scholarly animosity and militance in cult controversies, as well as in other conflicts, is also related to two salient phenomena that need to be introduced into any discussion of scholarly partisanship and objectivity: the American *cult of expertise* and the ubiquity of the *double standard.*

ADVOCACY AND OBJECTIVITY

The precariousness of combining *advocacy* and *objectivity* without blunting the former or corrupting the latter is a pervasive problem throughout American society and government. The context of this problem is what might be termed the American *Cult of Expertise.* It is almost impossible today to carry any point in either a legal or a legislative venue without a supportive cadre of experts whose putatively objective and "scientific" expertise is marshaled to support the claims of a partisan litigating or lobbying "client." Experts square off against each other in hearings and in the press. A particularly furious "battle of the experts" recently erupted in the sensational trial of the "British nanny" in Boston. Persons (often themselves learned experts) sympathetic to either the experts testifying for the defense or those mobilized by the prosecution explicitly threw the term "junk science" at the opposing expert witnesses such that both sets of witnesses were publicly attacked in this manner. In the broader area of public opinion and policy advocacy a spirited battle of experts rages over the imminence, extent, causes, and proper remediation of "Global Warming." Experts and their cheerleaders on either side denigrate opposing experts, who are accused of being "kept" by wealthy corporations eager to ward off the costs of curtailing the use of fossil fuels or of not being objective scientists so much as ecology movement zealots and quasi-religious fanatics.

Persons with scientific or scholarly credentials can sometimes develop lucrative careers as "professional witnesses," lobbyists, or consultants to lawyers and governmental bodies. They are rewarded with both money and media attention. Ideological commitment ("bias") and commitment to remunerative career enhancement (plus the media spotlight) reinforce each other as many experts become permanently associated with one "side" of a controversial issue and develop enduring liaisons with interested parties. Acrimony increases as particular experts become stigmatized as either blind and narrow partisans or mercenary "hired guns." Acrimony further intensifies as experts who "perform" in court

will often allow their testimony to be shaped by the needs of lawyers, which can result in cruder and more extreme assertions.[2]

In this context expertise in a given area becomes politicized and polarized. This polarization and politicization is reflected in the otherwise highly praiseworthy effort by some religious studies scholars to develop a liaison with the FBI in order to "educate" the agency and forfend against "another Waco."[3] This writer's colleagues now eagerly compete with anticultists to gain the ear of the Bureau and become the "experts" to be consulted in the next confrontation. The feds cannot be expected to act appropriately unless they comprehend the nature of millennialist religion, asserts one set of scholars. According to their rivals, the dynamics of "destructive cultism" must be mastered.

One thing that becomes apparent when considering these phenomena is the pervasiveness of *double standards.* It is more reputable to be a scientist crusading or testifying against tobacco companies than it is to be an expert enrolled in their defense. This is notwithstanding the likelihood that there is at least a point or two which might be made in behalf of tobacco moguls' contentions (e.g., is the "addictiveness" of tobacco really comparable to that of heroin or cocaine?). Similarly, it is viewed as more legitimate to be a scholar or scientist who is informing the world about the ravages of cults than an expert supporting such groups against their critics. This effect may be intensified under the impact of recent catastrophic events. Nevertheless, the issues involved in cult controversies are not always black and white.

There may be various conceptions or definitions of "objectivity," but it can easily be demonstrated that objectivity in terms of *neutrality* often does not seem to be required in order to legitimate the work of an expert. In the area of social movements there are definite current models for legitimate "activist expertise."

Consider the hated Ku Klux Klan. Who are popularly considered to be the legitimate experts on the KKK? Are they not researchers such as the crusading lawyer Morris Dees and persons associated with organizations such as Klanwatch? Is not the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) widely viewed as a legitimate—perhaps the premier—source of expertise on authoritarian racist, anti-Semite, and neofascist groups? Similarly the media have long conferred the mantle of expert-in-behalf-of-the-public-interest on (anticult) "cultwatchers" and "cult experts" and particularly persons associated with the former Cult Awareness Network (CAN). Scholars who have been critical of CAN and "anticult" constructions of reality are often labeled "cult apologists." This is a labeling game somewhat reminiscent of the 1950s when critics of certain anti-Communist programs were called "communist sympathizers" and "comsymps" or at best "well-meaning dupes." The underlying dynamic is that when certain groups are widely perceived as *known malefactors* or

public "enemies," crusaders against such groups become accepted as the authentic, most objective, and exclusive repositories of legitimate expertise. Investigators with conflicting perspectives are shunted aside as naive and fatuous and even denounced as highly suspect and subversive.[4] In such a climate many commentators will question the objectivity of writers and scholars who defend stigmatized movements but not the objectivity of those who attack them.

Are crusading "countersubversive" experts objective? Are they accurate? Jeffrey Kaplan has noted that public information on cults and "hate groups" often seems to be controlled by hostile "watchdog" groups such as ADL or CAN, which actually develop strange symbiotic relationships with the movements they monitor.[5] Exaggerations or worst case scenarios purveyed by the watchdogs regarding extremist groups tend for various reasons to become self-fulfilling prophecies. I would also note the inherent subjectivity of clinical methods employed by some critics of induced psychopathy in cults. Psychotherapy is very much a *persuasive* enterprise, one that has even been compared with thought reform.[6] Often a clinician or therapist will receive information from a devotee or ex-devotee about life in a movement while simultaneously revealing to the client the *real* nature of his or her involvement in the group and the underlying fabric of mind control, enslavement, ego destruction, and so forth. The clinician may subsequently appear as a remunerated expert witness in the ex-devotee's civil suit against the group for "intentional infliction of emotional distress" or other outrages.[7] Some "experts" are engaged so frequently in these sequences as to be plausibly designated "professional witnesses."

But *Tu Quoque* is hardly an adequate defense. The study of NRMs has become deplorably politicized, and the alleged "cult apologists" must share some of the responsibility. As I noted above, scholars of religion were initially drawn into controversies over cults through the issue of coercive deprogramming. I have previously noted that the reaction against deprogramming "has probably distorted scholarly discourse and pushed scholars . . . into downplaying manipulative and coercive elements in some movements."[8] Since the 1970s, liaisons between scholars and "cults" have expanded and become diversified. Arguably abuses have crept in. Benjamin Zablocki has critically noted the tendency for scholars associated with the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the other sociologists of religion to close ranks protectively in support of movements facing million dollar civil suits related to claims of brainwashing, and thus to exclude by fiat the possibility that brainwashing might exist.[9] Scholars dissenting from this view are alleged to have experienced difficulties publishing their views in journals of record. Zablocki may have a point, but it is wildly exaggerated. His overheated "blacklisting" metaphor notwithstanding, the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* did not become the *Red Channels* of the 1980s.[10]

It should almost go without saying that sources of financial support should always be disclosed even if the double standard leads to a stigmatization of researchers with controversial associations.[11] Shoddy research intended from the outset to defend (or indict) a movement will ultimately discredit the researchers. However, an exaggerated mythology may now be emerging concerning vast monies flowing into the study of religion from cultist coffers. Nevertheless, students of religion may experience a particular credibility problem as a function of what has been called the "philomandarin" pose affected by some NRMs, which eagerly invite scholars of religion to research their groups and seek to guide such research. In any case, there will continue to be many difficult ethical dilemmas involved in the study of controversial sects.[12]

But it appears to me that the ubiquity of the double standard will sustain polarization among NRM scholars. I believe that "our" side has probably been a bit more introspective and reflexive about our possible bias than has that of the anticultists.[13] Many of the latter would support the "public health approach"[14] formulated by an eminent psychiatrist and "brainwashing expert" that maintains that experts exposing the "infernal" reality of destructive cults must play a role similar to that of scientists combating a raging disease. In this medicalistic context clinicians and scholars attacking cults need not be troubled by self-doubts about objectivity and balance any more than Jonas Salk should have considered becoming more balanced and neutral in his view of polio. It seems strange that in the face of such reductionism it is mainly the "cult apologists" who are expected to reconsider their methods and assumptions.

*The author wishes to thank James Richardson, Stephen Kent, and Dick Anthony for helpful comments.

ENDNOTES

[1] "These individuals and their organizations undoubtedly contribute to the cult's veneer of respectability behind which strange and ugly things are happening. They project into the cults some of their own hopes for religious reform, spiritual rebirth, rejection of materialism, or even escape from the dangers of the thermonuclear age. . . . The grateful cults have been known to reward them with grants, awards, published praise, and even 'research' opportunities" (Louis Jolyon West, "Persuasive Techniques in Contemporary Cults: A Public Health Approach," *The Cultic Studies Journal* 7 [1990]: 133-34). Very similar views were articulated in West's earlier essay, "Contemporary Cults: Utopian Image and Infernal Reality," *The Center Magazine* 13 (1982): 10-13.

[2] On the difficulty of imposing ethical norms on the courtroom performances of "experts," see Donald W. Shuman and Stuart A. Greenberg, "The Role of Ethical Norms in the

Admissibility of Expert Testimony," *The Judges Journal* (Winter, 1998): 5-9, 42-43.

[3] This project is discussed in Jean Rosenfeld, "The Importance of the Analysis of Religion in Avoiding Violent Outcomes: The Justus Freeman Crisis," *Nova Religio* 1 (1997): 72-95.

[4] A case in point entails the declining credibility of the "Old China Hands" in the 1950s. In the context of the deepening Cold War (and the hot Korean War), a number of "Old China Hands" lost their academic prestige and their positions or influence in the State Department because they were deemed insufficiently alarmist about Maoist totalitarianism and unduly critical of the corrupt (but anti-Communist) Chiang Kai-shek regime. A rigidly one-sided climate of opinion emerged. Will "cult apologists" go the way of the "Old China Hands"?

[5] Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

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

[7] See H. Newton Malony, "Ethics of Psychologists' Reactions to New Religions" (paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, New York City, August 1987).

[8] Thomas Robbins, *Cults, Converts and Charisma* (London: Sage Publications, 1988), 73.

[9] Benjamin Zablocki, "The Blacklisting of a Concept: The Strange History of the Brainwashing Conjecture in the Sociology of Religion," *Nova Religio* 1 (1997): 96-121.

[10] *Red Channels* was a sheet published in the early 1950s by entrepreneurs who pandered to McCarthyism by listing the names of television entertainers with leftist backgrounds. Its exposés were central to the formation of blacklists.

[11] The double standard creates a lose-lose situation with regard to disclosure. Writers and scholars who are members of or receive support from highly stigmatized groups (such as "Moonies" in the 1980s or "commies" in the 1950s) will appear to be discredited and will not be listened to. If they conceal their affiliation or funding to get a hearing for their views, they risk ultimately eliciting a more intense stigma associated with deception.

[12] For example, what is the ethical responsibility of a researcher who has good relations with a controversial group and fears that some other researcher who wants to study them might end up writing about the group very negatively or even testifying against them in court? Should the first researcher warn the group about the second researcher and thus torpedo the latter's research? It is likely that both anticult and cultophile researchers may sometimes directly or indirectly control access to religious devotees, apostates, and other research subjects.

[13] See the symposium "On Scholarship and Sponsorship," *Sociological Analysis* 43 (1983). See also Robbins, *Cults, Converts and Charisma*, particularly pp. 199-205, and Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson, "Studying Religion Today: Controversy and Objectivity in the Sociology of Religion," *Religion* 21 (1991): 319-37.

[14] West, "Persuasive Techniques in Contemporary Cults: A Public Health Approach." West notes the polarization of expertise but faults exclusively the defenders of alternative religions, who are depicted as a motley crew of romanticists, extreme civil libertarians, and naive dupes.

THE ACCIDENTAL EXPERT

James T. Richardson

ACCIDENTS DO HAPPEN

I did not intend to become embroiled in the "cult wars" when I started my career as a sociologist and social psychologist nearly 30 years ago. Indeed, I did not even define myself as a specialist interested in religion at the time.

I had not planned to become an "expert" testifying in legislative hearings and making public presentations to policy makers and international scholars concerning alternative and emerging faiths in the U. S. and abroad. I would not have guessed that I would give hundreds of interviews with media representatives from all over the world about new religions, or that I would be asked for advice by dozens of parents, friends, and siblings of participants in new religious groups.

I did not plan to become a consultant in legal actions against some of the newer religious groups, nor did I ever think that I would become an expert witness in a few such cases.[1] I would have been astonished if someone had told me that I would get a law degree later in my life and that I would publish articles in law reviews about issues raised by legal efforts to engage in social control of newer faiths.[2]

I certainly did not intend to find myself listed as a defendant in two extremely trying (and expensive) multi-million dollar lawsuits brought by advocates of so-called "brainwashing" theories who had turned those popular notions into lucrative careers as expert witnesses on behalf of those attacking new religions in court.[3] And I did not expect to see my scholarly research and publications caricatured in other publications.[4]

MY INTENTIONS WERE HONORABLE

What I did intend was to find answers to questions such as why do relatively well-educated and affluent young people join new religious movements (NRMs), and what are the processes involved with their joining? Those questions arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s for me

and a few graduate students. Years of research—funded mostly by myself or small grants from my university—on those and other questions concerning a number of controversial new religions furnished some answers, answers that have been treated with respect by most fellow scholars. My students, colleagues, and I have done nearly three decades of research on conversion/recruitment issues, as well as on questions of how the groups organize themselves and change over time; the psychological impact of participation; methods by which the groups raise and spend money; the treatment of new religions by institutions of social control; media treatments of NRMs; comparative studies of NRMs around the world; reasons for the rise of interest in new religions; legal issues raised by the new religions; and other topics, such as the related "satanism scare" that has developed in America and elsewhere. I have published close to 100 articles in refereed journals and book chapters in this area and have produced five books (some with co-authors or co-editors) on various aspects of new religions.[5]

SHOOT-OUT AT THE OK CORRAL

My research on recruitment and conversion led fairly directly to my involvement in the "cult wars" and its many battles that have occurred within academia, legislative halls, the media, and, of course, in courtrooms in the U. S. and elsewhere. I got involved, albeit reluctantly, because I saw on a number of occasions that the research that I and others were doing on recruitment and participation was being misrepresented or ignored, even though our findings were obviously relevant to questions being dealt with in courtrooms.

Claims that people had been tricked into joining or that some mysterious techniques such as "brainwashing" or "mind control" had been used with converts seemed ludicrous on their face given the field research of myself and others.[6] We found that people were participating because they wanted to (even if parents and others disapproved—or maybe because they did!),[7] that such participation was usually short-lived,[8] and that these groups that seemed so fearsome were actually quite small and struggling for existence, often in a hostile environment.[9]

However, such claims were being taken seriously by judges and juries, sometimes with devastating effect. For a small religious group to survive a multi-million dollar judgment might well be impossible, a fact not lost on opponents of such groups or on those legal scholars who study religious freedom in our society.[10]

Claims that young people were being "brainwashed" were also undergirding social policy development and public discussion concerning new religions. Law enforcement personnel, welfare case workers, immigration and tax officials, legislators and politicians,

journalists, and others were, deliberately or not, often using stereotypes of "cult" participants as brainwashed zombies to drive their reactions to such groups.[11] These persons, in their efforts at social control of new religions, were depending on bad or limited data and faulty theorizing as they made decisions that dramatically impacted lives.[12]

The "bad data" to which I refer usually were claims by people developed after the fact in ways that served their interests and which were functional for their situations. Sociologists call such claims "accounts," and they usually do not accept them at face value; instead, they seek many types of information about a given phenomenon before drawing conclusions.[13] We call this process of seeking data from many sources "triangulation" and believe that getting more points of view is essential to understanding what is happening in a given situation.[14]

Other bad data included misinformation about the size of groups and their effectiveness at recruitment. Both the groups and their opponents had a vested interest in not always being accurate in calculating membership or attrition, and this misinformation contributed to the problem. Politicians and others who thought they were dealing with a huge problem might have been surprised to find out how relatively few people were actually involved in most of the groups that were attracting attention.[15]

As the "brainwashing" idea gained credence within the legal system, I and a few other scholars felt compelled to take some sort of action. It took several years to figure out what might be done and then to try to implement our ideas. We felt that we wanted to stop the misrepresentation of our disciplines and research in public policy forums, especially in courts of law. Some of us were motivated by concerns about religious freedom as well.

We started addressing the "brainwashing" claims in our scholarly work, organizing panels at professional meetings, and also publishing discussions of the misuse of this type of theory in courts and other forums.[16] Moreover, some of us expressed a willingness to talk with attorneys and others involved in defending suits based directly or indirectly on "brainwashing" theories. Eventually, some of us testified in a few such cases, but usually with poor results from our point of view.

It seemed that jurors were paying no attention to our testimony and instead had bought into the "brainwashing" claims that were fueling much of the anti-cult sentiment developing in America. If jurors accepted "brainwashing" and the idea that "cults" were about to take over our society, then they were prone to "do their duty as good citizens" and "send messages" that activities of these groups were unacceptable.[17] And, of course, the best way to send such a message was through a verdict that punished the new religion and its leaders. So, a plethora of multi-million dollar verdicts against newer faiths have emerged over the last few decades.[18]

I DIDN'T KNOW THE GUN WAS LOADED

After years of mostly problematic court decisions based often on bad information and stereotypes about new religions, the tide began to turn a bit during the late 1980s, not only within the American legal arena, but also outside the U. S.[19] Key cases developed in which so-called "brainwashing experts" were not allowed to testify about such theories, thus undercutting efforts to use the legal system to exert social control over new religions.[20]

This change was accomplished only after considerable effort that included a few social scientists being willing to consult and testify and a few professional organizations being willing to take stands critical of the misrepresentation (or ignoring) of considerable sound research relevant to the questions being addressed in legal actions.[21]

It remains to be seen whether recent victories blocking the use of "brainwashing"-based testimony will be maintained in the face of strong popular belief in such notions. The "brainwashing" myth has spread around the world, and it is currently helping to fuel the growing animus toward new religions in Europe and former communist countries, not to mention other countries such as Australia, Argentina, and Brazil.[22]

The "brainwashing" idea is useful to the efforts of traditional state churches in former communist countries to exert themselves against "foreign competition." Also, the myth is useful to politicians seeking to ingratiate themselves with those newly emerging traditional churches. Particularly in Russia this can be seen to be the case.[23] These situations clearly show that the sociological notion of "accounts" is useful in describing the development of a powerful political "brainwashing" weapon in "politics of representation" battles over religious primacy in these countries.[24]

WHO ARE THESE GUYS AND GALS?

I know personally most of the small cadre of fellow scholars who have become involved as consultants and experts on behalf of some of the new religions in court cases in the U. S. and elsewhere. Our motivations for participation, I think, vary a bit, but three principles tend to drive us: (1) we thought some important values such as freedom of religion and the freedom to experiment with different lifestyles were at stake; (2) our research on why people join and what happens in the groups was directly relevant to specific court cases; and (3) our disciplines and relevant research were being misrepresented. Some were more concerned about issues of freedom and social experimentation, while others were more upset that their disciplines were being misrepresented

or ignored by self-proclaimed experts working for those opposed to the new religions.

All in this small cadre believe that newer religions should be left alone unless it can be proved that they are harming others in some tangible way.[25] We seem to agree, even though some of us are definitely not religious personally, that religious people have a right to their beliefs and practices as long as they are not harming anyone. And, based on a large amount of field work over the years, we believe that virtually all who join religious organizations do so of their own volition and that they can and do leave in large numbers, usually after only a relatively short time within the group.

My personal philosophy (which is, I think, generally shared by others of the small group of interested scholars) is that, since the actions of joining and participating are largely volitional, people's membership is their own business, not that of the state or of other people, even though those other people may be very concerned and well-meaning. Personal autonomy is an important value to me and, I think, to the others who have joined together to communicate our research findings within the legal arena. And, although we might have personal preferences otherwise, most of the scholars with whom I talk about these matters seem to agree that raising children in religious groups usually should be allowed by the state. Having a child in a minority religious group does not by itself constitute legal child abuse, and the state should usually avoid being dragged into such matters.[26]

It is not the case that the scholars willing to get involved are motivated mainly by concerns about money. Some do not have academic positions, and thus they may seek financial remuneration, but this was never the major motivation for getting caught up in battles of the "cult wars" for any of those I know. Instead, I sensed a real dismay both that the cult wars developed and that scholars' expertise was needed in those wars.[27]

IT WASN'T THE MONEY

Contrary to the efforts of some to convince the public otherwise, I and others involved on one side of the "cult war" did not get involved to reap huge fees from religious groups.[28] Indeed, I personally now have a very good understanding of the idea of "pro bono" used within the legal profession to refer to free legal assistance. I have spent many unremunerated hours offering advice to religious groups and members or their attorneys when asked how my research and that of others might be relevant to a specific court case, or going someplace, usually at an inconvenient time, to testify in a few cases.[29]

These groups felt they were being put upon by those who would apparently prefer that religious experimentation disappear in our society,

and they needed help, even if they were unable to pay for it. So I and a few others have on occasion assisted them, sometimes for a fee but usually not.[30] What effect our help has had remains to be seen.

MUCH SOUND AND FURY, PROBABLY SIGNIFYING LITTLE

All our efforts have probably signified little, to be honest. Certainly the cases that I and others, particularly Dick Anthony, worked on where "brainwashing" testimony was disallowed or limited are important, and they have precedential value for the future. And some specific cases have been and will be won on behalf of new religions because of those legal precedents.[31]

We also have been able to educate some journalists, but this is a difficult, never-ending task. Some journalists are more open than others to solid information on the groups and how they live and recruit, but most simply reflect the values of their culture or write the stories under editors whose posture concerning new religions may not be positive.[32]

Some professional associations and their officers and members have been made more aware that their disciplines were caught up in a controversy of some magnitude. Thus our efforts have resulted in some raising of consciousness among fellow professionals in our disciplines who are not directly involved in the "cult wars."[33]

However, we are all aware of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the general public and many policy makers have accepted "brainwashing" claims, with all their accouterments and implications.[34] Thus, none of us are sanguine about having made a huge difference in the world through our meager efforts at sharing our research and scholarship in legal and political arenas.

So perhaps a major effect of our efforts is that we feel better for having tried to defend the proper use of social science research results on new religions.[35] Some of us are also happy that we have been able to stand up for the important values of freedom of religion and association, even if we may not be personally religious. And some are pleased that they have been able to support social experimentation by individuals and within society.[36] However, many of us caught up in the conflict long for cessation of the war and a time when we can get back to addressing other simpler questions, such as the ones that originally motivated me as I began this long and admittedly interesting journey.

ENDNOTES

[1] I have testified six times in my over-25-year career in cases involving new religions. One case involved the religious group about which I and others had written (James Richardson, Mary Stewart, and Robert Simmonds, *Organized Miracles* [New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1979]). Long after the book was written I was asked to testify about the group in Federal Tax Court because the IRS was trying to prove that the group owed hundreds of thousands of dollars in unrelated business income taxes. Indeed, I received a subpoena for all my research data on this group, a development raising many ethical and practical issues. The group lost the case, effectively putting it out of business.

Another was a civil rights case in federal court in Minneapolis brought by a 27-year-old man against deprogrammers who had kidnapped him and his pregnant wife from a fundamentalist religious group in a rural area of the upper Midwest (described in the Appendix to *Cults, Culture, and the Law,* ed. Thomas Robbins, William Shepherd, and James McBride [Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985], 225-26). He won a directed verdict, but the deprogrammers "successfully" deprogrammed his wife, thus breaking up the marriage.

A third involved being a witness for the prosecution in a kidnapping case brought against deprogrammers of a 26-year-old woman who was kidnapped by force in Denver, taken across state lines, kept for two weeks, and who finally escaped her captors by jumping from a second-story window. The deprogrammers were freed after a vigorous defense based on the concept of "necessity" (i.e., it was better to kidnap than to leave her in such an awful group as the "Moonies"). The Colorado Supreme Court, which had allowed the "necessity" defense that led to weeks of testimony about the beliefs and practices of the Unification Church, eventually changed its position and disallowed such defenses in future cases.

A fourth case involved a 55-year-old man named Gregory Mull, who was counter-suing the Church Universal and Triumphant for over $200 million. He claimed he had been "brainwashed" into joining the group and doing work for them, although he had voluntarily joined the group to design some buildings that the group later decided not to build. The man suffered from a serious, degenerative nerve disease at the time of trial which plainly evoked considerable sympathy from the jury. He blamed the church for the disease, among other claims, and won a judgment of some $1.5 million. I testified to the fact that joining a NRM involves considerable back-and-forth negotiation, and in this case, I had a stack of letters exchanged by Mull and church officials to analyze. But my social psychological analysis was of little moment in the face of a crippled defendant making brainwashing claims.

A fifth case involved testifying in the longest-running wardship case in English history. The case involved The Family and an effort by the mother of a member to gain custody of her grandson who was living in the group with his mother. I testified based on my years of research on this group, which formerly was called the Children of God (see Rex Davis and James Richardson, "The Organization and Functioning of the Children of God," *Sociological Analysis* 37 [1976]: 321-39; James Richardson and Rex Davis, "Experiential Fundamentalism: Revisions of Orthodoxy in the Jesus Movement," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51 [1983]: 397-425; and James Richardson, "Update on 'The Family': Organizational Change and Development in a Controversial New Religious Group," in *Sex, Slander, and Salvation: Investigating The Family/Children of God,* eds. James Lewis and Gordon Melton [Stanford, CA: Center for Academic Publication, 1994], 27-39). The judge eventually decided—after a vigorous attempt by the grandmother, a number of anti-cultists, and a governmental agency to win custody—to leave the child in the group with certain safeguards in place.

The sixth case in which I have testified involved an important freedom of religion case in Russia in 1997. A functionary of the Russian Orthodox Church was being sued for libel for statements printed about a number of minority faiths, including some of the

controversial new religions in America, but also such groups as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses. The case was lost by those newer faiths bringing the case. The conflict was part of the larger effort of the Orthodox Church to reestablish itself as the state religion in Russia. See James Richardson and Marat Shterin, "Legal Battles Over Religious Freedom in Russia: A Case Study of *Yakunin v. Dvorkin*" (paper presented at "The Protection of Religious Minorities: Religious Freedom and Human Rights in Post-Communist Europe" conference, Krakow, Poland, 1998).

When I have testified, I usually have my travel expenses paid and have sometimes received a small fee. But, in over 20 years of such involvement, I have not earned more than $3,000 in fees in these cases, and in three of them I did not earn any fee at all. The allegation by some that those of us involved in these cases have been getting rich is simply wrong. Indeed, I have spent much more of my own money doing research on the newer groups than I could ever earn as an expert witness, even if I wanted to take this path (which I do not).

[2] For examples of such legally oriented writings on freedom of religion and evidentiary issues raised by social control efforts against new religions, see James Richardson, "Cult/Brainwashing Cases and Freedom of Religion," *Journal of Church and State* 33 (1991): 55-74; James Richardson, "Legal Status of New Religions in the United States," *Social Compass* 43 (1995): 249-64; James Richardson, "Minority Religions, Religious Freedom, and the Pan-European Legal and Political Institutions," *Journal of Church and State* 37 (1995): 39-59; James Richardson, "Minority Religions ('Cults') and the Law: Comparisons of the United States, Europe, and Australia," *University of Queensland Law Review* 18 (1995): 183-207; 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 (1996): 873-904; James Richardson and Gerald Ginsburg, "'Brainwashing' Claims in Light of *Daubert*," forthcoming in *Current Legal Studies* (1998).

[3] See James Richardson, "Sociology and the New Religions: 'Brainwashing,' the Courts, and Religious Freedom," in *Witnessing for Sociology*, eds. Pam Jenkins and Steve Kroll-Smith (New York: Praeger, 1997), 115-34, for a brief recounting of this and related episodes that raise many questions about the issue of trying to resolve disputes among scholars in a court of law. The potential lucrativeness of the anti-cult expert careers is demonstrated by the claim of one of the two that one particular action—the filing of an *amicus* brief criticizing his testimony—would cost him some $500,000 in lost fees. The other plaintiff in the two suits was, according to her own testimony, charging $350 per hour for consulting and testimony, and had testified in over 40 such cases as of the late 1980s.

[4] I have been attacked, even vilified, in some nonscholarly anti-cult publications by name, and occasionally referred to indirectly in some more scholarly anti-cult oriented writings. The recent publication by Benjamin Zablocki, "The Blacklisting of a Concept: The Strange History of the Brainwashing Conjecture in the Sociology of Religion," *Nova Religio* 1 (1997): 96-121, is a disturbing effort that mischaracterizes my work through selective reading and "straw man" arguments. Zablocki erroneously implies that I am motivated in my actions by pecuniary interests. His version of the history of the "cult wars" is disingenuous in places and rewrites that history in others. Those wanting another version of that history might read other accounts such as my "Sociology and the New Religions: 'Brainwashing,' the Courts, and Religious Freedom," as well as Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Negligence, Coercion, and the Protection of Religious Belief," *Journal of Church and State* 37 (1995): 509-36.

[5] For a listing of publications not referred to in the endnotes of this paper, contact the author.

[6] Early in my career I and some students actually tested the "thought reform" model of Robert Lifton with the Jesus Movement groups I was studying. This was done because of claims being made, sometimes in courtrooms, that this was the best explanation of why otherwise bright and well-educated youth would join such a movement. I wanted to test this idea, with which I had some sympathy at the time, and so we did. See James Richardson, Mary Harder, and Robert Simmonds, "Thought Reform and the Jesus Movement," *Youth*

and Society 4 (1972): 185-202. Much to my chagrin, I then found out that the paper was being circulated by some anti-cult groups, based on the apparent assumption that since we were testing the model we must fully agree with it! A close reading of the paper shows that we did find some validity in Lifton's model, and that similar results might apply to Christian fundamentalism in general. However, we also concluded that the theory was wanting when it came to certain important elements such as the presence of physical coercion, which was simply not found in Jesus Movement groups. We concluded that the so-called "stripping process" did not function as was proposed in Lifton's model, mainly because the participants were coming voluntarily to the movement seeking a solution to problems they sensed in their lives, be they problems of meaning or drug or alcohol addiction. I then became aware that those who were applying Lifton's model were usually doing so by not considering his last chapter, which dealt with voluntary personal change in Communist China. See my section on the evidence concerning how new religions have a positive impact on substance abuse in John Muffler, John Langrod, David Larson, and James Richardson, "Religion," in *Substance Abuse: A Comprehensive Textbook*, 3rd ed., eds. Joyce Lowinson, Perdo Ruiz, Robert Millman, and John Langrod (Baltimore, MD: Williams and Wilkins, 1997), 492-99, as well as James Richardson, "Studies in Conversion: Secularization or Reenchantment?" in *The Sacred in a Secular Age*, ed. Phillip Hammond (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 104-21, for a clearer statement of my view of what happens when people convert to new religions. Assumptions of passivity underlying thought reform and brainwashing theories were simply not met in the Jesus Movement groups I studied, even if they were espousing a religious ideology that I personally found problematic. It was this research testing the thought reform model that first began to convince me that such theories were not applicable to the new religions. See James Richardson and Brock Kilbourne, "Classical and Contemporary Applications of Brainwashing Models: A Comparison and Critique," in *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy*, ed. David Bromley and James Richardson (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983), 29-45, and Brock Kilbourne and James Richardson, "Psychotherapy and New Religions in a Pluralistic Society," *American Psychologist* 39 (1964): 237-51, for more detail on underlying assumptions of classical brainwashing models, the lack of understanding of that early work demonstrated by contemporary users of the ideas, and alternative explanations for many persons' fascination with such views.

[7] See James Richardson, "The Active Versus Passive Convert: A Paradigm Shift in Conversion/Recruitment Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 24 (1985): 163-79, for a discussion of the activist approach to participation.

[8] See Frederick Bird and Bill Reimer, "A Sociological Analysis of New Religious and Para-religious Movements," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 21 (1982): 1-14; Stuart Wright, *Leaving the Cults: the Dynamics of Defection* (Washington, D.C.: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1987); and James Richardson, Jan van der Lans, and Frans Derks, "Leaving and Labeling: Voluntary and Coerced Disaffiliation from Religious Social Movements," in *Research in Social Movements, Conflict, and Change*, eds. Kurt and Gladys Lang (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1986), for research and theorizing on the processes involved in leaving groups.

[9] See James Richardson, "The 'Deformation' of New Religions: Impacts of Societal and Organizational Factors," in *Cults, Culture, and the Law*, eds. Thomas Robbins, William Shepherd, and James McBride (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 163-75, for a discussion of the external and internal forces that impact minority religious groups.

[10] See Douglas Laycock, "Free Exercise and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act," *Fordham Law Review* 62 (1994): 883-904, at 888-89 for a discussion of the dramatic impact of such a damage claim on one small religious group, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, in California.

[11] The term "cult" is very pejorative, and just labeling a group with that term can have immense political and legal implications. See Jane Dillon and James Richardson, "The 'Cult' Concept: A Politics of Representation Analysis," *SYZYGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* 3 (1994): 185-97; and James Richardson, "The 'Cult' Concept: From

Sociological-Technical to Popular Negative," *Review of Religious Research* 34 (1993): 348-56, for discussions of the history of that term and the implications of its use.

[12] Such notions about newer religious groups have been used to justify raids by heavily armed police which resulted in persons' being arrested and having their children taken away from them. Sometimes the children were not returned for months, and sometimes the parents, who had done nothing but belong to an unpopular religious group, spent months in a foreign prison. See James Richardson, "Social Control of New Religions: From 'Brainwashing' Claims to Child Abuse Accusations," in *Children in New Religions,* eds. Susan Palmer and Charlotte Hardman (New York: Rutgers University Press, 1998, forthcoming), for details. Such notions also have been used at least as partial justification for such actions as the BATF raid on David Koresh and his followers near Waco, as well as many other actions that seem questionable to some. For general discussions of these issues see David Bromley and Thomas Robbins, "The Role of Government in Regulating New and Nonconventional Religions," in *The Role of Government in Monitoring and Regulating Religion in Public Life,* eds. James Wood and Derek Davis (Waco, TX: Dawson Institute of Church-State Religions, 1993), as well as Cole Durham, "Treatment of Religious Minorities in the United States," in *European Consortium for Church and State Research: The Legal Status of Religious Minorities in the Countries of the European Union* (1994), for more examples. On Waco, see James Richardson, "Manufacturing Consent About Koresh," and Christopher Ellison and John Bartkowski, "'Babies Were Being Beaten': Exploring Child Abuse Allegations at Ranch Apocalypse," both in *Armageddon in Waco,* ed. Stuart Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago

[13] See Marvin Scott and Stanford Lyman, "Accounts," *American Sociological Review* 33 (1976): 46-62, for the classic paper on accounts, and James Beckford, "Accounting for Conversion," *British Journal of Sociology* 29 (1978): 249-62, and Richardson, van der Lans, and Derks, "Leaving and Labeling," 97-126, for applications of the notion to minority religions. See James Richardson, J. Gordon Melton, and Robert Balch, "Problems of Research and Data in the Study of New Religions," in *The Handbook of Cults and Sects in America,* eds. Jeffrey Hadden and David Bromley (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1993), 213-29, for a discussion of a special kind of account that has been particularly troublesome in the area of new religions. I refer to the treatment of accounts developed, sometimes in therapy, by ex-members (many of whom were deprogrammed) as sound data on what life in the groups is like. Depending on such accounts for a description of life in the groups is a bit like writing about higher education by interviewing a list of drop-outs, expellees, or those who were forced to quit school against their will, but who felt they needed therap because of their experiences.

[14] See James Beckford, "Through a Looking Glass and Out the Other Side: Withdrawal from the Reverend Moon's Unification Church," *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 45 (1978): 95-116 for a good discussion of triangulation, as well as Richardson, Melton, and Balch, "Problems of Research and Data in the Study of New Religions."

[15] In 1986 I asked a class of a dozen trial judges to whom I was teaching a social science methods course just how many members of the Unification Church (UC) there were in America. All of the judges, from eight different states around the country, had heard of the "Moonies," and they guessed that there were anywhere from 300,000 to 1.5 million of them in America at that time. When told that there were never more than 10,000 members of the UC at any one time in America and that there were no more than 3,000 present members in the U. S., the judges were shocked. But revelation of the huge disparity between their perceptions and actuality led to an interesting discussion of why they thought that there were so many UC members around and that they were actually a threat to our society.

[16] See, for instance, Bromley and Richardson, *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy;* Tom Robbins and Dick Anthony, "Deprogramming, Brainwashing, and the Medicalization of New Religions," *Social Problems* 29 (1982): 283-97; Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice?* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); Gene James, "Brainwashing: The Myth and the Actuality," *Thought: A Review of Culture and Idea* 61 (1986): 241-57.

[17] See John DeWitt, James Richardson, and Lyle Warner, "Novel Scientific Evidence in Controversial Cases: A Social Psychological Examination," *Law and Psychology Review* 21 (1997): 1-26, for an experimental study showing the powerful effects of having a reputed expert validate the stereotyped opinions about new religions concerning "brainwashing." Also, see Jeffrey Pfeifer, "The Psychological Framing of Cults: Schematic Representations and Cult Evaluations," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 22 (1982): 531-44, for another excellent experimental study that shows the power of perceptions about the activities of "cults" and those who join them.

[18] See James Richardson, "Legal Status of New Religions in the United States," *Social Compass* 42 (1995): 249-64, and Dick Anthony and Tom Robbins, "Negligence, Coercion, and the Protection of Religious Belief," *Journal of Church and State* 37 (1995): 509-36, for discussions of some of these cases.

[19] See Richardson, "'Brainwashing' Cases Outside the United States."

[20] Dick Anthony was involved as a consultant in major decisions to disallow such testimony, with occasional assistance from others, including myself. See Dick Anthony, "Religious Movements and Brainwashing Litigation: Evaluating Key Testimony," in *In Gods We Trust*, 2nd edit., eds. Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1990), 295-344, and Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Law, Social Science, and the 'Brainwashing' Exception to the First Amendment," *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 10 (1992): 5-29, as well as James Richardson, "Cult/Brainwashing Cases and the Freedom of Religion," *Journal of Church and State* 33 (1991): 55-74, for reviews of some of these key cases.

[21] See James Richardson, "Sociology and the New Religions: 'Brainwashing,' the Courts, and Religious Freedom," in *Witnessing for Sociology*, eds. Pam Jenkins and S. Kroll-Smith (New York: Praeger, 1996), 115-34, for one discussion of the machinations involved with taking a stand on the use of "brainwashing" claims in courtrooms by professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association and the American Sociological Association.

[22] I recognize that strong psychological pressures can be brought against individuals in groups. Much social psychology, especially American social psychology, focuses on what are called conformity effects, as I point out in James Richardson, "A Social Psychological Critique of 'Brainwashing' Claims About Recruitment to New Religions," in *The Handbook of Sects and Cults in America*, eds. Hadden and Bromley, 75-97. But I am concerned when such a powerful political weapon as the term "brainwashing," which was itself originally designed as a political weapon against communism by a CIA employee named Edward Hunter, is used indiscriminately against relatively weak religious groups, sometimes to the extent that the groups are destroyed and their members suffer great hardship. I am deeply troubled by efforts to resurrect the term "brainwashing" from the dustbin of history, where it belongs (see Zablocki, "The Blacklisting of a Concept"). The relative effects of various recruitment methods can be investigated without using such an ideologically charged term. Indeed, insistence on using that term clouds the issue so much as to discourage efforts at scholarly communication about the matter of recruitment to newer faiths.

[23] See Marat Shetrin and James Richardson, "Local Laws Restricting Religion in Russia: Precursors of Russia's New National Law," *Journal of Church and State* 40 (1998): 319-41; Richardson and Shterin, "Legal Battles Over Religious Freedom in Russia: A Case Study of *Yakunin versus Dvorkin*"; and Marat Shterin, James Richardson, and Eileen Barker, "The Western Anti-Cult Movement and Debates About New Religions in Russia" (papers presented at conference in Krakow, Poland, 1998, for discussions of the Russian situation. Also, see James Richardson, "Minority Religions, Religious Freedom, and the New Pan-European Political and Judicial Institutions," *Journal of Church and State* 37 (1995): 39-59, for coverage of the Western European treatment of minority religions in legal and political pan-European institutions, and James Richardson, "New Religions and Religious Freedom in Eastern and Central Europe: A Sociological Analysis," in *New Religious Phenomena in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Irena Borowik and G. Babinski (Krakow, Poland: Nomos, 1997), 257-83, for a discussion of developments in Eastern and Central Europe.

[24] "Politics of representation" is a phrase referring to battles of language and the right to designate something by a term that carries certain connotations. See Dillon and Richardson, "The 'Cult' Concept: A Politics of Representation Analysis," for a discussion of the battle over use of the term "cult," with all its negative baggage, to refer to newer religious groups in American society. That term has become a cultural product being diffused around the world and used, for example, in European societies to make negative statements about new faiths in that context.

[25] If harm is being done to individuals, then to a person, this group of scholars would accept the idea that intervention would be justified. But the idea of breaking up religious groups because of unfounded accusations or forcing persons who are of age to leave religious groups because their parents prefer for them not to be there seems unacceptable to those who value civil liberties. If, in extreme cases, law enforcement agents must take action against a group, those actions should be consistent with the law and not excessive in the use of force. We do not need any more "Wacos."

[26] I realize that if someone makes accusations of child abuse in today's climate of opinion and legal strictures, authorities must take action. But I would urge that care be taken to avoid accepting such accusations without solid proof. Some disastrous developments have occurred in this area when authorities acted too hastily or without verifying accusations put to them by dissident members or other detractors. See Richardson, "Social Control of New Religions: From 'Brainwashing' Claims to Child Abuse Accusations," for a discussion of the use of child abuse accusations as a social control device against new religions.

[27] I am aware of only one person, a scholar without an academic position, who has depended for part of his life on income from work with the defense in "cult" cases. And I know from many conversations that he does not relish this turn of events. However, since his sources of income are limited by his not having an academic position, he has accepted fees for his work, which is of top quality, and makes no apologies for having done so.

[28] See Zablocki's several unsubstantiated references (see endnote 4) to lucrative payments from new religions to scholars studying them and getting involved in court cases. He apparently would be surprised at the news that I have turned down involvement in a number of cases, including cases in which I knew a sizable fee would be forthcoming.

[29] Just for the record, and because one of the other symposium participants asked, I have also worked over the years with many parents and others concerned about the fact that someone they knew had joined a new religion. I have received many calls over the years asking for advice, and I have always been willing to give it, to send the person calling copies of papers and books that I and others have done, and to refer them to organizations that might assist them in learning more objective information about the group into which their loved one has chosen to go. When such calls come, I always talk about the research showing how small the groups are and how high their attrition rates are, and I counsel patience and maintaining contact. I point out that the odds favor the person voluntarily leaving the group in a short time, but I also urge that the person's choices concerning religion be respected. When asked, I explicitly counsel against any form of deprogramming, noting that my reading of the meager research on deprogramming suggests that this action may remove the person from the group in the short term, but that to take such a drastic action may well result in serious problems of relations with the person in the future.

[30] Of course, I have gained access to information as I have worked on these cases, and some publications have resulted. These publications have been developed mainly to illuminate this area of the law for others, and they have contributed only marginally to any salary increases I have obtained.

[31] See especially the *Fishman* case (*United States v. Fishman*, 743 F. Supp. 713 [N.D. Cal. 1990]).

[32] See James Richardson, "Journalistic Bias Toward New Religious Movements in Australia," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 11 (1996): 289-302; and James Richardson and Barend van Dreil, "Journalistic Attitudes Toward New Religious Movements," *Review of Religious Research* 39 (1997): 116-36, for presentations of research results on the values of journalists who cover new religions.

[33] See Richardson, "Sociology and the New Religions: 'Brainwashing,' the Courts, and Religious Freedom," for a discussion of the involvement of professional associations in the "cult wars."

[34] See public opinion data reported in David Bromley and Edward Breschel, "General Population and Institutional Elite Support for Control of New Religious Movements: Evidence from National Survey Data," *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 10 (1992): 39-52; and James Richardson, "Public Opinion and the Tax Evasion Trial of Reverend Moon," *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 10 (1992): 53-63, clearly showing that many members of the general public and opinion leaders share beliefs that "cults" "brainwash" their members and that they should be controlled.

[35] As indicated earlier, I now do some scholarly writing on the issue of criteria to be used by the courts when dealing with social science evidence. This line of research and writing was given impetus by my experiences in trying to deal with "brainwashing" claims within the legal system. See James Richardson, "Dramatic Changes in American Expert Evidence Law: From *Frye* to *Daubert*," *The Judicial Review* 2 (1994): 13-36; and James Richardson, Gerald Ginsburg, Sophia Gatowski, and Shirley Dobbin, "Problems Applying *Daubert* to Psychological Syndrome Evidence," *Judicature* 79 (1995): 10-16, for more general discussions of evidentiary criteria, and Richardson and Ginsburg, "'Brainwashing' Claims in Light of *Daubert*," for a specific discussion of application of those criteria to "brainwashing" testimony.

[36] See Tom Robbins and David Bromley, "Social Experimentation and the Significance of American New Religions," *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 4 (1993): 1-28, for discussion of the value of social experimentation for society and for individuals.

Academic Compromise in the Social Scientific Study of Alternative Religions

Stephen A. Kent and Theresa Krebs

Two decades ago, Irving Louis Horowitz raised ethical issues and methodological concerns about social scientists' involvement in Unification Church conferences.[1] Many of his objections centered on issues of propriety concerning academic relationships with research subjects and the organizations that they studied. Horowitz was concerned, for example, about the quality of information that conference attendees received.[2] Moreover, he speculated about what forms of reciprocity and advocacy might result from scholars who benefited from Reverend Moon's expenses-paid largesse.[3] The debate between Horowitz and his critics on the topics of objectivity and ethical relationships between social scientists and the groups they study continued into the early 1980s, but then died down.[4]

Much has happened in the study of alternative religions and related groups since Horowitz publicly aired his concerns,[5] and a renewal and update of that debate is long overdue. Indeed, many of Horowitz's fears about academic objectivity being compromised have proven justified, with the passage of time amplifying the magnitude of the problems and the numbers of parties involved. Numerous groups beyond the Unification Church have learned the value of successfully courting academics[6] and, as a result, the social scientific study of new or alternative religions has suffered.

This article discusses recent developments in the social scientific study of religion in which academics became involved in religious organizations' efforts to gain social legitimacy. Knowingly or not, academics have involved themselves in undertakings that enhance the reputations of controversial religious ideologies at the expense of accepted social scientific procedures involving objective analysis and dissemination of research. Indeed, as Marybeth Ayella warned a half-decade ago, "[c]o-optation of the researcher can be a major problem for the unwary researcher, because he or she can become, without intent, a 'counter' in the ongoing stigma contest between cult and anticult."[7]

BIASED ACADEMIC STUDIES

Two recent studies of controversial religions underscore problems of research and publication on groups that see academics as a means to acquire badly needed positive press.[8] In one case, the group had received years of negative publicity involving allegations that its children suffered sexual abuse under the auspices of doctrines that the leader himself developed and propagated.[9] As the organization was battling a court case in the United Kingdom that threatened to expose its earlier child rearing practices to public scrutiny,[10] group leaders contacted a scholar seeking "advice on how to combat the negative publicity and other attacks"[11] it was receiving around the world.[12] The resultant publication that the scholar co-edited (and published through his own publication business) includes chapters based on some researchers' visits to various group homes in which they observed activities, interviewed members, and examined literature. The organization was so pleased with the findings that it uses the study as part of a public relations package that it sends to the media.[13]

Significant methodological problems, however, existed with aspects of the data collection and write-up, which made many of the findings about the group highly suspect.[14] First and foremost is the fact that this organization specifically designed what it internally called "media homes,"[15] which are the very sites that some of the researchers visited.[16] Hand-picked individuals living in these well-funded facilities went through rehearsals about how to portray themselves and the group to media, scholars, and others who might scrutinize them. Subsequently, former members have reported how these media homes operated, even describing the drills and rehearsals in which they participated.[17]

One former member, for example, who had lived at a media home described the place as "basically a nice, squeaky clean, polished-up home [which was] about as polished as you can get."[18] Another former member provided insights about the "mega-preparation" that took place prior to visits from outsiders—such as moving out extra children, removing beds from overcrowded bedrooms, and placing single mothers elsewhere.[19] The media homes apparently had "only the best PR people there and the show troupes that needed to be there to sing, and the people who were, you know, prepared to talk and, you know, knew how to talk and wouldn't, you know, slip up or whatever."[20] The organization produced booklets about anticipated questions, and spokespersons learned how to respond to queries with appropriate answers.[21]

Spokespersons' rehearsals of "questions and answers—what to say about this, and what to say about that" prevented their revealing sensitive information about the group.[22] Moreover, we know that the organization undertook efforts to destroy controversial publications when it realized

that some of its literature provided critics with ammunition about questionable practices in the group.[23] In essence, much of the information that some of the researchers wrote about was precisely what the organization wanted them to use.

A review of this study raised the important methodological issue of "impression management" by this group and others whose members know that they are being examined and studied.[24] Citing Erving Goffman's concept of impression management,[25] the reviewer reminded readers about how groups work together as teams to prevent exposure of damaging information to outsiders–including, presumably, researchers.[26] Very similar problems, however, occurred in a second study that this scholar and his co-editor undertook, this time after organizing a team of researchers from various academic disciplines.

In mid-summer of 1993 many of the contributors to this first volume participated in a study of another group's facility in the American northwest. This organization was also suffering from negative media coverage and poor public relations and wanted to improve its image in the press, which may explain why it accepted an independent scholar's offer to organize a team to study it.[27] Of particular concern were allegations that this organization had amassed a weapons arsenal as part of its preparation for Armageddon, which its leader predicted might happen.[28] Although the organization denied these weapons allegations, the husband of the leader was arrested in 1987 for attempting to make an illegal arms purchase.[29] Issues concerning arms and controversial religions were on the public's mind since the disaster at Waco, and many people predicted that any governmental intervention against the group likely would result in another shoot-out. At the same time, the Internal Revenue Service had removed the group's tax exempt status, which threatened to cost the organization millions of dollars.[30]

"Most [researchers] were unable to stay for more than a few days" on the group's property while the organization held an annual festival and conference between 25 June and 4 July 1993.[31] As was the case in the previous study that we mentioned, the principal scholar overseeing the project co-published a collection of essays in book form with the press that he operated. The group under study was so pleased with the results that it interviewed some of the participating researchers in an organizational newspaper[32] and, as happened with the other study, used the book as part of its public relations package.

We know a great deal about the internal dynamics of this second study because two members of the research team spent their time conducting "a study of the study." The two social scientists were critical of the study's research questions, research design, and methodology—concluding that these weaknesses prevented researchers from getting at what was going on behind the scenes.[33] Not surprisingly, therefore, the study failed to elucidate the issues that made the group

controversial—excessive commercialism, use of organizational funds to pay off a civil penalty against the leader, and arms violations.[34] Ironically, nine days after the researchers concluded their visit, a lawyer for the organization stated "in a letter to [the] Justice Department, 'the church wants to accept responsibility for weapons. . . .'"[35]

Although some of the essays on both groups seem academically sound, overall assessment of the two collections is that they failed to examine crucial aspects of their target organizations.[36] These studies bring to mind the concerns raised by Horowitz that the Unification Church might use positive findings from questionable research that it sponsored in order to attempt to legitimize itself.[37] As a consequence, the study of religion suffers in numerous ways.

Academics who do not know about the controversies surrounding these studies may try to fit their results into larger, theoretical statements, essentially building their models and theories on what amounts to a foundation of sand. Current members who themselves have questions about aspects of group operations or ideology may judge themselves inaccurate or at fault in the face of these previously published "expert" opinions. Similarly, disaffected former members may be driven further into silence or confusion by the statements of researchers that categorically dismiss or disregard the experiences that former members had while living in the groups. Courts, the media, and social services may be misled by the findings, and the groups' leaders may never be held accountable for questionable or harmful actions. Indeed, academic respectability is diminished when the media or other investigators uncover the information that the supposedly expert researchers miss or ignore.[38] In sum, superficial research can have very real and harmful effects.

LOBBYING AND "FRONT" GROUPS

Not to be overlooked is that the two edited volumes discussed thus far were carried out under the auspices of what was purported to be a research and information organization that operated outside of educational or academic oversight. Indeed, a member of one of the studied groups appears to have been involved with the formation of the research organization.[39] As an independent entity operated by an independent scholar, normal academic obligations such as ethics reviews, pressures to publish in peer review publications, and protection of the identities and confidentiality of sources are unenforceable. Moreover, independence from educational or academic institutions likely means that neither the research organization nor its principal researchers have secure salaries, making researchers more susceptible to financial pressure from the groups that they examine. Objective scholarship possibly

becomes the victim of immediate financial and social pressures, and scholars may drift into operations that resemble paid lobbying. Indeed, secret documents from one group revealed that it had actively run what it called a "front group" operation during the 1970s, which was an organization comprised of impressively credentialed people whose opinions on alternative religions benefited the controversial sponsoring group itself.[40]

ACADEMICS AND LEGAL ISSUES

Among the many important reasons for scholars to conduct ethically and methodologically rigorous research is that these scholars likely will get approached to be expert witnesses in court cases involving their target organizations or members.[41] Disgruntled former members often bring suit against their former spiritual leaders for a variety of reasons, some of which are quite serious in nature.[42] Increasingly, however, the controversial groups themselves are bringing lawsuits against an array of perceived enemies.[43] Most immediately, researchers can serve as expert witnesses, thereby having direct opportunities to influence judicial outcomes, either for or against the groups.[44] Because academic testimony is so valuable, social scientists of religion may become pawns in high stakes games,[45] as appears to have happened in a recent prominent case.[46]

The 1995 case in question involved an attempt by one group to silence a critical organization in the countercult movement through a civil court decision.[47] An expert for the plaintiff, who deservedly is one of the most respected researchers in the sociology of religion, provided testimony and conclusions about the countercult organization.[48] Much of the case revolved around the actions of a person whom the court considered to have been a "contact person" for the countercult organization. Apparently, however, she was listed as representing a *different* organization on the local Crisis Clinic hotline that gave her number to a concerned inquirer seeking information about getting relatives out of a so-called "cult."[49] Although the academic expert had not interviewed anyone from the countercult organization since 1979 and had not worked on the countercult movement in general for approximately six years prior to his testimony, he testified to his conviction that the organization was involved in illegal deprogramming.[50] His testimony probably was a factor that led to a negative decision against the countercult organization, and the organization's subsequent bankruptcy.

When, however, a major American news investigative program examined the case over two years later, it discovered that the signatory to one of the most damaging affidavits against the countercult organization had renounced his previously sworn statement.[51] In

addition, the program discovered that a private investigator had reported that he could not find any evidence concerning the countercult organization's alleged illegal deprogramming activities.[52] The case, therefore, against the countercult organization was weak, even though an appeals court affirmed the judgment against it.[53] The possibility exists that the controversial organization used the academic to further its own aspirations, which involved the destruction of its opponent.[54]

One of the more surprising legal interventions by scholars involves the support of a dozen academics for efforts by a controversial organization to keep its upper level documents secret.[55] Drawing examples from a wide range of religious and secular organizations and groups, these academics insist that secrecy has been a crucial aspect of religions for millennia, so a contemporary organization's attempts to keep secret some of its most important theological positions should be respected by the courts and others. This position, however, potentially damages scholarship by denying access to documents that researchers need to conduct analyses. Indeed, academics should realize that organizations frequently use secrets to cover instances of manipulation and abuse, which are activities that researchers should be keen to uncover and analyze. It is worth repeating, therefore, the position articulated by Horowitz almost twenty years ago:

> Sociological analysis is highly revelatory in character. Social research opens up to public scrutiny and criticism the innermost secrets of religious organization. This is the inevitable ground upon which sociological and religious analysis must differ. . . . [Hence] the criteria involved in the pursuit of religion and in that of science are different.[56]

The fact that some very prominent social scientists are supporting efforts to deny their colleagues access to important documents reveals the extent to which parts of the academic community are willing to subvert legitimate areas of research in order for religious groups to retain the power of secrecy.[57] As a consequence of this position, religious groups gain an unprecedented level of informational control over the academics who wish to examine them.

CONCLUSION

Alternative religions have learned the value of endorsements by, and support from, academics and other researchers. Endorsements and support may assist organizations in their attempts to construct positive public images, and academic opinions may assist controversial religions in meeting organizational goals (including the destruction of enemies). In the process, however, social science suffers, with public relations and

advocacy replacing objective research and publication of results. As a result of diminished objectivity on the part of a few social scientists, colleagues receive conclusions of questionable accuracy, courts hear and read opinions that may not be scholastically rigorous, and publications that are not flattering to religious subjects may get suppressed. Scholars who compromise objectivity or academic integrity threaten to diminish the reputation of social science within the academy and among informed members of the public. Indeed, an understated but scornful comment (cloaked in Latin) by the respected analyst of journalism, Mark Silk, indicates that our reputation already has diminished in the eyes of some. After mentioning that scholars may be dependent upon the groups they study for financial support and access to both members and documents, Silk alluded to a book title by John Henry Newman (1801-1890) in concluding, "reporters can perhaps be forgiven for disregarding the conventional *apologia pro culta sua* [*sic*: a defense on behalf of one's own cult] of [new religious movement] scholars."[58]

ENDNOTES

[1] Irving Louis Horowitz, "Science, Sin, and Sponsorship," in *Science, Sin, and Scholarship: The Politics of Reverend Moon and the Unification Church*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978), 261-82.

[2] Horowitz, "Science, Sin, and Sponsorship," 270.

[3] Horowitz, "Science, Sin, and Sponsorship," 261-71, 280.

[4] In 1983, for example, a journal for the social scientific study of religion, *Sociological Analysis*, devoted a major part of the Fall issue to a symposium on scholarship and sponsorship.

[5] See, for example, James T. Richardson, "Reflexivity and Objectivity in the Study of Controversial New Religions," *Religion* 21 (1991): 305-18; Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson, "Studying Religion Today: Controversiality and 'Objectivity' in the Sociology of Religion," *Religion* 21 (1991): 319-37.

[6] Stephen A. Kent, "Deviance Labeling and Normative Strategies in the Canadian 'New Religion/Countercult Debate,'" *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 15, no. 4 (1990): 393-416.

[7] Marybeth Ayella, "'They Must Be Crazy': Some of the Difficulties in Researching 'Cults,'" in *Researching Sensitive Topics*, eds. Claire M. Renzetti and Raymond M. Lee (London: Sage, 1993), 121.

[8] James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Church Universal and Triumphant in Scholarly Perspective* (Stanford, CA: Center for Academic Publication, 1994); James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Sex, Slander, and Salvation: Investigating the Family/Children of God* (Stanford, CA: Center for Academic Publication, 1994).

[9] For some background regarding a dispute between this scholar and one of the authors (Kent), see Albert Mobilio, "Children of a Lusty God," *Lingua Franca* (July/August, 1994): 16-19; Stephen A. Kent, Editor's Introduction to "Lustful Prophet: A Psychosexual Historical Study of the Children of God's Leader, David Berg," *Cultic Studies Journal* 11, no. 2 (1994): 135-88.

[10] The case began on 18 February 1992, when the court made a child (whose mother was a Family member) a ward of the court. Alan Ward, *W 42 1992 Judgement in the British High*

Court of Justice: Family Division (19 October 1995): 4. After reviewing extensive court and expert evidence, the judge in the British case did in fact conclude, "[t]here is, therefore, overwhelming evidence that the high leadership within [this group] has been guilty of child sexual abuse" (Ward, *Judgement in the British High Court of Justice*, 120).

[11] Lewis and Melton, eds., *Sex, Slander, and Salvation*, vi.

[12] During the early 1990s, for example, police in Argentina ("Officials Study Cult Evidence," *Edmonton Journal*, September 5, 1993, A6; "Argentine Court Releases Cult Members Charged With Sexual Abuse," December 14, 1993, A6), Australia (Luke Morfesse, "Sect Children in Custody," *The West Australian*, May 16, 1992, 3), France ("Police in France Raid Sect Which Advocates Free Love," *Edmonton Journal*, June 11, 1993, A5; "Children of French Sect Taken into Care," *Times* [London], June 12, 1993, 15), and the United Kingdom (Maurice Chittenden and Maria Laura Avignolo, "The Day the 'Martians' Woke Up," *Sunday Times* [London], September 5, 1993, 12) raided several of the organization's homes from which they removed the children to custodial facilities. Allegations against adult members included child sexual abuse, enslavement, and kidnapping. Following the collapse of the cases for lack of evidence, state authorities eventually returned the children to their homes. The organization issued a special news release containing excerpts from several official judgments which stated that in all cases the charges were unsubstantiated ("'The Family' Vindicated in Every Case!" *World Services* [Zurich, Switzerland: World Services, (n.d.) 1994], 2).

[13] The organization also includes a video among its public relations material. The video contains interviews with what the organization calls "leading authorities in the fields of sociology, psychology, education and religion" (The Family, *Insight* [Video], 1994: coverleaf). Comments that some of the experts made suggest that they based at least part of their evaluations on observations made in the group's media homes.

[14] Robert Balch, Review of *Sex, Slander, and Salvation: Investigating the Family/Children of God*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35 (March 1996): 72.

[15] Stephen Kent, Interview with Cheryl [pseudonym], February 12, 1996. Place not given to protect anonymity of informant.

[16] See, for example, Gustav Niebuhr, "'The Family' and Final Harvest," *The Washington Post*, June 2, 1993, A1; downloaded from <WashingtonPost.com: The Cult Controversy> (March 26, 1998); Susan J. Palmer, "Heaven's Children: The Children of God's Second Generation," in *Sex, Slander, and Salvation*, eds. Lewis and Melton (Stanford, CA: Center for Academic Publication, 1994), 1-26.

[17] Beyond identifying some informants as former members, we do not label them either as "apostates" or anything else.

[18] Stephen Kent, Interview with Cheryl [pseudonym], February 9, 1996.

[19] Stephen Kent, Interview with Lorna [pseudonym], January 16, 1996. Place not given to protect anonymity of informant.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Family Services, "Heavenly Security-Part I" (Zurich, Switzerland: Family Services, DO [Disciples Only], January 1989): 1-36; "Contending for the Faith: How to Handle Accusations, Controversies and Concerns!" (Zurich, Switzerland: Family Services, DO [Disciples Only], July 1992): 1-48; "Wise Witnessing Replies," (Zurich, Switzerland: Family Services, July 1992).

[22] Stephen Kent, Interview with Cheryl [pseudonym], February 9, 1996.

[23] World Services, "The Pubs [Publications] Purge!: An *Urgent* Advisory to All Family Homes" (Zurich, Switzerland: World Services, June 1991): 2.

[24] Balch, Review of *Sex, Slander, and Salvation*, 72.

[25] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 1959).

[26] Balch, Review of *Sex, Slander, and Salvation*, 72.

[27] Lewis and Melton, eds., *Church Universal and Triumphant*, viii-xi.

[28] "Papers Detail CUT Arms Deals," *Billings Gazette*, 1 July 1993, 1A, 13A. See also Karin Ronnow, "IRS Responds to CUT Appeal," *Livingston Enterprise*, 30 March 1993, 1; Ronnow, "Feds Track CUT Weapons Activity," *Livingston Enterprise*, 30 June 1993, 1; Ronnow, "Papers Give Details of 'Survival' Club," *Livingston Enterprise*, 1 July 1993, 3.

[29] Scott McMillion, "Critics Say Arsenal Belonged to Church," *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, 14 March 1995, 1, 10.

[30] *United States of America [USA] and Bruce M. Philipson, Internal Revenue Agent vs. Church Universal and Triumphant [CUT], Inc. and Edward L. Francis, its Vice President*, "Second Declaration of Petitioner Bruce M. Philipson," Civil No. MCV-91-18-BLG-JDS (United States District Court: District of Montana, [July] 1991), 2. In 1994, the IRS restored CUT's tax exemption except for the period between 1 May 1988 and 30 April 1990, and "the church agreed not to own or store weapons and to dispose of any existing weapons. . ." ("Survivalists Swap Guns for Tax Status," *The Washington Post*, 4 June 1994, A4).

[31] Robert W. Balch and Stephan Langdon, "How the Problem of Malfeasance Gets Overlooked in Studies of New Religions: An Examination of the AWARE Study of the Church Universal and Triumphant," in *Wolves Within the Fold*, ed. Anson Shupe (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998): 196-97, see 195.

[32] "Study Debunks Anti-Church Myths," *Royal Teton Ranch News*, April 1994, 1, 11.

[33] Balch and Langdon, "How the Problem of Malfeasance Gets Overlooked in Studies of New Religions," 192.

[34] Ibid., 198-199; see Scott McMillion, "Guru Ma's Pleadings Answered—CUT Members Come Through with $720,000," *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* (January 25, 1994): 1.

[35] Quoted in the "Weapons Timeline" for 1993 in McMillion, "Critics Say Arsenal Belonged to Church," 10. Despite this acceptance of responsibility by the organization, the editors published a study in which the researcher offered that he "found no illegal weapons nor any indication of illegal conversions of weapons, above nor below ground" (Moorman Oliver, Jr., "Church Universal and Triumphant: A Law Enforcement Perspective," in *Church Universal and Triumphant*, eds. Lewis and Melton, 144). The issues concerning the IRS, however, involved organization members using false names and addresses when purchasing weapons, along with tax-exempt organizational money contributing to the purchases. The issue of organizational money related to one of the gun purchaser's use of a corporate credit card to cover expenses while on his gun-buying trip (Scott McMillion, "Showdown: CUT vs IRS," *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, 30 May 1991, 8).

[36] Balch, Review of *Sex, Slander, and Salvation*; Balch and Langdon, "How the Problem of Malfeasance Gets Overlooked in Studies of New Religions." For, however, a positive review of the AWARE study of CUT, see Derek H. Davis, Review of *Church Universal and Triumphant in Scholarly Perspective*, *Journal of Church and State* 37 (1995): 157-58.

[37] Horowitz, *Science, Sin, and Scholarship*, 271-278; see also Marlene Mackie and Merlin B. Brinkerhoff, "Moonie Conferences: Dialog or Duplicity?" *Update* 7, no. 3 (September 1983): 22-37.

[38] See, for example, Ian Reader, "Aum Affair Intensifies Japan's Religious Crisis: An Analysis," *Religion Watch* 19, no. 9 (July/August 1995): 1-2; T. R. Reid, "U.S. Visitors Boost Cause of Japanese Cult," *The Washington Post*, 9 May 1995, A8; Teresa Watanabe, "Alleged Persecution of Cult Investigated," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 May, 1995, A5.

[39] *AWARE (Association of World Academics for Religious Education)*, "Important Press Conference," [Fax], (Los Angeles, CA: AWARE, 9 November 1992).

[40] *APRL [Americans Preserving Religious Liberty] Newsletter*, "New Name, Same Organization," (Oakland, CA: APRL, January 1982); Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Cedars, L. A. Inventories, Evidence #10042: PR General Categories of Data Needing Coding," [Documents obtained during FBI search of Cindy Raymond's office, from black metal four drawer file cabinet designated as 2M], 8 July 1977, 97, 104; Clinton MacSherry, "Divine Intervention," *City Paper* [Baltimore, Maryland], 15 May 1992, 16.

[41] See, for example, "Giving Cults a Good Name," *Esquire*, June 1997, 20; Larry D. Shinn, "Cult Conversions and the Courts: Some Ethical Issues in Academic Expert Testimony," *Sociological Analysis* 53, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 273-85.

[42] See, for example, *Church Universal and Triumphant [CUT], Inc. vs. Gregory Mull*, "Cross Complaint for Damages," No. C 358191 (Superior Court of the State of California: Los Angeles County, 11 May 1981): 1-12; *[CUT] and Elizabeth Clare Prophet vs. Linda Witt*, "Appeal from a Judgment of the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Alfred L. Margolis, Judge," No. C 358191 (Court of Appeal of the State of California: Second Appellate District, Division Five: Superior Court, 10 April 1989): 1-32.

[43] Tom Brune, "Judgment May KO Anti-Cult Group, Deprogrammer," *Chicago Tribune*, 15 October 1995, 1; Claude Iosso, "Plans for Cult-Buster Trial Hotly Debated," *The Daily World*, 28 December 1993, 1; Raymond L. M. Lee and Susan E. Ackerman, "Farewell to Ethnography? Global Embourgeoisement and the Disprivileging of the Narrative," *Critique of Anthropology* 14, no. 4 (1994): 339-54.

[44] Shinn, "Cult Conversions and the Courts."

[45] See, for example, Church of Scientology International, "The Cult Awareness Network: Anatomy of a Hate Group," *Freedom* Magazine: Public Service, n.d. [1994/1995?]; Church of Scientology International, "Cult Awareness Network: The Serpent of Hatred, Intolerance, Violence and Death," A Special Report from *Freedom* Magazine, 27, no. 2 (1995): 2-35.

[46] See, Laurie Goodstein, "Anti-Cult Group Dismembered as Former Foes Buy Its Assets," *The Washington Post*, December 1, 1996, A1, A22.

[47] Jennifer Bjorhus, "Man Wins $5 Million in Deprogramming Suit," *The Seattle Times*, 30 September 1995, A6; Susan Hansen, "Did Scientology Strike Back?" *The American Lawyer*, June 1997, 62-70.

[48] *Scott vs. Ross, et al*, "Deposition of Anson David Shupe, Jr.," No. C94-0079 (United States District Court: Western District of Washington at Seattle, 19 July 1995): 1-172; *Scott vs. Ross, et al*, "Transcript of Proceedings: Testimony of Anson David Shupe, Jr.," No. C94-79C (United States District Court: Western District of Washington at Seattle, 26 September 1995) Vol. 4: 18-79.

[49] The recent appeals court decision affirming the judgment against the countercult organization made a factual error when it stated that the mother of the young man who eventually underwent an "unsuccessful deprogramming" "contacted Shirley Landa after a referral from the Seattle Community Service hotline. Landa was involved in various 'anti-cult' activities and worked as CAN's Washington state 'contact.' A 'contact' is 'an unpaid volunteer who is available in given areas to speak to members of the public on behalf of CAN'" (*Scott vs. Ross, et al.*, "Opinion by Judge Beezer," No. CV-94-00079-JCC [U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit: Western District of Washington at Seattle], 8 April 1998: 3209). In fact, no organization existed by the name of Seattle Community Service. The organization that did make the referral to Landa is named the Crisis Clinic, which (now) shares its database with Crisis Line and Community Information Line. Apparently the Crisis Clinic database did not have her listed as a CAN representative. As far as we can determine (from speaking with several staff members of the Crisis Clinic), Landa's current listing with the Seattle organization as a cult resource person has not changed for years. Her only organizational affiliation on the current data base is with a group called "Parents Awareness/Citizens Freedom Foundation," which has no affiliation with CAN. Even though the name would imply that Landa's local group was connected with the Citizens Freedom Foundation (CAN's immediate predecessor), CAN did not have a Seattle affiliate. Landa was a CAN contact person *only* when the national CAN office referred a caller to her (probably to save on the caller's telephone bills), but in this case the initial call for help by a relative of the (eventually "unsuccessfully deprogrammed") young man went straight to the Crisis Clinic. At no time was the national CAN office involved.

[50] *Scott vs. Ross, et al*, "Deposition of Anson David Shupe, Jr.," 83-85, 86-87; see also, *Scott vs. Ross, et al*, "CAN's Reply Brief in Support of Motion to Exclude Expert," No. C94-79C

(United States District Court: Western District of Washington at Seattle, 7 September 1995): 1-6.

[51] *CBS News*, "CAN: The Cult Awareness Network," *60 Minutes* 30, no. 15, 28 December 1997, 19-20.

[52] Ibid.

[53] *Scott vs. Ross, et al.*, "Opinion by Judge Beezer."

[54] Hansen, "Did Scientology Strike Back?"; see also William W. Horne, "The Two Faces of Scientology," *The American Lawyer* (July/August 1992): 74-82.

[55] *Church of Scientology International vs. Steven Fishman and Uwe Geertz*, "Declaration of J. Gordon Melton in Support of Brief of Amicus Curiae on Remand Issue of Confidentiality of Religious Scriptures," No. 91-6426 HLH [Tx] (United States District Court: Central District of California, November 28, 1994): 4 pp.

[56] Irving Louis Horowitz, "Universal Standards, Not Uniform Beliefs," *Sociological Analysis* 44 (Fall, 1983): 181.

[57] Georg Simmel, "Secrecy," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. and ed. Kurt H. Wolff, (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1950), 330-44.

[58] Mark Silk, "Journalists' Attitudes Toward New Religious Movements," *Review of Religious Research* 39, no. 2 (December 1997): 141. The allusion is to Newman's *Apologia pro vita sua* [*A Defense of His Own Life* (1864)], in which he defended his quest for truth that led him to convert to Catholicism from Anglicanism. When Silk replaced Newman's word, *vita*, with *culta*, gender problems in the grammar occurred that make literal translation impossible. Silk informed one of the authors that he meant "argument on behalf of their cult" or "justification of their cult" (Mark Silk email to Stephen A. Kent, 10 March 1998). Our translation is a variant on what Silk proposed. We express gratitude to Massimo Introvigne for pointing out problems in Silk's Latin phrase, and to Kelly McFarlane for helping clarify various grammatical issues and translation options.

"Crazy Wisdom," Charisma, and the Transmission of Buddhism in the United States

Sandra Bell

My journey to the overseas continent needs no copyright,
For it has never been conducted in the same manner.[1]
Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the 1960s and continuing through the early 1970s, sections of educated youth in the United States voiced their opposition to what Theodore Roszak dubbed "the technocracy."[2] Roszak defined technocracy as "a social form in which an industrial society reaches the peak of its organizational integration," and he estimated it to be "more highly developed in America than in any other society."[3] Much of the opposition focused on cultural resistance, which in turn led thousands of young people to explore an "imagined global moral community" that lay beyond the immediate, dominant cultural formations.[4] Eastern religions in particular were identified as containing positive alternative ideas that sought to "encompass rather than exclude,"[5] and they were becoming more accessible due to cheaper air travel and the easing of immigration restrictions in the United States in 1965.[6]

Young American travellers in search of new spiritual horizons headed for India and Nepal where they encountered Tibetan Buddhist lamas exiled from their homeland by events surrounding the Chinese invasion

of Tibet. A few retained a sufficiently serious interest in Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism to attempt to pursue their studies back home. But they soon found that this was not possible without the guidance of experienced teachers, so by the end of the 1960s centers were founded throughout America where Tibetan lamas were invited to teach on either a temporary or permanent basis. By 1988 there were at least 158 Tibetan Buddhist centers and groups in the U. S. across twenty-nine different states and in Washington, D. C., with an additional twenty-five in Canada.[7]

This essay provides a sketch of the early history of one Tibetan Buddhist movement founded in 1973 by the late Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. The movement was originally known as Vajradhatu International, but it recently changed its name to Shambala International. My account is the result of archival research, formal interviews, and informal discussions with long-standing members of Vajradhatu in and around its center located in Boulder, Colorado, during the summer of 1994. Despite Chogyam Trungpa being perhaps the most well known of the Tibetan lamas to have settled in the U. S., the history of his movement has scarcely been recorded in scholarly literature. For this reason I have devoted considerable attention to a descriptive account of what took place. However, two interrelated themes emerge through the unfolding of this narrative account: the first concerns the significance of charismatic authority in facilitating the transmission of religious beliefs and practices from Asia to the United States, and the second considers problems of interpretation surrounding the teacher-pupil relationship among Western adherents of Tibetan Buddhism and related issues surrounding the transmission of authority.

The first issue arises from the fact that Tantric practices of the Vajrayana require the disciple to regard his or her religious teacher (Skt—*guru*, Tib—*bla-ma*) as a personification of the Vajradhara, the Tantric form of the Buddha. Intense personal devotion on the part of disciples towards the religious teacher is thus part of their religious duty, sustaining and validating the charisma possessed by the teacher through his manifestation as the Vajradhara. An additional factor that in Tibet often contributes to the charismatic attraction of the teacher is his recognition as the incarnation of a previous lama. In Tibetan Buddhism this system results in "lineages" of what are known in English as incarnate lamas (Tib—*tulku*). As an infant, Chogyam Trungpa was acknowledged as the incarnation of the tenth Trungpa Tulku, Supreme Lama of the Surmang group of monasteries in eastern Tibet, and subsequently enthroned as the eleventh Trungpa Tulku.[8] According to Geoffrey Samuel,[9] the development of the *tulku* system in fourteenth-century Tibet was in part a "political device"[10] that allowed the monasteries "to take a more central role in the provision of shamanic services to the Tibetan population" while strengthening their position in the political system.[11] In America,

Chogyam Trungpa's status as a *tulku* was a major element of his charismatic appeal, although it did create great problems for the transmission of charismatic authority to a new leadership after his death.

Samuel identifies two related strands within Tibetan Buddhism: the clerical and the shamanic. The clerical strand is associated with monasticism and with the exercise of political authority, while the shamanic strand is associated with Tantric yoga and displays anti-clerical and anarchic tendencies. It was through the evolution of the *tulku* system that the clerical and shamanic/charismatic strands cohered because, for political and economic reasons, the presence of a reincarnated lama was a "major strength" for a monastery.[12]

Furthermore, Samuel suggests that there are two distinct, but overlapping, shamanic complexes in Tibetan Buddhism. One emerges from the folk spirit-religion, and the second he calls shamanic Buddhism. Tantric practices can be defined as shamanic because they "are centred around communication with an alternative mode of reality (that of the Tantric deities) via the alternative states of consciousness of Tantric yoga."[13] Samuel asserts that "this communication forms the basis for much of the Tibetan lama's role in relation to Tibetan society" because the majority of practitioners seek the shamanic services of the *guru*, which he delivers through the Tantric techniques of the Vajrayana.[14]

I propose that in the American context Chogyam Trungpa exhibited a form of charismatic authority with its roots in shamanic Buddhism and that this was the means through which his students came to accept his absolute authority as their *guru*. Such a view is supported by Charles Lindholm's assertion that there is a direct comparison between the roles of modern charismatics in industrial societies and shamans in subsistence-based societies: "Both reveal emotional intensity, exhibit facility in role playing, and show a fluidity of identity and a capacity for empathy combined with inner detachment."[15]

The second theme to be developed in later sections relates to the succession of leadership on the demise of the founder. Realignments of authority after the death of a founder often create a testing time for the stability of charismatic groups. In the case of Buddhist and Hindu movements, however, the handing down of spiritual authority through pupilliary or other prescribed channels of succession adds a further complication, as Gene Thursby has shown with regard to Swami Muktananda and the Siddha Yoga movement in the United States.[16] It is typical of these kinds of movements to seek to retain a close association with their Asian origins,[17] and Vajradhatu has predictably sought to authenticate its position within the wider Vajrayana Buddhist world by stressing its location within the "ancient tradition" of which it claims to be a part. For followers in the host culture, the foreign origins of the founder and the Tibetan orientation of their movement constitute part of its attraction. Members of Vajradhatu visit Tibetan religious sites and

monasteries in Nepal and Sikkim and speak proudly of the fact that their organization is recognized and supported by prominent lamas. They are eager to bring lamas to teach in the United States. Once here, these masters are housed in sumptuous apartments with expensive furnishings and walls lined with silks and brocades and are attended upon, according to strict protocols, by teams of volunteers.

Western disciples have a tendency to romanticize the Tibetan "tradition." What count as everyday aspects of religious knowledge and practice in the Tibetan cultural area appear in the United States as "extra-ordinary" aspects of the charismatic community that enable adepts to "solidify and mark themselves out against the outer world as the possessors of esoteric knowledge."[18] The question then arises as to whether Western devotees of an Asian religion are involved in an act of appropriation which is, to quote from Gelberg's discussion of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), "merely one of 'make believe,' imitation, exotic role-playing."[19] Vajradhatu followers were impelled to face up to these issues when a crisis of leadership exploded dramatically in 1988. During this period, dispute centered around questions of what should be the correct interpretation of the traditional relationship between the disciple and teacher. How might the transmission of charismatic authority follow the lines charted by the *tulku* system and so remain true to a particular characteristic of Tantric Buddhism that had attracted many disciples in the first place? On the other hand, how might such a relationship rise above cultural differences to achieve the kind of universal applicability held out by Chogyam Trungpa?

CHOGYAM TRUNGPA AND SHAMANIC BUDDHISM

Chogyam Trungpa began his mission to the West in Britain where, with fellow lama Akong Rinpoche, he founded Samye Ling, a Tibetan religious center in Scotland. Through contacts developed by an American disciple, he was invited to the United States in 1970 where he went on to found and lead four separate but associated institutions. Vajradhatu was the first to be established in 1973; it was a religious organization whose aim was to promote the practice of Vajrayana Buddhism in America and Europe. In 1974 came two educational organizations: The Nalanda Foundation, established to promote Chogyam Trungpa's interest in the visual arts, and the Naropa Institute, a college dedicated to the study of Buddhism and other Asian religions, as well as psychotherapy and the performing arts. In 1976 Shambala Training was founded. Designed to be the secular arm of Chogyam Trungpa's movement, Shambala Training was much influenced by his

fascination with the warrior ethos of the Japanese Samurai. By the 1990s there were 90 local branches associated with Vajradhatu or Shambala Training in 30 states, the District of Columbia, and six Canadian provinces. A newspaper, *Vajradhatu Sun*, was published and distributed nationally by the community in Boulder, and at its peak the periodical reached an estimated one percent of Boulder's population.[20]

The Surmang monasteries for which Chogyam Trungpa became Supreme Lama were affiliated with the Karma Kagyudpa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism (the Karmapas), and their founding is closely associated with the biographies of a lineage of renowned saints, including the famous Tibetan holy men (Skt—*siddha*) Marpa and Milarepa. Devotees become *siddha* through the attainment of a spiritual path known in Sanskrit as *mahamudra-siddhi,* which entails the practice of the supreme or higher Tantra (Skt—*anuttarayoga-tantra*).

Milarepa was among those eulogized by the saintly and erratically behaved lamas (Tib—*drubnyon*) of the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, from whence stories and myths in the Tibetan oral and literary tradition evolved around the paradoxical notion of disruptive holiness. This concept was personified by spiritually insightful characters who nevertheless "perpetually engaged in one sort of perverse activity or another—drinking to excess, fornicating, thieving, defying authority, playing magical tricks. . . ."[21] Embodying a form of anarchic religiosity, such practitioners are not all placed in the distant past. Examples survive into modern times—among them a teacher of Chogyam Trungpa's, K'enpo Gangshar[22]—and, as will be made clear, the description is applicable to Chogyam Trungpa himself. He encouraged his disciples to follow the *drubnyon* philosophy that traditionally combined exceptional insight and impressive magical power with a flamboyant disregard for conventional behavior.[23] Chogyam Trungpa translated the anarchic ideology of the *drubnyon* into English by use of the term "crazy wisdom," and this phrase became the hallmark of his teaching in America.

Chogyam Trungpa's appeal to the "crazy wisdom" tradition did not in any way detract from the characteristic role of the *guru* that lies at the heart of Vajrayana Buddhist practices and which Chogyam Trungpa continued to endorse among his American followers. Practitioners of the higher Tantra believe that its doctrines and practices were taught by the Buddha's Tantric form, Vajradhara, and that it is necessary to see all lamas, and in particular one's personal "root lama" (Tib—*tsawe lama),* as the Buddha (Vajradhara). Though a practitioner may have other teachers, the personal lama, who is likely to be the one who initiated the pupil into Tantric practices, holds a special place in the pupil's heart and should inspire fierce loyalty and devotion.[24]

According to Weber, the charismatic leader acquires and retains his authority "only by proving his powers in practice,"[25] and in this Chogyam

Trungpa was a master practitioner. To this day his disciples continue to relate how meeting Chogyam Trungpa changed their lives for the better. A typical account is provided by John, who told me that on first looking into Chogyam's eyes, he felt the shyness and temerity that had plagued him all his life dissolve away. Twenty years later John claims he has never again felt the stultifying lack of confidence that he experienced prior to that moment. Another informant describing his meeting with the lama said, "His body emitted golden rays and wild birds would come and sit on his outstretched arms." Such visions were experienced among the four thousand disciples at Chogyam Trungpa's funeral who reported seeing rainbows and turquoise clouds in the shape of a dragon's tail appear in the sky as the pyre burnt.[26]

The display of magical skills and properties, the management of ritual occasion, and the transmission of esoteric techniques and knowledge were part of Chogyam Trungpa's shamanic repertoire. But they were also the source and continuing confirmation of his charismatic authority in the sense, as Weber puts it, that his disciples acknowledged their duty "to recognize its genuineness and to act accordingly."[27] During his life Chogyam Trungpa constructed a whole series of these events in the form of happenings and productions for his followers, such as the three-month-long retreats at the remote Rocky Mountain Dharma Centre at Red Feather Lake, Colorado, and the ritual transmission of Vajrayana practices (Skt—*sadhana*). He was also adept at projecting his public appearance at events that were designed to transform and "mass market" Tibetan Buddhism for American consumption.[28] These events often took the form of lectures or poetry readings, and on these occasions he was greatly assisted by his best known disciple, the poet Allen Ginsberg. Theodore Roszak has asserted that Ginsberg too acquired some of the characteristics of a shamanic figure through his role within the counter-cultural movement in America during the 1960s.[29]

Even before his relationship with Chogyam Trungpa, Ginsberg proclaimed his interest in Asian religions, borrowing images, words, and forms from Hinduism and Buddhism to set in motion a mystical revolution intended to re-enchant the American way of life. He became an internationally recognized icon of the burgeoning counterculture, and there can be no doubt that Ginsberg's connection with Chogyam Trungpa brought the Tibetan lama to the attention of the poet's large audience among whom new disciples were recruited.

Chogyam Trungpa's enthusiastic response to Ginsberg and his fellow Beat Poets was typical of his approach to the cross-cultural enterprise in which he so energetically engaged. His career since his flight from Tibet in 1959 had been marked by a prolific cultural eclecticism that was reflected in the organizations he founded and in his teachings; these included not only material drawn from Vajrayana Buddhism, but also his own interpretations of English aristocratic life, as well as elements

from Japanese arts and philosophies. Indeed, the synthesizing of these disparate elements was bound up with Chogyam's shamanic proclivities, for the shaman's expertise lies in his ability to transform and manipulate his visions into reality.[30]

The shaman is above all a mediator whose role is to resolve dangerous tensions between the mundane world and the supernatural world. However, he is often called upon to employ his cultural knowledge for the reconciliation of contending forces within society. To achieve these kinds of objectives the shaman must be capable of passing back and forth across what are, for ordinary people, threatening and impenetrable boundaries.[31] These boundaries mark a distinction between the material and the spiritual worlds, and Chogyam Trungpa's identity as a *tulku*, whose incarnations stretched back over ten previous lives as an important lama, distinguished him among his Western adherents as a traveller between these realms.[32] The shaman is therefore particularly well placed and equipped to negotiate the boundaries between different mundane worlds, such as those that are perceived to exist between traditional Tibetan and modern American societies. Western mythologizing of Tibet as a remote and mysterious mountain fastness has contributed to perceptions of its exotic "otherness," and from the Tibetan side it should be recalled that, until the recent diaspora, the religious and secular aristocracy who acted as the guardians of Tibetan culture were noted for their xenophobic response towards Occidental advances.[33] Bridging this void calls for a kind of fearless specialization in boundary crossing.

In the case of Chogyam Trungpa, his quick intelligence, knowledge of Tibetan and Western thought, artistic abilities, and reputation for eccentricity became fused with his status as an authentic representative of shamanic Buddhism to produce an expert cultural broker and innovator. Moreover, in his early meetings with Ginsberg, Chogyam Trungpa encountered a fellow charismatic, a latter-day shaman, and a cultural boundary-crosser in the reverse direction. Together they constituted a potent mix.

THE GURU AND HIS FOLLOWERS

In an article published in *Harper's* magazine in 1979, Peter Marin described Chogyam Trungpa's disciples of that decade as "drawn mainly from the counterculture," though he suspected "that they are generally more intelligent, literate, and profligate than those drawn to other contemporary spiritual leaders."[34] I view this description as credible because it resonates with impressions gained from my discussions and interviews with disciples who were present from the movement's early days. An exhibition of photographs and captions (mounted in the summer of 1994) depicts the history of the Rocky Mountain Dharma

Center, revealing these early followers as sporting the kind of colorful and creative attire associated with the "hippie" counterculture. However, Chogyam Trungpa instructed his disciples to dress conventionally, and the profile of the membership gradually altered to become one of prosperous, professional, career-minded, middle-class Americans. They were the followers who supported Chogyam Trungpa's expensive life style and who worked to make his movement acceptable to the well-heeled inhabitants of Boulder, where he settled in 1971 to establish a base for the subsequent expansion of his organization.

In addition to their engagement with the organizational expansion of Chogyam Trungpa's movement, the disciples had to follow an arduous and largely solitary spiritual regime founded on devotion to Chogyam Trungpa as their *guru.* Before they could receive initiation into the various Tantric practices, devotees had to complete a lengthy practice known as *ngondro. Ngondro* requires that the student complete 100,000 full length prostrations, 100,000 mantra recitations, 100,000 recitations of the vow to become a bodhisattva (an enlightened being), 100,000 recitations of a formula for seeking refuge in the Buddha and his teaching, and 100,000 repetitions arranging and rearranging a mandala composed of grains of rice. Much of the spiritual work involved in the Tantric levels following *ngondro* were equally demanding and were also to be carried out in a spirit of utter devotion to the *guru*, the teacher-shaman.

Stephen Butterfield, who passed through *ngondro* to the higher level practices, wrote:

> The single most important quality demanded of the Vajrayana student is devotion to the guru. . . . The guru is the Buddha. . . . To regard the guru as an ordinary person is a perverted attitude. No matter what the guru does, you must accept it as a teaching.[35]

This sheer intensity of feeling for the teacher merged with an investment in lengthy hours of arduous practice and the idea of "crazy wisdom" to inculcate in the disciple a proclivity to accept the *guru's* inaccessibility or idiosyncratic behavior.

Even within the American tradition of eccentric forms of religious efflorescence and revival, Chogyam Trungpa was a paradoxical figure whose sometimes outrageous behavior seemed to flout convention, causing him to appear at odds with the strict regime of etiquette, dress, and protocol he imposed on his followers. At the same time he prescribed that his followers enjoy a rather fantastic version of the good life.[36] The large house that Chogyam Trungpa occupied in a high class area of Boulder was known as The Kalapa Court. Disciples were admitted by invitation only. The residence was sumptuously appointed and organized to reflect a courtly hierarchy with followers eager to serve as

cleaners, attendants, guards, cooks, flower arrangers, and so on. Here Chogyam Trungpa was surrounded by an inner circle whose members took a vow not to reveal or discuss his behavior, although it was openly acknowledged, now as then, that Chogyam Trungpa had sexual relations with a number of his female disciples.[37] The disciples were also unrestrained in their sexual liaisons, believing that sexual jealousy indicated a failure to grasp Chogyam Trungpa's teaching. The resulting tensions led to emotionally charged relationships between individual members of the *sangha* and added to the shared intensity of the collective experience.

In 1976, Chogyam Trungpa appointed one of his American disciples, Tom Rich, as his Vajra Regent. Chogyam Trungpa gave Rich the Tibetan name of Osel Tendzin. In the event of his master's death, Osel Tendzin was to administer the religious community, referred to by the Sanskrit term *sangha.*[38]

THE PROBLEM OF SUCCESSION

Upon Chogyam Trungpa's death in 1987, Osel Tendzin, as the Vajra Regent, inherited his master's authority to override all decisions made by the twelve-member Board of Directors of Vajradhatu and of the Nalanda Foundation (the same persons served on each board). These directors had been appointed by Chogyam Trungpa who, as their *guru,* founder of the organizations, and self-appointed Director of the First Class, held the power to veto the board's decisions. Democratic structures were firmly eschewed in favor of what Chogyam Trungpa called a "natural hierarchy." In this governing structure, adherents who were judged acceptable on account of their personal qualities—qualities subsequently enhanced through religious practice—were appointed by Trungpa to positions of responsibility within his organizations, creating what Weber refers to as a "charismatic aristocracy."[39] As the movement acquired properties and developed the four wings of its organizational structure, it had to comply with the laws and conventions of the wider society. The consequence of this development was that disciples with experience in legal procedures and business administration were able to rise to positions of prominence as members of the Board of Directors of Vajradhatu. They became administrators of its financial accounts and managers of its religious and educational projects. J. Gordon Melton has proposed that corporate structures, imposed for tax purposes within NRMs in the United States, have "given new religious groups an additional stability that no single leader could bequeath."[40] We shall see, however, that much depends on the behavior of what Melton calls "board leadership." In the case of Vajradhatu, a newly constituted board would ultimately provide the kind of stability that Melton implies. Prior

to this eventual resolution, however, the secretive and contentious behavior of the board of directors contributed to the upheavals following the regent's succession.

Chogyam Trungpa encouraged the rejection of democracy as a "one person, one vote" form of decision making on the basis that it is "dangerous."[41] In his talks to the *sangha*, Chogyam did not draw on Tibetan sources to justify his ideal of the benign autocratic leader. Instead he deployed the Chinese religio-political metaphor of the emperor uniting heaven (representing vision) and earth (representing the practical means to realizing the vision of an enlightened society). Through metaphorical reference to the spiritual leader as the emperor in possession of a heavenly mandate, Chogyam Trungpa affirmed his power over the movement's separate institutions. He was able to reserve the right to make senior appointments for himself and to maintain an inner circle of elite students who adopted a managerial function and gradually developed an administrative bureaucracy. The "heavenly mandate" device also enabled him to pave the way for a successor by shifting charismatic authority from his person to his office. He accomplished this by comparing his office to the inherited position of an emperor in possession of *divine* and *secular* powers. He was able to achieve this imaginative leap and to have it accepted by his followers, however, because of the charismatic/shamanic powers that facilitated his expertise in cultural eclecticism outlined above. The Chinese reference appealed to the membership's countercultural appetite for what Roszak describes as "a phantasmagoria of exotic religiosity."[42]

Chogyam Trungpa and the Vajra Regent functioned as both the actual and symbolic head of the *sangha*. Funds came from donations to specific projects and from members contributing to what is still known as a personal annual gift (PAG). Members and contributors were also to be found in Europe, especially in and around the German town of Marburg, and in Canada. In 1984, Chogyam Trungpa took a year-long solitary retreat in Nova Scotia and developed a great affinity for the place. Despite his declining health, he founded a monastery, Gampo Abbey, and encouraged his followers to move to Nova Scotia. Three years after his death in Nova Scotia, there was a flourishing community of up to several hundred disciples, including those who had relocated from the U. S. and those who were local converts.

It came as a great shock to many of these practitioners when it was revealed to them by the members of the board of directors, in December 1988, that Osel Tendzin was HIV-positive. Furthermore, he had known about his condition for four years and had continued to practice unprotected sex with male members of the *sangha* and with some females. One of the young men with whom Osel Tendzin had unprotected sex later contracted AIDS and died after transmitting the infection to a girlfriend. It also came to light that members of the board of directors

had known about the regent's condition for some time, though they had taken no action. Osel Tendzin told a meeting of *sangha* members in Berkeley, California that in 1985 he had a conversation with Chogyam Trungpa about being HIV-positive. During this talk, Trungpa had suggested that he could change "the karma." Osel Tendzin said he misunderstood this to mean that he had "some extraordinary means of protection" and so "went ahead with my business as if something else would take care of it for me."[43]

Many members took Osel Tendzin's remarks to mean that he had considered himself to be under some kind of "magical" protection which would prevent the virus from conquering "his body or the extended social body that trusted him."[44] The obvious error of this stance meant that the legitimacy which had been conferred by "designation on the part of the original charismatic leader of his own successor and his recognition on the part of the followers" began to disintegrate.[45] This much is clear from the columns of an independent newsletter, entitled *Sangha*, founded in response to the crisis by members of the *sangha* who criticised their official journal, *Vajradhatu Sun*, for suppressing full and frank discussion of the issues. The publishers of the newsletter included Rick Fields, the former editor of the *Sun* and chronicler of Buddhism in America, who had resigned from his editorial post in protest.

A significant proportion of the *sangha* declared that they could no longer accept the leadership of the regent largely because of the deception over his seropositive status and its tragic consequences. The regent's admission that he once imagined himself to be "magically protected" from spreading HIV was thought by some students to have created a dangerous and false impression capable of leading the general public to view Vajradhatu as a fanatical Buddhist church dealing in the sort of death defying pacts associated with the infamous Jonestown massacre in 1978. In a letter calling for the regent's resignation, one couple wrote that the effect of revelations in the local and national media towards the beginning of 1989 was to give people outside the organization a constellation of facts that appeared as

> bewildering in a positively abhorrent way, a seemingly heinous crime against humanity that is inexplicable in conventional terms, and an association with which could only be seen in their eyes as horrifying and create suspicion of the church [Vajradhatu] as a cult that would drink kool-aid if told to. . . .[46]

There were also expressions of alarm among disciples that the regent had abused his power in order to obtain sexual favours; however, there was an ambivalence as to whether, in retrospect, Chogyam Trungpa's sexual activities might be viewed in a similar light. It was widely known that Chogyam Trungpa had had numerous sexual partners among his disciples, despite his marriage to the English woman Diane Pybus a year

after giving up his monastic vows in 1969. His eldest son was born in 1962 to a Tibetan mother. Up to the point of the disclosures about the regent, sexual permissiveness was an unremarkable fact of life within Vajradhatu circles. Sexual practices, whether with an actual partner or with a visualized partner, are an integral part of Tantric Buddhism, and, as Samuel reminds us, "more relaxed and permissive attitudes towards sexuality of all kinds, including pre- and extramarital relationships [are] characteristic of Tibetan societies."[47] As we have seen, many of Chogyam Trungpa's followers had served their time among the amorphous ranks of the 1960s youth culture where sexual liberation was generally espoused. Unlike the Siddha Yoga organization and the Zen Center in San Francisco, where sexual scandals also surrounded the leadership,[48] promiscuity was part of the ambience within Vajradhatu, and sexual jealousy was frowned upon. Such an atmosphere, together with the idolization of Chogyam Trungpa, muted any potential criticism of his sexual liaisons. That Chogyam Trungpa's behavior might have set an unfortunate example for Osel Tendzin did not, however, escape the notice of some disciples. One correspondent to *Sangha* wrote,

> But this current mess is not just his [the Regent's] mess. The whole *sangha,* including Trungpa himself, have played a role. We must look at the way we have related to power, to the Guru, to the whole 'fucking around' scene . . . I would like to ask you to begin exploring more openly the inappropriateness of various Tibetan structures in an American Buddhist community.[49]

The last sentence of the quotation implies that students were sometimes unable to understand that Chogyam Trungpa's way of organizing his *sangha* was not based on a purely Tibetan model. His vision was idiosyncratic in that it drew on many different sources and ideas that he had encountered since his flight from Tibet.

DISSIDENTS

In the pages of *Sangha,* disciples opposed to the board's cover-up expressed their discontent with Vajradhatu's internal politics. One item called for open elections of officials, while numerous correspondents railed against the secrecy and misinformation they detected as emanating from the movement's elite. The appeal to democracy indicates a weakening of the original charismatic bonds which, according to Weber, is likely to occur even when the master appoints his own successor since the appointment marks "a step away from autonomous leadership based on the power of personal charisma toward a legitimacy based on the authority of the 'source.'"[50] The strength of charismatic authority was damaged by the moral shock which so many had felt upon learning of

the regent's behavior. As Weber has it, "the source of the effectiveness of charisma lies in the faith of the ruled, their approval of the designated successor is indispensable."[51] For many members of Vajradhatu, faith in the regent was negated by the knowledge of his abuse of power as a means for gaining sexual partners and his subsequent deception with regard to his seropositive status. Doubt was also cast on the "source" of Osel Tendzin's legitimacy. Letters were distributed around the *sangha* containing reports that in the year before his death Chogyam Trungpa had repeatedly entreated close associates to watch out for the regent's behavior and had warned that he might take advantage of students. It was said that Chogyam Trungpa had desired the regent to be replaced if he brought "disgrace" on the *sangha*. A section of Chogyam Trungpa's will was quoted in *Sangha* in support of a view that tried to distance Osel Tendzin from Trungpa.

From the columns of the *Sangha* newsletter and from other documents, it appears that the largest group of dissidents were those who wanted Osel Tendzin to resign as President of Vajradhatu and Nalanda but who stopped short of suggesting he give up his spiritual inheritance by disclaiming his position as regent in the Trungpa lineage. These students interpreted the regent's position in the lineage as inviolable, because it had been conferred by the eleventh Trungpa Tulku himself as a spiritual and not a political act. Chogyam Trungpa's authority to transform Tom Rich into Osel Tendzin was felt by them to be an aspect of his shamanic powers as a *mahasiddha* and congruent with his manifestation as the Buddha's Tantric form. In refusing to be budged, Osel Tendzin was well aware that this was his strongest card. He told students that to withdraw from the leadership "would violate the oath I took with my guru, and it would also violate my heart."[52]

Another group wanted to be completely rid of the regent. At the back of their minds was the knowledge that Chogyam Trungpa's first-born son, Osel Rangdrol Mukpo, was maturing as a young man and studying with eminent lamas in India. At the age of seventeen, in 1979, he had been given religious empowerment as a *sawang* (Earth Lord), an obscure title that may have been invented by his father. This group also based their arguments on a different interpretation of Vajrayana spiritual theory and claimed that the regent had violated sacred vows taken before Chogyam Trungpa and had thus voluntarily sacrificed his right to religious office.

By the beginning of 1989, local and national media began to take an interest in the story, causing some members to feel publicly shamed. Up until the scandal surrounding the regent, and despite Chogyam Trungpa's reputation as a hard drinker who was fond of women, members of Vajradhatu had considered that their organization was turning a sincere and respectable face to the North American public. My research supports Kane's assertion that, up to the point when the

regent's actions became public, members of the Buddhist community in Boulder were acknowledged as "part of the tax base of the city." They "were known as good citizens, employers, and people with expensive tastes."[53] Those who relocated to Halifax met no resistance from the Canadian immigration authorities. Indeed, there were signs that as professional people with entrepreneurial skills the Buddhist incomers were welcomed as a potential boost for Nova Scotia's ailing economy. In spite of these factors, however, Vajradhatu was forced to stand alone because it was not yet sufficiently embedded in Canadian or U. S. society to find strong allies to assist and defend it in its time of crisis. Instead, help had to be sought from Chogyam Trungpa's associates in the Tibetan diaspora.

During the time when the revelations surrounding Osel Tendzin were coming to light, appeals were made by all sides to eminent Tibetan lamas in the Karma-Kagyudpa lineage whose headquarters are in Rumtek, Sikkim. Chogyam Trungpa had fostered connections between these lamas and his American disciples. Appeals were also made to Lama Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, an important lama of the Nyingmapa order, who had acted as a teacher to Chogyam Trungpa in Tibet and presided over his cremation ceremony. However, documents show that confusion arose as representatives of different factions and individual petitioners gave different accounts for and against the regent to the lamas, thus ensuring that they received conflicting advice concerning the crisis. In the early spring of 1990, Dilgo Khyentse advised the regent to go into "strict retreat" for at least the duration of a year. In a message to the *sangha*, the regent announced his acceptance of the lama's instructions and remained in retreat until his death the following August.

DEPENDING ON THE TEACHER

Many issues had been raised by the crisis, but most of all uncertainty flourished around the role and function of the *guru*—the charismatic leader. In America the students had very often succumbed to the *guru* through a kind of instant conversion experience, whereas the process of fully accepting a *guru* among Tibetans most usually occurs at a more drawn out pace with a student employing discrimination and patience, approaching and testing the *guru* before committing himself/herself to his guidance. Anthropologist Barbara Aziz, who spent twenty years carrying out fieldwork among Tibetans and was asked to comment on the Vajradhatu crisis, replied, "I see far more discernment among my Tibetan and Nepali friends than among Westerners."[54]

The extra caution displayed by Tibetans suggests a greater familiarity with the gravity entailed in the act of accepting a *guru.* David Snellgrove, in his classic two volume study of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, describes

how the injunction to be absolutely and totally devoted to one's chosen teacher can never be transgressed. "It may be noted," he states "how in the midst of so many 'evils' which are acceptable in given circumstances, this one is specifically listed as allowing of no reservations."[55] The bestowal of initiation (Skt—*abisheka*) into Tantric rites (Skt—*sadhana*) is conferred by the *guru* and involves the evocation of a Tantric deity (Skt—*yidam*), usually along with his or her entourage. As Snellgrove points out, however, the teacher is also identified with the deity.[56] In this way the relationship between teacher and pupil is formulated through a concept known as *samaya*, a Sanskrit word that is often rather inadequately translated by the English word *vow*. In a long discussion about the difficulties of translating the term *samaya* into English, Snellgrove explains,

> In the Buddhist tantric understanding the *samaya* becomes a 'pledge' of a 'coming together' of the divinity with the image that represents him, the sacrificial offering that 'embodies' him, or with the yogin, or even the faithful worshipper who is one pointedly intent upon him. 'Pledge' is probably the best word in English to cover the range of interpretations and it is thus that the Tibetans translated the term (*samaya* = *damtshig*), but it would scarcely convey the intended meaning to uninitiated readers.[57]

Disciples were preoccupied with the exegesis of the term *samaya* partly because its application was important to their perceptions of themselves as authentic Vajrayana Buddhists but also because it formed the basis for identification with the *guru*. In this latter sense *samaya* represented the legitimate channels through which charismatic authority flowed. The concept of *samaya* thus became central to the various positions adopted following the announcement of Osel Tendzin's illness. The interpretation of *samaya* that emerged from correspondence on the topic supposed not only that the regent was bound in a mystical union with the Chogyam Trungpa, but that Chogyam Trungpa's students were similarly bound, primarily to him, but also to his successor, the regent. To deny the regent was to deny the charismatic authority of their original teacher. Those students who had joined after the death of Chogyam Trungpa were initiated into the Tantric rites by Osel Tendzin and owed him their personal allegiance.

The regent claimed that to resign his office was impossible because it would breach his relationship of *samaya* with his guru, Chogyam Trungpa, who had appointed him. Some students retorted that through his "corrupt" behavior the regent had already violated *samaya*. The term was bandied about in the heated debate that developed between people of varying opinions. In November 1989, in an open letter to members of the *sangha*, the regent wrote,

> There must be one lineage holder in whom resides the spiritual and temporal authority to say "yes" or "no." That karma has fallen to me. The samaya of my relationship to my own duty for me is beyond good and bad, success and failure. And having been warned over and over again by the Vidyadhara [Chogyam Trungpa] I must reiterate the nature of this command.[58]

Given the absolute centrality of commitment and devotion to the teacher as it is taught in Vajrayana (Tantric) Buddhism and as it was taught to American students by Chogyam Trungpa, the confusion surrounding the behavior of Osel Tendzin is understandable. For devotees who had been initiated by Chogyam Trungpa the problem was whether rejection of Osel Tendzin also implied a rejection of the wishes of their *root-guru.* Osel Tendzin was the *root-guru* for those who had taken initiation from him after Chogyam Trungpa's death. For both sets of disciples any rejection of Osel Tendzin on their part suggested possibly serious consequences for their further practice. At the time of the scandal, a number of students were planning to take initiation into new levels of practice from Osel Tendzin but now felt uncertain as to whether they could offer him the necessary devotion or, in Weberian terms, whether they could recognize his succession to charismatic authority. Some tried to get around this by applying for initiation to Tibetan lamas from other lineages who were visiting America. Such a step was thought acceptable since it is not uncommon for practitioners to take initiations from lamas other than their *root-guru.* But Osel Tendzin refused permission for them to do so. He also refused to authorize students to carry out those ritual practices learnt from external teachers within the bounds of the Vajradhatu *sangha* and banned the use of Vajradhatu shrine rooms for such purposes. This left the students in the difficult position of having to decide whether to reject their teacher or, at the very least, the teacher who was appointed to them by their *root-guru.* Loyalties were thus stretched to the breaking point, and the entire question of devotion to the *guru* came under scrutiny. One thing, however, on which everyone agreed was that the movement—based as it was on a model of "benign autocracy"—could not function without a leader with paramount authority to act as organizational director, ritual specialist, and spiritual guide.

The rupture in the transmission of charismatic authority that led to this impasse is only partially explained by the moral censure of the regent. Events were also determined by the cross-cultural context in which they were played out. This perspective is also important to a proper understanding of how Weber's theory of charismatic authority can relate to this case study of Vajradhatu. Lindholm reminds us that at the highest level of theory Weber was concerned with the role of the individual actor "locked within his or her skin" and with how the struggle for

meaning and advantage by active agents can account for society. The weakness in Weber's more grounded theory of charismatic authority is that "the charismatic, and the crowd around him, are both as remote from this rationalistic model of sociological understanding as is the convulsion of the epileptic."[59]

When applied to Vajradhatu, Lindholm's observation is instructive. The figure of the "holy madman" evoked by Chogyam Trungpa certainly fits the description of the pure charismatic. And, from a Western point of view, so does the notion of the incarnate lama, understood as a heroic individual who dies and, on being reborn, succeeds (or reverts) to his titular position in the lineage. In the Tibetan cultural area, the reincarnated lama is not regarded primarily as being related to his biological parents but "rather represents a stage in the continuous career of a single, discrete personality over the course of countless lives."[60] Such a being appears to approach a modern Western, even Weberian, understanding of the rational individual agent. According to Paul, the *tulku* theoretically achieves "a level of autonomy which truly differentiates him from ordinary mortals and raises him to sacred royal status."[61] However, the reincarnate lama's disconnection from the essential institutions of kinship, alliance, and economic obligations do not in fact set him free. Instead, through his place in the religious hierarchy, he is incorporated into a network of bureaucratic structures. Here he may inherit the charisma of office, "a force for the legitimization of powerful institutions and individuals."[62] Only in America, at a distance from Tibetan social forms and cultural understandings, could Chogyam Trungpa realize the full power of personal charisma.

This line of reasoning may also help to explain some of the contradictions surrounding Chogyam Trungpa's aspirations and actions—for example, his insistence that his followers present a respectable image to the outside world, his desire to retain the approval of important Kagyudpa lamas, his appetite for protocol, and his facility for institution building, all of which belied his emphasis on "crazy wisdom."

CONCLUSION

From the time of the regent's death, Vajradhatu began a slow period of recovery. Under the urging of Dilgo Khyentse the now weakened board of directors agreed to the appointment of the Sawang as the new leader in 1990. As Chogyam Trungpa's son he had received instructions and empowerments from lamas in the Tibetan diaspora, including Dilgo Khyentse, and was regarded among the various factions as the one figure around whom the entire membership would be able to rally and from whom disciples would be prepared to take initiations in a relationship

based on *samaya.* As one of the editors of the *Sangha* expressed it, "there was no other alternative to the Sawang."[63]

During the period of turmoil, the Sawang had remained distant from the various factions and was not identified with any particular perspective. One of his first actions was to disband the board of directors and appoint a new board to be known as the Kalapa Council. By 1994 it was clear that his style of leadership was to be cautious and more consultative than that of Osel Tendzin. The disciples welcomed this as an opportunity for retrenchment. A member of the Kalapa Council who had also been a member of the old board of directors said in an interview in 1994, "People no longer depend on a charismatic teacher to be a reference point."[64]

Emphasis shifted from the *guru* to the organization, which had suffered from a loss of membership and a drop in funds. Because of the scale of its operations, Vajradhatu had built up an extensive and well disciplined administrative structure consisting of both paid and voluntary workers. These structures were sufficiently strong to survive the worst effects of the crisis and were critical in steering the movement through the transfer of loyalty to the Sawang. Vajradhatu provides a sound illustration of Melton's observation that NRMs, even in the first generation, often develop to a point at which "the real task of managing the organization and administering the organization's affairs increasingly passes to the second and third echelon leadership."[65]

As described in earlier sections, Chogyam Trungpa's founding of Vajradhatu demonstrates a classic case of charismatic authority. In particular, his role as a shaman gave him an advantage as a cultural vector, combining elements from disparate sources while remaining sufficiently true to the basic tenets and practices of Vajrayana Buddhism to retain the support of important Nyingma and Kagyu lamas.[66] The events surrounding his successor ruptured the original charismatic promise creating disarray and psychological distress in his disciples. However, by that point the institutional forms of the movement were sufficiently mature to resist the brief, but intense, trauma of the scandal. Some elements, such as the Naropa Institute, remained largely unblemished.

Since in Tibet a lama's status may be hereditary,[67] in accepting the Sawang as their new leader the disciples are secure in their perception of themselves as belonging to an authentic Vajrayana lineage. At the same time they are, more than ever, stressing the universal applicability of Chogyam Trungpa's teachings by endorsing a new emphasis on Shambala Training. This path offers instruction in basic meditation and self-awareness training without asking students to commit themselves to the Vajrayana path, even though many go on to do so. In 1994 around Boulder the students were talking about "reaching out" to the world and helping to create "an Enlightened society"; this kind of rhetoric

has appeared frequently in recent issues of the newly named *Shambala Sun.* The outward and inclusive orientation that has emerged under the new leadership is also seen from within as a way of combating accusations (resulting from the scandal) that the movement resembles an inward looking "cult." It is also a means for rebuilding the membership.[68] As Shambala International, the movement hopes to initiate a period of consolidation marked by what one long-standing member describes ruefully as "less crazy, more wise."

ENDNOTES

[1] Chogyam Trungpa, cited in Stephen Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West* (London: Thorson, 1995), 105.

[2] I should like to thank Dr. Cathy Cantwell of the University of Kent at Canterbury for her advice in preparing an original draft for this paper; the Nuffield Foundation for financial assistance to conduct fieldwork and archival research in Boulder in 1994; and members of Vajradhatu for their cooperation during that period. Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), 4-5.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Tamar Frankiel, "Ritual Sites in the Narrative of American Religion," *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 57-86.

[5] Jacob Needleman, *A Sense of the Cosmos* (London: Arkana, 1988), 163.

[6] J. Gordon Melton, "Introduction: When Prophets Die," *The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements*, ed. Timothy Miller (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 1-12.

[7] Don Morreale, ed., *Buddhist America: Centers, Retreats, Practices* (Santa Fe: John Muir Publications, 1988).

[8] Chogyam Trungpa, *Born In Tibet* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966).

[9] Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1993). Scholars employ different forms of transliteration of this Tibetan word. Paul (*The Tibetan Symbolic World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) has *tulku.* Samuel has *trulku.* I follow the usage employed by Chogyam Trungpa (*Born In Tibet*) and his disciples.

[10] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 496.

[11] Ibid., 497.

[12] Ibid., 496.

[13] Ibid., 8.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Charles Lindholm, *Charisma* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1990), 162.

[16] Gene Thursby, "Siddha Yoga: Swami Muktananda and the Seat of Power," in *The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements*, ed. Timothy Miller, 165-82.

[17] Sandra Bell, "Buddhism in Britain: Development and Adaptation" (Ph.D. diss., University of Durham, 1991); David Kay, "The New Kadampa Tradition and the Continuity of

Tibetan Buddhism in Transition," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 12 (1997): 277-93.

[18] Lindholm, *Charisma*, 180.

[19] Steven J. Gelberg, "The Call of the Lotus-Eyed Lord: The Fate of Krishna Consciousness in the West," in *The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements*, ed. Miller, 149-64.

[20] Stephanie Kane, "Sacred Deviance and AIDS in a North American Buddhist Community," *Law and Policy* 16 (1994): 323-39.

[21] John Ardussi and Lawrence Epstein, "The Saintly Madman in Tibet," in *Himalayan Anthropology: The Indo-Tibetan Interface*, ed. James F. Fisher (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 327-38.

[22] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 307.

[23] Georg Feuerstein, *Holy Madness* (London: Arkana, 1992).

[24] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 253.

[25] Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1114.

[26] Author's fieldnotes.

[27] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 242.

[28] P. Marin, "Spiritual Obedience," *Harper's*, February 1979, 43-58.

[29] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 128.

[30] Lindholm, *Charisma*, 162.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*. In an endnote to Chapter 1 Samuel states, "Future lives are in the Tibetan Buddhist conception part of this world, not of the alternative mode of existence that the Tantric deities represent. They are part of the illusory or provisional truth" (p. 583). However, this distinction will be clear only to Western devotees who are well advanced in their learning about the doctrines of Tibetan Buddhism. The distinction reinforces my point that the powerful lama may be perceived by Americans to cross readily boundaries between different realms of the mundane world.

[33] Peter Bishop, *Dreams of Power: Tibetan Buddhism and the Western Imagination* (London: Athlone Press, 1993).

[34] Marin, "Spiritual Obedience," 45.

[35] Stephen Butterfield, *The Double Mirror: A Skeptical Journey into Buddhist Tantra* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1994), 136.

[36] He persuaded them to organize extravagant formal balls and to copy a style of speech and manners that aped the English upper class. He even organized elocution lessons in "Oxfordian English." Chogyam Trungpa enjoyed and promoted equestrian events such as dressage, as well as pseudo-military exercises and uniforms, which he incorporated into his institutional organization as the Vajra Guards, some of whom acted as his bodyguards.

[37] Butterfield, *The Double Mirror*, 100.

[38] The appointment of the regent was heralded as an historic event for Tibetan Buddhism since it was the first occasion on which a Westerner was admitted to an official position within a Tibetan religious lineage.

[39] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1119.

[40] Melton, "Introduction: When Prophets Die," 1-12.

[41] Letter from Stan Hoffman, *Sangha* 1, no. 3: 11.

[42] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 139.

[43] Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake* (Boston: Shambala, 1992), 365.

[44] Kane, "Sacred Deviance," 331.

[45] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 247.

[46] Document filed in the archives of the library of the Naropa Institute, consulted by the author in 1994. Up to this date the documents had not been catalogued.

[47] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 276.

[48] See William Rodarmor, "The Secret Life of Swami Muktananda," *Coevolution Quarterly* 40 (Winter, 1983): 104-11; Stan Trout, "Letter From a Former Swami," *Coevolution Quarterly* 40 (Winter, 1983): 110-11; Karen Butler, "Events Are the Teacher," *Coevolution Quarterly* 40 (Winter, 1983): 112-23.

[49] Letter from Mitch Turbin, *Sangha* 1, no 3: 18.

[50] Weber, 1124

[51] Ibid., 1125.

[52] Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake*, 366.

[53] Kane, *Sacred Deviance*, 28.

[54] Karen Butler, "Encountering the Shadow in Buddhist America," *Common Boundary* (May/June 1990): 19.

[55] David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors* (Boston: Shambala, 1987), 176.

[56] Ibid., 179.

[57] Ibid., 166.

[58] Document filed in the archives of the library of the Naropa Institute, consulted by the author in 1994.

[59] Lindholm, *Charisma*, 27.

[60] Robert A. Paul, *The Tibetan Symbolic World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 41.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Lindholm, *Charisma*, 24.

[63] Anonymous Respondent, Interview with Author.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Melton, "Introduction: When Prophets Die," 11.

[66] An eclectic and syncretistic approach had been a feature of the history of Buddhism in Tibet. For a discussion of the opposition between this and purist, sectarian tendencies see Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 505, who cites E. Gene Smith's suggestion that there are regional differences, with tolerant and eclectic attitudes being present notably in the southern region, as well as in the east of Tibet from where Chogyam Trungpa originated (E. Gene Smith, "Introduction," *Kongtrul's Encyclopedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture*, ed. Lokesh Chandra [New Delhi: IAIC, 1970], 1-87).

[67] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 245.

[68] During the height of the crisis a $25,000 donation to developments at the Rocky Mountain Dharma Center was withdrawn. Though it is impossible to quote precise figures, alarm about dwindling finances was expressed in the *Sangha* newsletter, which was funded from donations by the readership. It is possible that without this outlet for their feelings, alongside the sense of solidarity it created for those suspicious of the regent, members might have departed in greater numbers.

The Forgotten Contribution of Annie Rix Militz to the Unity School of Christianity

John K. Simmons

During the "Centennial Decade" of the 1890s, powerful forces and personalities were busy shaping the institutional structures and ideologies which, in time, would manifest themselves in today's metaphysical religious organizations.[1] For example, it was in the 1890s, after numerous student revolts, that the organizational acrobat, Mary Baker Eddy, disbanded the National Christian Science Association and consolidated ecclesiastical power in the Mother Church, thus creating the "fixed and enduring institution" known as Christian Science.[2] That "teacher of teachers," Emma Curtis Hopkins, who had earlier bolted from the Eddy stable, was busy teaching a veritable "Who's Who" of eventual New Thought leaders at her own Christian Science Theological Seminary in Chicago.[3] Two women students, Malinda Cramer, from San Francisco, and Nona Brooks, from Pueblo, Colorado, along with Nona's two sisters would work throughout the decade to finally establish the First Divine Science Church in 1899.[4] Two other Hopkins students, Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, starting from humble beginnings in Kansas City, would take a little known publication entitled *Christian Science Thought* and transform it over the decade into the influential New Thought organ, *Unity*. It was in the 1890s that the Fillmores laid the foundation for the most successful New Thought religious organization in America today, the Unity School of Christianity.[5] And finally, though just a boy, Ernest Holmes, founder of Religious Science, was busy honing his visionary skills at Gould's Academy in Bethel, Maine.[6]

Granted the pivotal role of the 1890s in New Thought history, it is incumbent upon scholars to resist ideologically driven perspectives that distort an accurate retrieval of the decade's complex interplay of theological ideas and personalities. One of the major obstacles to such accuracy is the tendency of America's metaphysical movements

(Christian Science/New Thought) either to take a completely ahistorical stance (of what difference is human history, after all, if, as these groups assert, creation is perfect and complete?) or else to adhere to an in-house story that promotes the particular leader of the organization as a "key" figure possessed of unparalleled spiritual acumen who arrived at his/her metaphysical perceptions unassisted by others in the broader New Thought movement.

The purpose of this paper is twofold: first, to rectify an egregious omission from the historical presentation of early New Thought history by introducing Annie Rix Militz as a key figure in the formative years of the Unity School of Christianity; and second, in so doing, to call for (1) a nonsectarian openness as the proper approach to the investigative task, (2) a recovery of all the characters in the drama, and (3) an increased subtlety in the historical analysis of America's metaphysical religious organizations during the pivotal "Centennial Decade."

One thing this essay is not meant to be is a gratuitous insult aimed at the Unity movement or its in-house historians.[7] If anything, it is hoped that the recognition of Annie Rix Militz's contribution to the early Unity movement will only enrich that organization's story. But the fact remains that she is written out of Unity's history in such official biographies as James Dillet Freeman's *The Story of Unity* and Thomas E. Witherspoon's *Myrtle Fillmore: Mother of Unity*.[8] This despite several key facts: (1) between the latter years of the 1890s and the early 1900s, Militz's "Bible Lessons" were the major teaching articles in *Unity* magazine; (2) the Fillmores openly acknowledged their appreciation of Militz as a writer, teacher and healer; and (3) Militz taught the monthly class at Unity headquarters in Kansas City in October 1900.[9] The following exploration of the fertile, productive, and long-standing creative relationship between Charles Fillmore and Annie Rix Militz should shed new light on early Unity history and also, hopefully, engender renewed scholarly interest in this significant person and period of American religious history.

So who is Annie Rix Militz, and why should she be considered a leading yet forgotten figure in the early New Thought movement? It is difficult to understand how such a dynamic and influential woman could have been omitted from American religious history in general, much less New Thought history, given her accomplishments. During her lifetime (March 13, 1856–June 22, 1924), she (1) founded a major New Thought religious organization, Home(s)of Truth, which, from its Los Angeles base, spread extensively throughout the West and Canada and, to a lesser degree, around the United States; (2) published a popular New Thought periodical, *Master Mind*, from 1911 until her "ascension" in June 1924; (3) founded the University of Christ in Los Angeles (along with a major metaphysical library) to train New Thought teachers; (4) traveled the globe as an officer of the National (later International)

New Thought Alliance spreading the metaphysical gospel; (5) served as president of the New Thought Exposition Committee which organized the New Thought Day (August 28, 1915) events during the Pacific-Panama International Exposition held in San Francisco in 1915; and (6) wrote numerous books and articles applying metaphysical precepts to a wide variety of local, national, and international social concerns.[10]

While this essay is primarily concerned with Militz's career during the two decades (1890–1910) when she made her major contributions to the Unity movement, it will be helpful to at least sketch in some earlier biographical history. Militz grew up in the vibrant, eclectic, experimental cultural atmosphere of post-Gold Rush San Francisco, California—an atmosphere that was conducive to the study and discussion of new religious perspectives. One such perspective—New Thought, with its assurance that inner, psychological affirmations of health, happiness, and prosperity were attuned to cosmic laws—particularly resonated with California's emerging religious ethos of idealism, nature mysticism, and individual self-realization. In any event, we know little of Militz's early life and must begin our investigation with the arrival of Emma Curtis Hopkins in San Francisco in Spring 1887. The presence of the renowned metaphysical teacher produced a stir in the avant-garde San Francisco religious community, and local newspapers carried accounts of her growing national fame as a teacher, healer, and lecturer. Two hundred and fifty aspiring souls, including a respected San Francisco school teacher, Annie Rix, and her sister, Harriet Rix, packed a large lecture hall on Turk Street to receive Hopkins' Primary Lessons.[11]

On the third day of this instruction, Annie Rix arrived with an annoyingly familiar condition for her, a migraine headache. Although she had been a healthy young woman for most of her life, she had been troubled by severe headaches since the age of sixteen and regarded them as an inheritance from her mother, who suffered from a similar condition. While receiving instructions from Hopkins, Rix was suddenly healed with such assurance that the headaches never returned. It was also at this time that she was healed of total deafness in one ear. The amelioration of these physical disturbances coincided with a spiritual epiphany: while traveling home on the trolley after class, Rix suddenly turned to her sister and declared, "I have found my life work!"[12]

Rix entered the exciting world of metaphysical possibility with remarkable energy and a staunchly ecumenical spirit. Within six months of her metaphysical baptism, she had established the first Home of Truth (then called a "Christian Science Home") at 420 Turk Street, and, with the help of her sister and a handful of dedicated women, was successfully ministering to a sizable population of Bay Area spiritual seekers. Three years after the founding of the first Home of Truth, Rix temporarily left the organization in the capable hands of her sister Harriet in order to accept a position at Hopkins' Christian Science Theological Seminary

in Chicago.[13] The next few years are extremely important to our story. For while serving as "Professor of Scripture Revelation" she would meet and establish a fruitful working relationship with Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. Chicago was unquestionably the center of New Thought metaphysics in America during the first years of the 1890s, and interested students from all over the country flocked to Hopkins' Theological Seminary. In 1889, in the pages of *Christian Science Magazine*, Charles and Myrtle Fillmore had read of the ordination of twenty-two students at the Chicago seminary and promptly enrolled in classes for the preparation of students for the Christian Science ministry.

In the November and December 1889 issues of Charles Fillmore's periodical *Modern Thought* (the precursor to *Unity*), announcements appeared concerning the coming of Emma Curtis Hopkins to teach Primary Lessons on Metaphysical Healing in the Fillmores' rooms in Kansas City.[14] Hopkins' class was an enormous success, and the January 1890 issue of *Modern Thought* contained these words:

> January eighteenth Mrs. Emma C. Hopkins of the Christian Science Theological Seminary, of Chicago, completed a course of instruction to the largest and most enthusiastic class in Christian Science that Kansas City has ever had. The class numbered eighty-seven, and the teacher said that in all her experience she had never at one time instructed so many independent, original thinkers. There were doctors, lawyers, and ministers, with minds trained in logic and synthesis, and ever on the alert for weak spots in the Science. Yet all the heterogeneous and antagonistic mass of thought was harmonized and satisfied.[15]

The class's success produced an association between the Fillmores and Hopkins which led to Charles Fillmore editorially divorcing himself from all forms of occultism, hypnotism, spiritualism, palmistry, astrology, and other forms of metaphysics and dedicating his efforts to "Pure Mind Healing" as taught by Hopkins. Thereafter, Hopkins' articles regularly appeared in the pages of *Modern Thought*. In deference to his teacher, Charles changed the name of the magazine to *Christian Science Thought* in April 1890.[16]

It was during advanced classes in metaphysical healing taught by Hopkins at her Chicago Seminary that the Fillmores and Annie Rix met. On June 1, 1891, a group of leading New Thought students, including the Fillmores, Rix, and Paul Militz, were ordained as Christian Science ministers by Hopkins. Shortly after their ordination, Annie Rix married Paul Militz and became Annie Rix Militz.[17]

In August 1893, the long and important professional association between Annie Rix Militz and the Fillmores began with the publication of her first article in *Unity* magazine entitled "Manifestation of God Through Judas Iscariot." In a manner that will be familiar to students of Charles Fillmore's writings, Militz interprets the story of Judas in a completely new manner. In Militz's view, Judas should be loved because

he was the "executor" of the disciples and "pushed Jesus into extremity" so that he would "manifest his destiny."[18] Indeed, the apostle Judas represented a microcosmic center present in all human beings, the generative center responsible for procreative/sexual energy. The remaining eleven disciples represented the twelve powers inherent in man that must be spiritually reactivated in order for one to perceive the divine harmony of God's creation—a clear adaptation of the Hindu concept of spinal *chakras* (centers of energy) to the biblical account of apostolic activity. Through the spiritual interpretation of biblical passages, the secrets to health, happiness, and prosperity were revealed, and Annie Rix Militz's career as a "metaphysical" interpreter had now begun in earnest.

A comparison of Militz's and Fillmore's interpretations of Judas illustrates the vibrant stream of metaphysical creativity that flowed between these two New Thought pioneers. In one of Fillmore's most popular books, *The Twelve Powers of Man*, Judas "has his throne in the generative center."[19] In other words, the "Judas center" controls human attitudes towards sex. Judas betrayed Jesus, but he can be redeemed because, from the metaphysical perspective, Judas controls the flow of the "life force" to every other center in the body. Fallen "man" permits Judas to act as a thief, stealing the "precious bodily fluids" from the rest of the body in order to titillate the sex center. A regenerate Judas will "become a supplier; he will give his life to every faculty."[20] At the end of a winding road of biblical exegesis, Fillmore arrives at the ever-maligned Garden of Eden. He writes,

> It is through Judas (the desire to appropriate and to experience the pleasure of sensation) that the soul (Eve) is led into sin. Through the sins of the sex life (casting away of the precious substance), the body is robbed of its essential fluids and eventually disintegrates. The result is called death, which is the great and last enemy to be overcome by man. Immortality in the body is possible to man only when he has overcome the weaknesses of sensation, and conserves his life substance.[21]

Both Fillmore and Militz seemed to have been fascinated by the possibility of physical immortality, and their exchange of ideas on this topic over the years appears to have had its beginning in Militz's initial call for the redemption of the "Judas function." In *The Twelve Powers of Man*, Fillmore expands upon Militz's seed idea, noting that sex-for-pleasure is a fallen, generative activity that wastes the inner life force and condemns humans to "shuffle off this mortal coil." In giving up sexual activity, generation becomes "regeneration," that is, a process by which the cells use the life force to "regenerate" themselves eternally. Physical immortality becomes metaphysical reality once the Judas center is redeemed.

In a later book, *The Renewal of the Body*, Militz put the final touches on this distinctive metaphysical teaching that grew out of the long intellectual relationship between her and Fillmore. She wrote, "In spirit there is no sex. . . . In generation is death. They who generate also degenerate. But in regeneration is life and immortality. Regeneration carries us out of generation. The thought of death is banished from the one who walks in the consciousness that perfect life knows no death."[22] Although many other examples of the intellectual and spiritual exchanges between Charles Fillmore and Annie Rix Militz could be documented, it must suffice for this paper simply to state that the cross-fertilization of ideas and interpretive styles between them was extensive, long enduring, and greatly fruitful for the future of the New Thought tradition.

The success of Militz's "Judas" article was a momentous event for the fledgling Unity movement. In September 1893, the first in a long series of Bible Lessons authored by Militz and patterned after the popular International Bible Lessons appeared in *Unity*. The thirteen lessons that comprised the first quarter's offerings reveal both Militz's ability to present New Thought ideas in a biblical context (a technique that Charles Fillmore in later years perfected) and her knack for authoritative spiritual interpretations of Scripture.

More than a decade later, Militz would compile these lessons into a single volume appropriately entitled *Primary Lessons in Christian Living and Healing*. In the preface, she notes that "for over twelve years these lessons have been given to spiritual students, hundreds of whom are living demonstrations of their efficacy in healing."[23] After describing various examples of physical and moral healing, she acknowledges the original source of the lessons: "The lessons were first brought out as a serial in the metaphysical magazine *Unity*, of Kansas City, Mo., and through its wide circulation they have reached thousands whose loving testimonials are coming to the writer every day."[24]

These lessons were extremely important to the Unity movement and formed a basis for many of its teachings. Although Militz's spiritual exegesis was not particularly original—since Emanuel Swedenborg there had been many open-ended metaphysical interpretations of Scripture—any serious student of Charles Fillmore cannot help but recognize the intellectual, literary, and spiritual connection between him and Militz.

In any event, Annie and Paul Militz returned to San Francisco late in 1893 to find the Home of Truth ministry in excellent shape. Harriet Rix and another founding member of the ministry, Eva Fulton, had not only purchased a handsome residence at 1232 Pine St.—where the main San Francisco Home of Truth would be located for years—but Harriet had organized a second Home across the bay in Alameda. Annie Militz could see that the work was proceeding well in San Francisco, and, in early 1894, she decided to move to Los Angeles to start a new center.

Throughout the building years of the Home of Truth in Los Angeles, Militz retained close ties with the Unity movement and remained a frequent contributor to Charles Fillmore's *Unity* magazine. It appears that one issue of *Unity* was published late due to a delay of Militz's Bible Lessons, which had been lost in the mail between Los Angeles and Kansas City. Charles Fillmore's decision to withhold publication for several weeks is certainly a testament to the importance he placed on these lessons.[25]

We unfortunately have no direct comment by Militz on how she perceived her professional relationship with Fillmore and the Unity movement. Was she personally committed to Unity? If so, why did she feel compelled to begin her own movement? Perhaps in the years before she began her own periodical, *Master Mind*, her relationship with the Fillmores was mutually beneficial. Unity offered Militz a forum for her metaphysical teachings and boosted her own movement through widely-read advertisements for the Home of Truth. Militz provided Fillmore and the Unity movement with a clear theology articulated with specifically biblical references. This theological formulation made Unity's teachings accessible to conventional Christians and even attracted new subscribers from among the mainstream clergy.

Evidence for this assertion can be found in the September 1894 edition of *Unity*, in which Fillmore responds to the numerous written requests he had received for "tracts":

> Many friends write us for tracts. Why not use *Unity* as a tract to enclose in your letters? It can be folded in an ordinary letter and be mailed without extra postage over the usual two cent stamp. We will supply copies of *Unity* for this purpose at two cents each. The present number is especially suitable for beginners. The Bible Lessons by Annie Rix Militz answer a whole lot of questions that are asked every day by inquirers.[26]

Clearly, Fillmore considered Militz's theological perceptions to be so near his own that he felt no need to add to them in any way; her work was Unity's work.

News of Militz's Los Angeles effort was closely followed in *Unity*, which included a warm, newsy column in which the activities of New Thought's brightest stars were presented. In the July 1894 issue, which included a Militz Bible Lesson on Jesus' temptation and a metaphysical "Dear Abby" column with Emma Curtis Hopkins answering spiritual queries, Annie Rix Militz was listed in the column of "Teachers and Healers." She could be contacted at Box 919, Los Angeles, California.[27] The September 1894 personal section of *Unity* noted that "Mr. and Mrs. Paul Militz are located at Sierra Madre, Los Angeles, Co., Cal."[28]

In the November 1894 edition, a significant letter appeared addressed to Mrs. Paul Militz care of the Sierra Madre address and dated September 30th, 1894. A Mrs. E. A. B. inquired of Militz as to the regular meetings

of "Silent Unity," the healing arm of Fillmore's movement. She despaired that "everything is so spread out in Los Angeles" and, consequently, that she had been unable to locate the place where they assembled.[29] Clearly the woman had identified Militz as an integral part of the Unity movement, a leader who could be contacted for information about the group's activities. This was a sensible conclusion given Militz's regular Bible Lessons. Yet, in a letter dated October 3, 1894, Militz chose not to respond directly to Mrs. E. A. B, but wrote to Charles Fillmore suggesting that he publish quarterly notices of public Unity meetings in the Los Angeles area.

Though perhaps Militz wished to address the larger problem of communication in her region, it is also possible that she was purposely distancing herself from the Unity program in her own backyard. Thus, while her ecumenical outlook allowed her to contribute regularly to *Unity* magazine, she may have considered herself, first and foremost, to be the founder of the Home of Truth—the institutional expression of her ministerial ideals.

Through the latter years of the 1890s, Militz continued to contribute regularly to *Unity* magazine while creating the organizational ground work for the Home of Truth in Los Angeles. *Unity* responded with excited reports on her progress: "Annie Rix Militz is doing noble work in Los Angeles, Cal. and vicinity. The Home of Truth established there by her is unusually effective as a Truth center, and Mrs. Militz has recently taught classes in Garvanza, Eagle Rock, and Morrison, and is doubtless now teaching a large one at Pomona."[30]

While there is no direct evidence that she identified herself as a feminist or had any training in civil engineering, Militz displayed natural gifts in each area which served her well in creating a successful emergent religion in the Los Angeles basin. The fact that she immediately moved out, along the trolley lines, into the far-flung communities in the Los Angeles basin and began to establish teaching centers for her ministry suggests that she was well aware of the geographical challenges of southern California. Her master plan called for (1) the organization of metaphysical classes in scattered communities, (2) the evolution of teaching centers into new Home(s) of Truth, and (3) the connection of satellite Homes to a main Home of Truth in the center of Los Angeles. This center would act as a kind of metaphysical clearing house for the smaller groups, providing teaching tracts, Sunday lesson plans, contact with other metaphysical groups around the country and world, and general institutional bonding.

From a feminist perspective, part of Militz's effectiveness as a leader rested on her ability to make use of the networking potential that already existed within the broader women's movement. The early years of the Home of Truth can partly be understood as a religious manifestation of

a social phenomenon that was reshaping life in the United States during that "progressive" period—women's clubs, women's political organizations, women in general joining together to confront the cultural challenges of the time and to reform what they conceived to be a degenerating social order. New Thought organizations were seen as a part of this struggle. Writing in an early New Thought journal, *Christian Science Thought*, Helen Wilmans, a well-known women's rights activist of the time, declared, "It is a noticeable fact that the Mental or Christian Science movement is a woman's movement. It may not be apparent to the casual observer, but it is nevertheless true, that in this movement woman's real voice has been heard for the first time in the history of the race."[31] Just as woman's suffrage leader Frances Willard used all-female membership, all-female leadership, and an almost exclusively female support system to build the Woman's Christian Temperance Union into an effective national social movement, female leaders of the New Thought movement, including Annie Rix Militz, relied on this networking model to build an interrelated system of religious organizations.[32] Nowhere is this model more obvious than in Militz's Los Angeles organizational adventures. Hardly a year after the opening of the first Home of Truth on W. 10th St. in Los Angeles, a notice appears in *Unity* stating that "we have moved from 701 W. 10th on account of the house being too small for the work. Now we have a fine large house with parlors that will accommodate an audience of 120. Miss Harriet Rix (Mrs. Militz's sister) is now speaker at the Home, Miss Beckham having taken charge of the San Diego Home of Truth." The new address is listed as 1215 Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, California.[33]

Such an announcement is typical of those describing Militz's career over the next decade. No sooner did she organize a new religious center than she staffed it with loyal and effective female compatriots and moved on to the next project. While Los Angeles remained her home base, she built Homes of Truth around the country over the first decade of the twentieth century by following the same organizational pattern: build or buy space, train women leaders, pass on leadership responsibility, move to the next region, and repeat the process. Though it is beyond the expressed scope of this essay—Annie Rix Militz's contribution to Unity's emergent years—there is obviously much to be gained from pursuing a feminist analysis of Militz and her Home(s) of Truth movement. It is quite possible that she amicably broke off her professional relationship with Charles Fillmore because she was drawn to a feminist style of leadership and institutional organization as opposed to the traditional organizational structure—church, preacher, pulpit—exhibited by the developing Unity movement.

In the September 1898 issue of *Unity* an "Important Announcement" reported another major Militz contribution to New Thought through the Unity movement:

You will be pleased to learn that Annie Rix Militz is to write a course of lessons for *Unity*. These lessons are the same that she has been delivering to her primary classes for several years and are the foundation of the thorough system of instruction which has been the cornerstone of the great work she has done on the Pacific coast in establishing Homes of Truth from British Columbia to Mexico. The inner history of that most important and far-reaching work has never been written, but when it is, it will be bound to be of Divine import. The first appear in the September number of *Unity*, and one in each issue until completed.[34]

Militz's charge to produce the lessons she had taught for a decade in an organized, publishable fashion was an enormously important step toward being recognized, *in her time*, as a major theologian and writer in the early New Thought movement. For twelve months the statement of her New Thought understanding unfolded in the pages of Unity to the apparent delight of her readers. Militz saw the publication of her lessons as her most important contribution to the spiritual ascension of the human race. In fact, she opens the 1904 edition of her lessons with the following comment:

> For over twelve years these lessons have been given to spiritual students, hundreds of whom are living demonstrations of their efficacy in healing . . . Go little book, and if in the great galaxy of spiritual lights that shall crown this century as the Spiritual renaissance of the world thou canst be the polar star to even one weary mariner, lost upon the ocean of delusion, by which Truth may guide him to his Home, thine existence will have been well accounted for, and thy mission blessed.[35]

Along with her earlier spiritual interpretations of biblical passages compiled in *Primary Lessons in Christian Living and Healing*, these *Unity* lessons provided the foundation on which Militz would build a remarkable career as a New Thought leader.

The Bible lessons of Annie Rix Militz were an immediate success for her and for Fillmore's magazine. In the May 1899 edition of *Unity*, there was an announcement that attempted to clear up confusion surrounding numerous requests for back issues containing the lessons.[36] On the next page, another letter from Militz appeared that not only revealed a kind of humble excitement in the success of her literary endeavors, but also underscored her continued commitment to the Unity movement while remaining in Southern California to continue her own work:

> My next lesson will be the last of the course, but I am thinking of adding a supplement, entitled "Questions Answered," and I would like to have you request the students to send me their questions immediately, that I may classify them and answer all that I can. Also, I would like those who are finding the lessons helpful to write to me and let me know, if possible, from what lesson they have received the most benefit. By this I shall be able to judge somewhat how to prepare further courses of lessons, which I am contemplating doing. I am so

glad to hear of the increase in the UNITY work, and I begin to have a very strong assurance that your work is now thoroughly established, a bulwark of righteousness, invulnerable to the enmities of "mortal mind." God has led me hitherto to mentally "hold up your hands" while the heathen raged, but now I am feeling you well settled in spiritual prosperity—"may its shadow never grow less." Have all letters addressed to Sierra Madre, Los Angeles, Cal. care of Annie Rix Militz.[37]

Though still committed to Unity, Militz hints in the last lines of this letter that she may be distancing herself from the movement. These lines also shed light on her motivation for contributing so fully to the movement. Unity's national presence, publications, and successful organizational structure likely influenced Militz in the early years of New Thought to contribute her many skills towards the metaphysical endeavor most likely to succeed. She would still, for several years, continue to contribute to Unity, but the inference that Fillmore's movement could stand on a firm foundation suggests that, in her mind, it was time to turn more attention towards the Homes of Truth movement.

Charles Fillmore, however, was in no frame of mind to lessen Militz's involvement in Unity, as the following "Special Announcement" attests:

The October Class at the Unity Headquarters, Kansas City, will be taught by Annie Rix Militz, of San Francisco, Cal., author of the lessons that have been running in *Unity* during the past year. The first lesson will be given Monday evening, October 2nd, and one lesson each evening for two weeks, Sunday excepted. A very large class is anticipated, and it may be that two classes will be formed, one during the day and another at night. This will be arranged later. Free-will offerings are the terms upon which Mrs. Militz carries on her ministry, and they will prevail in this course of lessons.[38]

Without personal diaries, it is difficult to assess either Fillmore's or Militz's motivations in having her journey to Kansas City. However, the word "prevail" in the last line of the announcement might provide a clue. Fillmore, noticing the incredible growth of Militz's West Coast movement, may have begun to get slightly nervous about competition in the metaphysical marketplace. By drawing Militz back to the center of the Unity Movement through the offer of the honored position of October Class teacher, he could renew and strengthen the association between them and perhaps even convince her to merge with his movement. In addition to the teaching offer, the October 1900 issue of *Unity* included an unprecedented, praise-permeated history of "Mrs. Militz's Ministrations." Not even Emma Curtis Hopkins had been paid such a tribute. Another reason why Fillmore might have conspired to keep Militz connected to Unity is that she had established a beachhead on Fillmore's midwestern territory. According to Patterson's article on the life of Militz, in 1899 "Mrs. Militz was led by the Spirit to Chicago where

she started the Truth Center."[39] Fillmore had even praised the center in his previously mentioned history of her ministry.[40]

With Militz gathering up students in his own backyard between trips back to California to tend to that ministry, Fillmore probably made the right decision in inviting her to reside for a time at the Unity Center in Kansas City. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how one views the situation, it was Militz that prevailed in the arrangement. Not only did she succeed in insisting that her lessons be given on the "freewill" basis characteristic of her ministry, but new Homes of Truth were soon established in Peoria, Illinois; Minneapolis; Geneva Lake, Wisconsin; St. Louis; Portland, Oregon (three new Homes were founded there); Walla Walla, Washington; Denver; and Holton, Kansas.[41] Given this impressive record of church planting, Charles Fillmore may even have wondered whether he might better join Unity to the Homes of Truth movement. In any event, it appears that both Fillmore and Militz considered her stay at the Unity Center to be a successful venture, and, on completion of the October Class, they parted amicably.

Between 1899 and 1902, Militz operated out of Chicago while commuting regularly to the West Coast. By 1903, however, she had re-established her home base in Southern California. Her frequent trips up and down the West Coast during this period received regular notice in the monthly issues of *Unity*. Yet despite her return to the West (or maybe because of it), Militz remained on good terms with Fillmore and the Unity movement. Her most unusual book, *Spiritual Housekeeping*, began to appear as a serial in the February 1910 edition of *Unity*. *Spiritual Housekeeping* is an extended metaphor that attempts to spiritualize the daily drudgery of housekeeping chores. In the book's introduction, Militz reminded readers that "Man decides the nature of work making it noble or degrading according to his attitude in it and towards it. Any work that is for the good of humanity, even the most menial, can be elevated by the workman who serves the divine One in all."[42] Militz suggests that housekeeping is a means of keeping the "temple of God" and that the days of the week can be understood as levels of spiritual ascension.

Though unusual, *Spiritual Housekeeping* may actually provide an important clue for scholars wishing to explore Militz's feminist leanings. The sacralization of women's traditional experiences and family roles is not without precedent in American history. As Marjorie Procter-Smith has noted, post-Ann Lee Shakerism sacralized the roles of women (1) through the use of "Mother" as a defining term for the Shaker community and (2) through "the use of traditionally female housekeeping tasks as models for the divine life."[43] The danger of this ideological position is obvious: sacralizing the drudgery of household chores may simply push woman further into the murky depths of patriarchal oppression. For Militz, however, *Spiritual Housekeeping* appears to be a manifestation of

her desire to uncover the dignity and holiness of women's work in the home. The spiritual centers she founded, after all, were staffed with women religious leaders and named Homes. During her lifetime, the cult of true womanhood was very much alive, and a woman's place was in the home. For Militz, however, *home* took on the additional connotation of the spiritual center of a woman's sacred universe.

Spiritual Housekeeping, along with the Homes of Truth image, suggest that Militz's view of gender roles was, to some extent, conflicted. On one hand, authentic spiritual existence transcended ontological dualism, including all masculine and feminine qualities. In "Divine Completeness, Our Satisfaction," the final chapter in *Primary Lessons in Christian Living and Healing*, she declared, "The Soul is complete. It is not dual, it is One. It has never been divided into sexes, and therefore it is not seeking a mate."[44] This attitude may account for her separation from Paul Militz somewhere along her spiritual journey. On the other hand, her writings revealed a keen motivation to raise the status of women's activity, so often ignored or demeaned, to a higher level of meaning, purpose, and holiness. In any event, *Spiritual Housekeeping* would be her last major contribution to the Unity movement (although Unity Publishing still offers one of her books, *Both Riches and Honor*).

In the Spring of 1911, an announcement in Unity signaled the end of the intermediate years in the career of Annie Rix Militz and her separation, physically and creatively, from the Unity movement:

> Mrs. Annie Rix Militz, the pioneer of New Thought upon the Pacific Coast, lecturer and teacher of world-wide reputation, and healer of great experience and success, has entered into another field of the Lord's work. She will edit and publish a New Thought magazine called *Master Mind*, and the many friends who have enjoyed the articles from Mrs. Militz's pen in *Unity* and other magazines will be glad of a publication devoted entirely to her writings, knowing that she will speak in no uncertain tone in the cause of Truth, and that the pages of her magazine will contain only the highest of spiritual teachings. [45]

Though the parting was obviously amicable, Militz had cut her ties with Unity and was prepared to fully develop her Home of Truth movement in Los Angeles.

CONCLUSION

It would be fair to say that Charles Fillmore used his lengthy association with Annie Rix Militz throughout the 1890s to hone his own metaphysical worldview; he would later present this worldview as his personal, unique form of spiritual revelation. This development may well have led to Militz' eventual separation from the Unity movement—

at least in terms of her contributions to the movements publications—and to the desire on her part to consolidate her own religious sentiments in the Home of Truth periodical, *Master Mind.*

Was the Militz-Fillmore relationship mutual and reciprocal or exploitive and co-optative? Unfortunately we have no direct statement from either participant on this critical issue. On one hand, it is suspicious that Militz has been ignored in official histories of the Unity movement. Why not sing her praises as an inspired contributor during the emergent years of the movement? Could there be a lost memorandum from Fillmore gathering dust in some neglected archive that effectively banishes Militz from the Unity story?

On the other hand, if there really were strained relations between Militz and Fillmore, Militz certainly had ample time to express these sentiments, if not overtly, at least in innuendo or tone as she continued to acknowledge Unity activities for years in the metaphysical news sections of *Master Mind.* She chose, instead, to concentrate all her energies on the creation of her own California-based metaphysical movement. Barring further discoveries, the jury remains out on the ethical implications of the Militz-Fillmore exchange of metaphysical insights. It is clear, however, that Charles Fillmore and Annie Rix Militz enjoyed a richly creative professional relationship throughout Unity's early years and that they stimulated each other's metaphysical perceptions and literary accomplishments. One wonders, then, why such a significant story of reciprocity, spiritual passion, inspiration, and creativity has been written out of the history of the Unity movement and, thus, out of American religious history in general. As we cross the millennial threshold and leave another "Centennial Decade" behind, perhaps scholars of New Thought can begin to rediscover the lost Annie Rix Militzes of early New Thought, and in so doing, offer the twenty-first century a clearer, more powerful picture of a formative era in American religious history.

EPILOGUE

On June 22, 1924, in the city of Los Angeles, Annie Rix Militz ascended. She was taken to a local funeral parlor, but her devotees would not allow the undertakers to embalm her body or otherwise perform their usual duties. She, of course, would be returning shortly. As a United Press article on the front page of the *Long Beach Press* reported it, "members of the cult said Mrs. Militz has merely gone away for a short time to learn from angels the details of her ascension to heaven."[46] For three days thereafter, her faithful disciples stood around the coffin firmly believing that she would fulfill her promise to return to inhabit her body. After all, for 35 years their teacher had preached the gospel

of "The Truth of Jesus Christ," which included the belief of the resurrection of the body after death. When she did not return, they concluded that the land to which she had gone was simply too beautiful and interesting to leave.

Finally, local health officials concluded that Militz was indeed dead, a victim of "acute nephritis and cardiacal decomposition."[47] The officials voted it best to inter the corpse. As the lid of the coffin was closed, all in attendance agreed that the body showed no sign of decay and appeared very lifelike. For the most part, the end of Militz meant the end of the Home(s) of Truth movement. Today there is but one remaining Home of Truth located in Alameda, California. The Unity movement of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, however, continues to flourish, with over 400 congregations and 150 affiliated study groups in North America, and over 42 ministries and 71 study groups in fifteen foreign countries.[48]

ENDNOTES

[1] By "metaphysical religious organizations" in America I mean identifiable groups such as Christian Science along with New Thought religious organizations such as the Unity School of Christianity, Divine Science, Religious Science, and lesser known organizations and people in sympathy with the worldview espoused by these groups (see J. Stillson Judah, *The History and Philosophy of the Metaphysical Movements in America* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967]).

[2] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 1023.

[3] J. Gordon Melton, "Emma Curtis Hopkins: A Feminist of the 1880s and Mother of New Thought," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 88-101.

[4] Charles Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963), 274-75.

[5] Ibid., 235; Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, 1028.

[6] Fenwicke L. Holmes, *Ernest Holmes* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1970), 42-43.

[7] If anything, Unity School of Christianity has been most helpful in the arduous process of placing Annie Rix Militz in early New Thought history. Most of the material, especially copies of the early issues of *Unity*, has been found in the Unity Archive in Lees Summit, Missouri. The Unity movement would hardly wish to suppress Militz's contribution to the early movement; witness their open appreciation of Emilie Cady's contributions. It is probably simply a case of Militz slipping through the cracks of early historical investigations of the movement.

[8] Militz's disappearance from American religious history is exacerbated by the fact that major American historians, such as Sidney Ahlstrom or Martin Marty, determine who is important within a movement by reviewing documents from within the religious organization or movement they are investigating. If no Unity historian or New Thought historian cares to say anything earth-shattering about Annie Rix Militz, a general historian of religion in America would have little reason to pay attention to her.

[9] *Unity* 12, no. 1 (October 1900): 28-34.

[10] For a full account of Annie Rix Militz's life and teaching see, John K. Simmons, "The Ascension of Annie Rix Militz and the Home(s) of Truth: Perfection Meets Paradise in Early 20th Century Los Angeles" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1987).

[11] Charles B. Patterson, "Annie Rix Militz," *Mind* 10, no. 1 (1902).

[12] Mary Deering, "Annie Rix Militz," *The New Thought Bulletin* 28, no. 3 (1945): 5.

[13] Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion*, 145.

[14] *Modern Thought* 1, no. 8 (December 1889): 12.

[15] *Modern Thought* 1, no. 9 (January 1890): 8.

[16] Faced with a lawsuit by an unrelenting Mary Baker Eddy over the public use of the name Christian Science, in June 1891 *Christian Science Thought* appeared with its permanent name, *Unity*. There are two fundamental differences between Mary Baker Eddy and Emma Curtis Hopkins as "Christian Science" leaders. Eddy was institutionally an authoritarian and metaphysically a fundamentalist, that is, she favored centralized institutional power and strict doctrinal interpretations of authorized scripture. Hopkins, quite simply, took the opposite path. She had little need to "institutionalize" metaphysical truths and was open-ended, comparative, and cross-cultural in her approach to the spiritual journey.

[17] Patterson, "Annie Rix Militz," 12. Though as yet there is no evidence that Annie and Paul Militz separated legally, he seems to disappear slowly from the drama as Annie's career enters the twentieth century. Paul did forge a successful if largely unnoticed career as a translator of New Thought texts into German for the large midwestern German immigrant population.

[18] Annie Rix Militz, "Manifestation of God Through Judas Iscariot," *Unity* 3, no. 3 (August 1893): 2.

[19] Charles Fillmore, *The Twelve Powers of Man*, (Kansas City: Unity School, 1964), 22.

[20] Ibid., 22.

[21] Ibid., 23.

[22] Annie Rix Militz, *The Renewal of the Body* (Holyoke, MA: The Elizabeth Towne Company, 1914), 120, 121.

[23] Annie Rix Militz, *Primary Lessons in Christian Living and Healing* (Los Angeles: Master Mind Press, 1904), v.

[24] Ibid., v.

[25] Ty Slyder, "The Unity Movement: A Search for the Truth of Practical Christianity," (unpublished paper presented at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Winter 1987), 27.

[26] Charles Fillmore, *Unity* 4, no. 4 (September 1894): 16. Tracts, or "theological platforms," were popular teaching tools used by healers and practitioners throughout the general New Thought movement and are used by evangelical Christians to this day.

[27] *Unity* 4, no. 2 (July 1894): 15.

[28] Ibid., no. 4 (September 1894): 102.

[29] Ibid., no. 6 (November 1894): 198.

[30] *Unity* 6, no. 4 (September 1896): 517.

[31] Helen Wilmans, *Christian Science Thought*, no. 1 (June 1890): 10.

[32] Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 19.

[33] *Unity* 7, no. 2 (July 1897): 258.

[34] *Unity* 11, no. 1 (September 1898): 80.

[35] Militz, *Primary Lessons in Christian Living and Healing*, v, vi.

[36] *Unity* 11, no. 11 (May 1899): 36.

[37] Ibid., 37.

[38] *Unity* 12, no. 5 (October 1900): 91.

[39] Patterson, "Annie Rix Militz," 5

[40] *Unity* 11, no. 11 (May 1899): 39.

[41] *Unity* 17, no. 2, (August 1902): 17.

[42] Annie Rix Militz, "Spiritual Housekeeping," *Unity* 22, no. 2 (February 1910): 97. See Annie Rix Militz, *Spiritual Housekeeping* (New York: The Absolute Press, 1910).

[43] Marjorie Procter-Smith, "In the Line of the Female: Shakerism and Feminism," in *Woman's Leadership in Marginal Religions*, ed. Wessinger, 28.

[44] Militz, *Primary Lessons in Christian Healing*, 164.

[45] *Unity* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1911): 259.

[46] "Cult Leader Dies," *Long Beach Press*, 25 June 1924, 2.

[47] Ibid.

[48] J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religion*, 3rd edit. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1989), 640.

Law and Minority Religions: "Positive" and "Negative" Uses of the Legal System

James T. Richardson

ABSTRACT: This paper examines several instances in which the law has had a pronounced impact on minority religions, a term used herein to include both older and newer small religious faiths. It employs examples of practices and even beliefs that have been negatively impacted by legal action, as individuals or governments have attempted to exert social control on newer faiths—a process referred to as "affirmative discrimination" by Thomas Robbins and James Beckford.[1] In addition, the paper describes instances in which laws and legal protections have been used in "positive" manners by minority religious groups in attempts to accomplish the objectives of group leaders. The examples used demonstrate that minority faiths operate in a changeable legal environment, a fact that must be taken into account if we are to understand minority faiths in any modern society.[2] Even in the U. S., with its constitutional protections for freedom of religion, governments are able to exert considerable managerial or regulatory controls over new faiths, especially if they become controversial in the eyes of societal power brokers and the public.[3] In other societies without such enforced constitutional protections, minority faiths are even more vulnerable to management by governmental bureaucracies.

As political climates change to allow greater exertion of control over minority faiths, certain characteristics of these groups often attract negative attention from governments, media, and the general public, making them especially vulnerable.[4] These "lightning rod" characteristics include methods of financial support, recruitment strategies, and general lifestyles. Unlike many older, more entrenched religious institutions, new religious groups cannot support themselves adequately on accumulated resources. Through experimentation,

therefore, they develop ways of gathering needed resources from outsiders, and they may also require a heavy commitment of resources from members.[5] Since the groups are new, their growth rates from births of second generation members tend to be much lower than those of established churches. If they are to grow and survive they must proselytize, using aggressive methods of personal contact or even mass advertising, activities which may attract unfavorable public attention. If the movement has a foreign point of origin, it may send organizational functionaries into the country being targeted for membership expansion. This influx of "foreigners" can attract negative attention from the media, the general public, and government officials, who may seek to limit such immigration. Some examples include Russia and other former Communist countries where, in recent years, anti-Western and anti-foreigner sentiments have fueled efforts to control minority faiths.[6]

The lifestyles of some groups have also attracted unfavorable publicity. Communal living arrangements invite accusations of free sex, child abuse, and drug use, among other things. A group's communal lifestyle, however, is often the consequence of limited resources, even if it is justified theologically as being "the way the early church actually lived."[7] The itinerant lifestyle that characterized many new religions in the 1960s and 1970s was often viewed quite negatively by parents whose offspring had affiliated with one of the groups. For some parents it was a shock to find that a son or daughter once thought headed to medical or law school was now doing mission activity in a foreign country for a new religion. Some of these parents sought assistance from governmental or private agencies, including deprogrammers.[8]

These controversial characteristics of newer faiths, coupled with the expansion of governmental control over many areas of life (including religion), has led to growing conflicts between minority religions and governments. Often these conflicts have found their way into the legal arena. In such settings the more powerful interests often, but not always, prevail, meaning that unconventional religious groups can suffer damaging legal setbacks.

"POSITIVE" USES OF THE LAW BY MINORITY FAITHS

The following examples demonstrate how smaller religious groups have tried, sometimes successfully, to work within legal and regulatory contexts they viewed as favorable. As will be shown, however, some of those contexts have changed over time in a less favorable direction,[9] in part because of the successful use of such contexts by minority religions.

1. The Unification Church, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), and other NRMs in the U.S. initially took

advantage of decades-old court precedents guaranteeing constitutional protection for fundraising activities to support themselves through solicitation of funds in public places such as airports.[10] These activities were often challenged, however, leading to numerous court cases over the right to solicit in public places. The Unification Church had one major case go to the U. S. Supreme Court, where it won a slim victory.[11] The success of the Unification Church in using Mobile Fundraising Teams to raise money and its legal victory led to the development of new group practices and even theological justification for such activities.[12] Similar impacts were discernible within ISKCON.

Over the past two decades this ability to raise funds through solicitation has been curtailed through changes of interpretation in the law via Supreme Court Cases which have used a public safety rationale to place time and place restrictions on such activities. We now see fewer ISKCON fund-raisers in airports (or at state fairs), although we may still see members of the Unification Church soliciting on street corners.[13]

Outside the U. S. there have also have been societal and legal contexts that have facilitated the development and maintenance of NRMs. For instance, in countries with national health plans for all citizens, religious groups are relieved of having to furnish health care for members. In addition, relatively generous welfare programs in some countries may furnish sustenance income for members of communal religious groups. Controversy has arisen in some European countries where such groups are accused of accepting this largesse from the government, but not doing productive (and taxable) work in return. That controversy has been one impetus for growing efforts to "manage" new religions in European countries such as Germany.[14]

2. Many communally organized NRMs have taken advantage of laws that ostensibly sanction communal living. Such group living arrangements foster increased commitment of members to group goals and beliefs and lower the costs of living for participants. These communal settings also encourage the use of small manufacturing or agriculture as methods of support, as well as the development of "work teams" that can be hired out, for instance, to neighboring agricultural enterprises.[15] Income derived from hiring out work teams or from the sale of goods made in small shops have been used to support the groups.[16] Over time, however, legal strictures have developed that have had the effect of curtailing both small NRM businesses and communal living itself in some urban areas.

For example, the courts started upholding local ordinances against communal living, stating that groups of citizens in neighborhoods, towns, and cities could pass ordinances regulating the number of unrelated people who could live together in residential neighborhoods. Such decisions have had a greater impact on urban communes than rural

ones. In addition, the federal Labor Department started enforcing federal wage rates in selected communal religious groups and won a major Supreme Court case against Tony Alamo's Alamo Foundation in Texas.[17] The church had been using volunteer labor living communally to produce clothing for sale to the public. In exchange for this voluntary labor, the group provided for members' shelter and food needs. The court's decision forced the Alamo community to pay minimum wages to its workers, and the government then attempted to apply this precedent to other groups.[18]

The use of work teams as a method of fundraising has also been curtailed by IRS decisions that treated such income as "unrelated business income," thus forcing groups to pay taxes on the income.[19] Shiloh, a communal Christian group on which I have done considerable research, received a multi-million dollar tax bill when the IRS, after initially sanctioning the way in which work teams were used for group support, changed its position and declared that the income was taxable. The group no longer exists, in part because of difficulties with the IRS.[20]

3. In most modern societies it is legal for members of a NRM to approach people to talk to them about joining their group. In the U. S., groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons regularly appear at our doors, facilitating the growth and spread of these religions. Minority faiths are able to implement aggressive missionary programs in the U. S. and elsewhere because of constitutional provisions and other legal codes guaranteeing freedom of religion—a guarantee that sometimes contains explicit provisions allowing persons to change faiths.[21] However, these freedoms are not found everywhere, and, even where they are, changes can occur.

To cite one example, after a burst of initial enthusiasm for strongly worded new laws and constitutional provisions guaranteeing freedom of religious speech and assembly, former communist countries such as Russia appear to be back-tracking on the right to proselytize. Some foreign religious groups are being refused official registration, an important guarantor of civil rights and legitimacy. This is occurring despite the fact that these NRMs are carefully adhering to the stated criteria for legal registration. Furthermore, explicit rules are now being established that limit the numbers of foreign missionaries being allowed into a country and the ability of these missionaries to solicit people for membership.[22]

Within the U. S. there have been efforts to modify the application of immigration laws with regard to religious groups. Despite laws that allow religious leaders to come to the U. S. to practice their faith (in part to reciprocate for our being allowed to send missionaries to other countries), strong efforts have been mounted to limit the number of Unification Church members entering the country. Efforts were also

made to deport Baghwan Rajneesh after he had been granted residency status by immigration officials. The Unification Church won an important legal victory when the judges voted to allow its members to immigrate according to extant laws. The Baghwan, however, was eventually deported.[23]

The right to proselytize for minority faiths has also been an issue in Greece, where members of Jehovah's Witnesses have been arrested, fined, and jailed since the reestablishment of democracy on charges that they violated laws against proselytizing. These laws, which had never been previously enforced against members of other faiths, were challenged by the European Court of Human Rights in 1993, when the laws were found to violate religious freedom guarantees of the Council of Europe. However, the vote of the court was split, and some strongly worded statements were made about the right of society to control those engaged in the aggressive spread of their faith.[24] Nonetheless, the decision seems to indicate some support for the basic right to proselytize, as well as for recruits to change their religions.

4. Christian Science and a number of other religious groups promote the use of spiritual healing for physical aliments. Although such methods have been controversial—especially with regard to sick children—Christian Scientists have been able to lobby successfully for laws that grant church members exemptions from some statutes concerning child endangerment and related charges. For decades in America if a Christian Science parent acting in good faith used spiritual healing to treat their child's illness or injury, the law was not applied to them when the treatment did not work as hoped. These provisions clearly encouraged the continued use of such healing methods.

In recent times, however, these laws have occasionally been ignored, and a number of Christian Science parents have been charged with child endangerment and even manslaughter and involuntary homicide when their children have died after spiritual healing treatments for fatal diseases or injuries.[25] Although in certain cases convictions have resulted, these convictions have been overturned on appeal for due process reasons.[26]

Efforts are being made around the country to get the exemption for spiritual healing repealed, so that the state can act more readily in these situations. For its part, the church seems to have modified its rules concerning how people should be treated who do not use spiritual healing methods with ill children. The church now makes it clear that Christian Science parents who choose to use traditional medical treatments with ill children are not subject to severe sanctions from church officials.[27]

5. Some of the more controversial new religions have gained considerable experience and prowess in the legal arena and have learned

how to use legal means to defend themselves against what they view as unwarranted attacks or attempts to exert social control over them. Detractors of these NRMs claim that the groups are simply harassing those with whom they disagree.

The Unification Church has learned over the years that it can bring legal actions to force local governmental agencies to allow it to engage in street solicitation, and that such actions can often be successful. It has also successfully sued to force the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to allow foreign members into this country when the INS slowed the handling of applications that appeared on their face to be fully lawful.[28]

The Church of Scientology and other minority religions have also made use of libel laws to sue or threaten suit against detractors. Individuals and even media organizations may act with exaggerated caution when faced with a threat of legal action against them for comments made or stories printed or being planned for publication. Winning libel suits is difficult, especially within an American context that protects speech more than most other societies, but defending against such actions requires considerable effort and expense.

A major libel case occurred in the U. S. in 1985, when the Church of Witness Lee sued the writer Neil Duddy, who had made serious claims of wrongdoing by the church in a book. An impressive set of experts testified on behalf of the church in a suit that resulted in an $11 million default judgment, with the defendant apparently leaving the country to avoid the legal action.[29]

Another libel case, in which ISKCON filed suit against a major detractor for comments made in some anti-cult-oriented publications,[30] marked a major watershed in Hungary. ISKCON won the suit at the trial level and also prevailed on appeal, marking one of the first times such an action has been won by one of the controversial new religions. In a similar case, formal charges against a journalist and one major newspaper in Australia were won by a quasi-religious therapy group known as Kenja after the paper published some extremely critical stories about it.[31]

A major libel action in the U. K. ended in a less positive fashion for the group filing the action. The Unification Church sued the *Daily Mail*, a tabloid newspaper in London, for allegations that the church "brainwashed" its members. This suit, which became the longest-running libel action in U. K. history, was eventually lost, and the jury also recommended revoking the Unification Church's charitable status. Efforts to do this were not successful, but they did cause the church considerable difficulty for a time.[32]

The filing of legal actions against detractors by Scientology is controversial, and the church is often accused of intimidation by its enemies. Church spokesmen respond that they must use the legal arena

since the attacks against the group are vigorous and the political climate for Scientology is so hostile. Recently the church was finally granted full tax exempt status by the U. S. Internal Revenue Service, a development that surprised many since in 1989 the IRS had won a major Supreme Court case supporting its refusal to grant such status to Scientology. Some commentators have suggested that the church's many suits against the IRS, coupled with the agency's questionable investigative tactics, may have contributed to the tax service's willingness to settle its legal actions involving Scientology.[33]

6. Prisoners in federal and state prisons recently were able, for a short while, to use a major new weapon in defending their exercise of religious freedom. In the past, prisoners who, for religious reasons, had desired to eat certain diets, wear certain clothes, jewelry, or hairstyles, or engage in special ritual practices had usually been denied permission to do so. The logic was that such denials had a "rational basis" recognized in the law, that being the maintenance of order and security in prisons. However, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) passed in 1993 granted prisoners a major new legal basis for asserting rights of religious freedom. The Act resulted from the Supreme Court's *Smith* decision, which overruled the "compelling interest" test that had been used for years in many religious freedom cases.[34] After RFRA, a warden could no longer simply disallow with impunity claims based on religious freedom. The new law forced wardens to prove that their actions represented a "compelling state interest" and to demonstrate that what they proposed was the least intrusive alternative to maintaining order and security. Following passage of the new law, a number of prisoners began winning suits against prison authorities, which in turn led to a major outcry and efforts to change the law either by court decision or legislation. These efforts were eventually successful. In 1997 a Supreme Court decision ruled the entire act unconstitutional on the grounds that Congress had usurped judicial power in passing the act.[35] Thus the situation for prisoners has reverted to what was the case prior to passage of RFRA.

"NEGATIVE" USES OF THE LAW IN SOCIAL CONTROL EFFORTS

The previous section has shown that new religions often use the law and governmental regulations for their own benefit, even if temporary victories can be changed markedly through subsequent court decisions or other means. Instances described in this section involve uses of law *against* minority faiths by those opposed to their development and proliferation. Robbins and Beckford's term "affirmative discrimination" includes much of what is discussed herein, although some of the

examples also illustrate their concept of "indirect" or "rule-based discrimination."[36] Thus the law and the legal system can be used by detractors of minority religious groups as mechanisms of social control, lending evidence to Stephen Carter's recent charge that a negative climate toward religion currently exists in the U. S.[37] As will be shown, there are indeed instances where the law has allowed, if not encouraged, attacks against NRMs through legal means.

1. A widespread accusation against new religions which has made its way into the courts concerns claims about "brainwashing" and "mind control" as a means of recruitment.[38] Such accusations, even if true, cannot serve directly as a basis for civil suits or criminal charges. However, these accusations can and have served both to underpin legal claims of all kinds and to defend anti-cultists against various charges.[39] For example, deprogrammers have used brainwashing claims as a defense for their actions in kidnapping members of controversial groups. In one major federal case, a person charged with mail fraud tried to make such claims as his defense, but the court did not allow the brainwashing-based claims, and he entered into a plea bargain arrangement, thus admitting his guilt.[40]

Many civil actions have been based on brainwashing claims, even though the actual torts do not mention them. The discussions of former members who were suing often involve how they were recruited, with claims that they lost their volition because of "mind control" or 'brainwashing." A number of juries have accepted these claims, sometimes awarding large damages to plaintiffs.[41]

Brainwashing claims can cause major disruption in groups that are required to defend against them in court or to pay damages resulting from lawsuits. Groups being sued on such a basis have had to take many actions that they might otherwise not have taken. In addition, they have had to justify these actions theologically. The raising of funds or reallocation of resources in order to defend against brainwashing claims must be justified, since raising money takes great effort and reallocation means that resources may be unavailable for other group goals. Group beliefs have changed under the pressure of lawsuits—often to include quite negative definitions of those making such claims.[42] These cases, as well as the deprogramming that is sometimes involved, have probably contributed to the development of a more polarized worldview for some of the groups being attacked.

2. Accusations of child abuse of various kinds against new or minority religions have become a standard means of attack in recent years for those wanting to control NRMs or to obtain custody of a child, one of whose parents is a member of a NRM community.[43] Child abuse accusations may be based on lifestyle. For example, such charges may

be leveled if a group does not have the economic base deemed necessary by some outsiders for raising children properly, or if corporal punishment is used. Alternatively, home schooling that is theologically based may attract negative attention from those who think children should be educated in secular public schools. Most damaging are the accusations of child sex abuse that have plagued NRMs such as The Family (formerly the Children of God) and the Branch Davidians.

The establishment in recent decades of mandatory reporting laws for child abuse and the establishment of governmental bureaucracies to protect children evidence the growing concern for the welfare of small children in societies throughout the world. Thus, someone willing to make claims that children are being abused, especially sexually, can provoke actions by law enforcement and other governmental bureaucracies. Such claims in both the U. S. and other countries have triggered massive raids in which hundreds of children have been taken into custody and parents have been charged with various types of abuse.[44] Some group members have spent time in foreign jails, and hundreds have had their children taken away, if only for a short time in most instances.

Police actions of this kind have had profound impacts on the NRMs involved. They have had to devote resources to defending themselves and fighting for custody of their children. They have also been caught up in legal and judicial systems that they would much preferred to have left alone. Some of the groups have changed internal policies dramatically in an effort to prove that they are worthy of being allowed to keep their children. Such policies, of course, must be justified on theological grounds since they relate to group beliefs. Thus law enforcement actions based on concerns for children have had profound impacts, in some cases bringing about permanent changes in beliefs and lifestyle.

3. As was mentioned earlier, tax laws have been used against minority faiths, sometimes in ways reminiscent of how the IRS was used to finally "get" leaders of organized crime. Tony Alamo, to cite one example, is spending time in prison for tax evasion at the present time, and the Reverend Sun Myung Moon spent time in a federal prison for tax evasion in what was one of the most controversial of such cases in many years.[45]

The action against Moon has backfired in one sense, as he became a major hero to many religious leaders because he was prosecuted for handling funds in ways quite similar to how many other religious groups and leaders do. However, the loss of a leader to prison cannot be defined as a positive outcome for most religious groups, whatever the charges. Thus, at least in the short term, this type of direct attack using tax laws has been effective as a method of social control, as have other creative

uses of tax regulations, such as those used with the Shiloh organization already described.

4. Governmental regulations of various kinds have also been used against minority faiths, sometimes with considerable success. Scientology has experienced the most creative uses of governmental regulation, both in the U. S. and Europe. In the U. S. the Food and Drug Administration battled for years with Scientology over its claims that use of E-meters would improve the users' mental and physical health. The United Kingdom banned entrance of any Scientologists into the country for years before lifting this action in 1980.

In Australia several states at one time made the practice of Scientology illegal, using laws that regulate the practice of psychology and counseling. Such regulations, which are no longer enforced, made it illegal for anyone to register as a Scientologist, to advertise services, to teach about Scientology, or to receive payments for services offered through Scientology. Even the Australian "Companies Code," which regulates business activities, has in the past made it illegal to use the terms "dianetics" or "scientology" in any advertising. A famous court case in Australia also made it acceptable to refuse employment to Scientologists applying for sensitive posts within the federal government.[46] And recently in Germany the federal government and some states have launched a massive and unprecedented campaign against Scientology. Included in this campaign is a Bavarian law making it illegal for a Scientologist to hold a government position.

Obviously, questions can be raised about why Scientology has engendered such a negative response from governmental authorities. Some would suggest that this occurs because Scientology is in such a competitive situation with the hegemonic position of modern psychiatry and psychotherapy.[47] Others would point out that Scientology does in many ways resemble a modern corporation, selling goods to the public in ways that raise questions about its status as a "real religion."[48] Scientology is not alone in this regard, of course. As noted in the introduction to this essay, many newer faiths operating within modern societies turn to economic enterprises to support themselves and thereby attract the attention of governmental regulators as well as the occasional ire of the general public.

Another example of systematic and pervasive efforts to regulate a minority faith through the use of the legal system is the case of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh movement during its sojourn in Oregon. Both the State of Oregon and the Federal Government made use of state and federal agencies' regulatory powers to exert control over this controversial group at various junctures during the early 1980s. Moreover, the State of Oregon made use of the state and federal court systems to sanction many of its actions.[49]

Bureaucratic regulation of this kind can cause considerable difficulty for minority faiths, which must allocate resources to defend themselves. At times regulatory efforts can cause a reaction on the part of group leaders and members, contributing to the potential for more difficulty and even violence (recall that the People's Temple tragedy was provoked in part by efforts by welfare officials in California to gain custody of a child fathered by Jim Jones).

CONCLUSIONS

One conclusion is obvious: all religious groups operate in a legal context which impinges on them both directly and indirectly. And often that legal context does not recognize the unique characteristics of NRMs that encourage them to engage in activities—such as proselytizing and fundraising—that may be defined as problematic or even deviant by the societies of which they are a part. The increasing expansion of state control in many modern societies exacerbates this difficulty, as scholars have noted.[50]

Sometimes religious groups are able to use the law to their advantage, as in the U. S. and other countries that legally protect religious freedoms. However, when an unpopular religious group uses the law, detractors may attempt to find ways to stop such uses, with varying degrees of success. This can change the legal context even for those not involved in NRMs, a fact sometimes overlooked by those willing to allow such efforts at social control.[51]

Sometimes private parties who oppose a given religious group can find ways to use the law in their attacks. The outcome is not always predictable, however, as some of the cases outlined above show. Still, such tactics can dramatically change the culture and even beliefs of a movement. At the same time, groups and individuals who are not associated with the community being attacked may be affected by the legal precedents set in such cases. Thus, there may be unintended consequences for religious freedom itself in these cases, and a subsequent expansion of state control into other areas of private life.

ENDNOTES

[1] Tom Robbins and James Beckford, "Religious Movements and Church-State Issues," in *Handbook of Sects and Cults in America*, eds. Jeffrey Hadden and David Bromley (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1993), 199-218.

[2] See Tom Robbins and David Bromley, "State Regulation of Marginal Religious

Movements," *SYZYGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* 2 (1993): 225-42; James T. Richardson, "Legal Status of Minority Religions in the United States," *Social Compass* 42 (1995): 249-64; James T. Richardson, "Minority Religions, Religious Freedom, and the New Pan-European Political and Judicial Institutions," *Journal of Church and State* 37 (1995): 39-59; and James T. Richardson, "Minority Religions ('Cults') and the Law: Comparisons of the United States, Europe, and Australia," *University of Queensland Law Review* 18 (1995): 183-207.

[3] See Stephen Carter, *The Culture of Unbelief* (New York: Basic Books, 1993) for development of this point.

[4] See David Bromley and Thomas Robbins, "The Role of Government in Regulating New and Unconventional Religions," in *The Role of Government in Monitoring and Regulating Religion in Public Life*, eds. J. Wood and D. Davis (Waco, TX: J. M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, 1993), 205-40 and Nikos Passas, "The Market for Gods and Services: Religion, Commerce, and Deviance," in *Between Sacred and Secular: Research and Theory in Quasi-Religion*, eds. Anthony Griel and Thomas Robbins (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1994), 217-40.

[5] See James Richardson, ed., *Money and Power in the New Religions* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988) and Passas, "The Market for Gods and Services."

[6] Some might suggest that such sentiments have become a good excuse for formerly powerful state churches (prior to Communism) to reassert themselves. See Marat Shterin and James Richardson, "Local Laws Limiting Religious Freedom in Russia: Precursors of Russia's New National Law," *Journal of Church and State* (forthcoming 1998).

[7] See James Richardson, Mary Harder and Robert Simmonds, *Organized Miracles* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1979) for such a group.

[8] See David Bromley and James Richardson, eds. *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983).

[9] See Robbins and Bromley, "State Regulation of Marginal Religious Movements," and Richardson, "Legal Status of Minority Religions."

[10] See Barry Fisher, "Current Issues in Government Regulation of Religious Solicitation," in *Government Intervention in Religious Affairs*, ed. Dean Kelley (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982).

[11] Robbins and Beckford, "Religious Movements and Church State Issues."

[12] See David Bromley and Anson Shupe, "Financing the New Religions: A Resource Mobilization Approach," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 19 (1979): 227-39 and James T. Richardson, "Financing the New Religions: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 21 (1982): 255-68.

[13] Bromley and Robbins, "The Role of Government in Regulating New and Nonconventional Religions," and Richardson, "Legal Status of Minority Religions."

[14] Richardson, "Minority Religions, Religious Freedom, and the New Pan-European Political and Judicial Institutions."

[15] See Richardson, *Money and Power in the New Religions*, and Richardson *et al.*, *Organized Miracles.*

[16] See chapters of Richardson, *Money and Power in the New Religions*, for examples of the various ways religious groups have supported themselves.

[17] See David Gregory, "Government Regulation of Religion Through Employment Discrimination Laws," in *The Role of Government in Monitoring and Regulating Religion in Public Life*, eds. Wood and Davis (Waco, Tx: Dawson Institute of Church-State Religions, 1993), and Bromley and Robbins, "The Role of Government in Regulating New and Nonconventional Religions."

[18] See Richardson, "Legal Status of Minority Religions."

[19] See Meade Emory and Lawrence Zelenak, "The Tax Exempt Status of Communitarian Organizations," in *Cults, Culture, and the Law*, eds. Thomas Robbins, William Shepherd, and James McBride (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 177-201, and Deborah Podus, "Churches, Tax Exemption, and the Social Organization of Religion," in *Religious Institutions*, ed. C. Calhoun (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1991), 179-202.

[20] James T. Richardson, "The 'Deformation' of New Religions: Impacts of Societal and Organizational Factors," in *Cults, Culture, and the Law*, eds. Thomas Robbins, *et al.* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 163-76.

[21] See Bromley and Robbins, "The Role of Government in Regulating New and Nonconventional Religions," and Richardson, "Legal Status of Minority Religions," "Minority Religions, Religious Freedom, and the New Pan-European Political and Judicial Institutions," and "Minority Religions ('Cults') and the Law."

[22] James T. Richardson, "New Religions and Religious Freedom in Eastern and Central Europe: A Sociological Analysis," in *New Religious Phenomena in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Irena Borowik and Grzegorz Babinski (Krakow: Nomos Publishing House, 1997), 257-82.

[23] James T. Richardson, "Religion on Trial: Minority Religions in Oregon," (paper presented at annual meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association, Spokane, WA, 1990) and Lewis Carter, *Charisma and Control in Rajneeshpuram* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[24] James T. Richardson, "'Brainwashing Claims and Minority Religions Outside the U. S.," *Brigham Young University Law Review* 1996 (1996): 873-904, and Richardson, "Minority Religions, Religious Freedom, and the New Pan-European Political and Judicial Institutions."

[25] James T. Richardson and John DeWitt, "Christian Science Spiritual Healing, the Law, and Public Opinion," *Journal of Church and State* 34 (1992): 549-62.

[26] These parents were unaware that they were violating the law since the legal situation had changed quite recently. Carter, in *The Culture of Unbelief*, discusses implications of the refusal by the courts to uphold decisions by Jehovah's Witness parents concerning blood transfusions for their children, pointing out that this refusal treats Witness claims about the meaning of blood transfusions as false.

[27] Richardson and DeWitt, "Christian Science Spiritual Healing, the Law, and Public Opinion."

[28] Richardson, "Legal Status of Minority Religions."

[29] See discussion of this case and statements of the expert witnesses in Living Stream Ministries, *The Experts Speak Concerning Witness Lee and the Local Churches* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministries, 1995).

[30] Richardson, "New Religions and Religious Freedom in Eastern and Central Europe."

[31] James T. Richardson, "Journalistic Bias Toward New Religions in Australia," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 11 (1996): 289-302.

[32] See discussion of this episode in Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice?* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984).

[33] See Douglas Frantz, "Scientology's Puzzling Journey From Tax Rebel to Tax Exempt," *New York Times*, Sunday, 9 March 1997, 1.

[34] James T. Richardson, "The Religious Freedom Restoration Act: A Short-Lived Experiment," in *Religion, Pluralism, and Law*, eds. Christopher Barringer and David Sinacore-Guinn (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998).

[35] The case involved a zoning dispute in Bourne, Texas between a Catholic Church and the local governing board. The Church wanted to expand to allow more room for its ministry to members and the poor, but since the church was located in a historical district, their request was refused. They sued using RFRA and lost at the trial level, with the judge saying the Act was unconstitutional. On appeal the Act was upheld, but the Supreme Court accepted the case and ruled that the entire Act was unconstitutional.

[36] Robbins and Beckford, "Religious Movements and Church-State Issues."

[37] Carter, *Culture of Unbelief.*

[38] Barker, *The Making of a Moonie;* Robbins and Bromley, "State Regulation of Marginal Religious Movements"; and James T. Richardson, "A Social Psychological Critique of 'Brainwashing' Claims About Recruitment to New Religions," in *Handbook of Cults and Sects in America,* eds. Hadden and Bromley, 75-97.

[39] Dick Anthony, "Religious Movements and Brainwashing Litigation: Evaluating Key Testimony," in *In Gods We Trust,* eds. Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1990), 295-344; Dick Anthony and Tom Robbins, "Law, Social Science, and the 'Brainwashing' Exception to the First Amendment," *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 10 (1992): 5-27; James T. Richardson, "Cult/Brainwashing Cases and the Freedom of Religion," *Journal of Church and State* 33 (1991): 55-74; and Larry Shinn, "Who Gets to Define Religion? The Brainwashing-Conversion Controversy," *Religious Studies Review* 19 (1993): 195-207.

[40] Dick Anthony and Tom Robbins, "Negligence, Coercion, and the Protection of Religious Belief," *Journal of Church and State* 37 (1995): 509-36.

[41] Richardson, "Legal Status of Minority Religions," and Richardson, "'Brainwashing' Claims and Minority Religions Outside the United States."

[42] Eileen Barker, "With Enemies Like That: Some Functions of Deprogramming as an Aid to Sectarian Membership," in *Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy,* eds. Bromley and Richardson, 329-44.

[43] James T. Richardson, "The Evolution of Social Control of New Religions: From 'Brainwashing' Claims to Child Sex Abuse Accusations," forthcoming in *Children in New Religions,* eds. Susan Palmer and Charlotte Hardman (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).

[44] For details see Richardson, "Evolution of Social Control of New Religions," as well as several chapters in *Sex, Slander, and Salvation: Investigating the Family/Children of God,* eds. James Lewis and Gordon Melton (Stanford, CA: Center for Academic Publications, 1994), 27-39.

[45] For details see James Richardson, "Public Opinion and the Tax Evasion Trial of Reverend Moon," *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 10 (1992), 53-63; Herbert Richardson, *Constitutional Issues in the Case of Reverend Moon* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984); and Carlton Sherwood, *Inquisition: The Persecution and Prosecution of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1991).

[46] See New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board, *Discrimination and Religious Conviction* (Sydney: NSA Anti-Discrimination Board, 1984) and Richardson, "Minority Religions ('Cults') and the Law: Comparisons of the United States, Europe, and Australia."

[47] Brock Kilbourne and James T. Richardson, "Psychotherapy and New Religions in a Pluralistic Society," *American Psychologist* 39 (1984): 237-51.

[48]Passas, "The Market for Gods and Services," and Nikos Passas and Manuel Castillo, "Scientology and its 'Clear' Business," *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 10 (1992): 103-16.

[49] I encountered a somewhat humorous illustration of attempts at social control by governmental regulators while doing research on the Rajneesh group in Oregon. During

an interview with an official of the Portland office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service about the Rajneeshees, I was told that they had finally figured out a way to deport the Bhagwan. It seems that he had taken a vow of silence and this meant that he was not really a minister because "everyone knows that ministers have to talk." Apparently wiser heads prevailed, because I am unaware of such an effort actually being tried, but just to hear the claim was informative. See Richardson, "Religion on Trial," and Carter, *Charisma and Control in Rajneeshpuram*, for details on the Rajneesh organization and its legal problems.

[50] Robbins and Bromley, "State Regulation of Marginal Religious Groups."

[51] Occasionally religionists in traditional faiths recognize that they too have something at stake when minority faiths are attacked. This occurred, for instance, when Reverend Moon was charged with tax evasion for handling funds in ways similar to many other religious groups in our society. When Reverend Moon's conviction was appealed to the U. S. Supreme Court, *amicus* briefs from religious organizations representing 125 million members were filed asking that the U. S. Supreme Court review the conviction. Their plea was rejected, however. See H. Richardson, *Constitutional Issues in the Case of Reverend Moon*; Sherwood, *Inquisition*; and J. Richardson, "Public Opinion and the Tax Evasion Trial of Reverend Moon," for details about this support.

Snapshots of Tradition: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Georgia

Brian Britt

ABSTRACT: On the thirteenth of each month, from October 1990 until May 1994, Nancy Fowler appeared on the porch of a farmhouse in Conyers, Georgia, to deliver the message she had received from an apparition of the Virgin Mary. On apparition days, up to 80,000 people brought rosaries and cameras to the grounds of the farm. This essay analyzes the use of traditional religious discourse and modern technologies such as photography by participants in the Conyers gatherings. Participants have also employed electronic mail and electromagnetic wave measurements to verify and legitimate the monthly apparitions. My analysis suggests that Conyers brings together traditional Marian discourse and modern technology to create a dynamic and popular religious setting.

Nancy Fowler is a married Roman Catholic who moved to Georgia in 1988, when she began seeing visions of Jesus.[1] Regular visions of Mary began in 1990, and in 1991, after the crowds had outgrown Fowler's property, Virginia businessman Robert Hughes purchased land near her house and formed an organization called Our Loving Mother's Children. The organization distributes books and flyers on the phenomenon and maintains an active Internet discussion group.[2] Monthly apparitions continued until May 13, 1994, when Fowler, in part due to pressure from local civic and church officials, announced that they would take place only once a year, in October. Nevertheless, "Fowler still receives a teaching message from Jesus on the 13th of each month, and Mary gives a Message for the United States on October 13 of every year."[3]

Many groups visited Conyers on apparition day: reporters and camera people, people in wheelchairs, and thousands of others in church tour groups, with families, or alone. While some viewed the gathering as a spectacular miracle, others treated it as an opportunity to bring specific petitions or to practice quiet devotions. Many people took Polaroid photographs of the area around the farmhouse, but far more—a clear majority—participated in the Rosary recitation. I suggest

that two factors account for the popularity and robustness of the Conyers apparitions: (1) the familiar and traditional discourse of Marian apparitions, and (2) the novel use of cameras and other technologies to legitimate the apparitions. The cameras, which are used to capture miraculous images of glowing objects, rays of light, or Mary herself, reinforce various forms of belief, practice, and spectacle.

TRADITIONAL MARIAN DISCOURSE

Modern Marian apparitions have their roots in twelfth- and thirteenth-century legends associated with Marian shrines in such places as Chartres, Soissons, and Laon.[4] By the fifteenth century, reports of public and serial apparitions of Mary were widespread in Spain and other parts of Europe.[5] According to William Christian, Jr., Marian apparitions declined from the sixteenth until the nineteenth century due in part to the Inquisition.[6] In the mid-eighteenth century, Pope Benedict XIV endorsed the limited use of apparitions and related phenomena for religious instruction, and this support increased in the nineteenth century, especially under Pope Pius IX:

> By "crowning" Marian shrine images, the papacy associated them with the universal church. Rome also endorsed a new series of proclamations of Marian images as patrons of dioceses or provinces. And it regarded with increasing sympathy visions of Mary that led to the establishment of new shrines.[7]

The modern period of Marian apparitions began in France, especially at LaSalette (1846) and Lourdes (1858), both of which enjoy official papal recognition and continued popularity today.[8] Along with new papal support, the modern apparitions drew strength from what David Blackbourn calls the feminization of nineteenth-century Catholicism, a development in which women and femininity became more prominent in popular religion.[9] As a form of piety in Catholicism, participation in Marian pilgrimages continues to grow worldwide.[10] According to a Vatican-sponsored Internet publication, there are over 300 Marian apparition sites in the world today.[11] Current pilgrimage and apparition sites include Fatima (Portugal), Garabandal (Spain), Betania (Venezuala), Medjugorje (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Knock (Ireland), Bayside/Flushing Meadows (New York), and Emmitsburg (Maryland). Building on the revival of Marian piety and apparitions, Mariology has joined angelology and other New Age phenomena as part of the wider popular religious culture. Public interest in the subject has produced books ranging from Franz Werfel's *The Song of Bernadette* to Ron Hansen's *Mariette in Ecstasy*; films such as *Therèse*; and television and newspaper coverage of Marian apparitions.[12]

Since the fifteenth century, Marian apparitions have shared a number of general characteristics that apply also to Conyers: the visions gain a public following and occur serially; they represent Mary as an intercessor for her followers in some crisis; they express divine anger at particular sins (e.g., irreverence and atheism); and they are accompanied by a message of warning as well as miraculous signs, especially healings.[13] At Conyers, such traditional signs as spinning suns and the changing colors of rosary beads are joined by such innovations as miraculous brain waves and atmospheric radiation—which require more advanced technological devices to measure and test. The use of miraculous Polaroid photographs as further testimony first became widespread at Bayside, New York (1970-1975), where Veronica Leuken, a housewife like Nancy Fowler, drew thousands of followers.[14]

In the modern period, at Fatima, Portugal (1917), and Garabandal, Spain (1961), apparitions of the Virgin have communicated warnings that have often been apocalyptic in nature.[15] According to Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, a "transcultural, apocalyptic ideology based on apparition messages" has arisen in twentieth-century Catholic culture.[16] The messages at Conyers, which, in the tradition of Fatima, took place on the thirteenth of the month, share this apocalyptic ideology. In 1991, for instance, Fowler reported the following statement by Mary: "Tensions within countries are mounting. Unless you turn back to God this nation will be in a great war."[17] According to the messages, returning to God involves devotion to Jesus, Mary, and the Catholic sacraments, and a rejection of such practices as abortion.

Nancy Fowler belongs to a long history of women mystics whose power derives from Marian apparitions; like many women since the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Fowler often experiences her visions during Mass.[18] These visions share the rich detail of their medieval counterparts, in which images are carefully described and then interpreted allegorically.[19] The content of her apparitions follows the conventions of Christian visionary discourse:

> Later Nancy said, "Rays of light are streaming from the Mother of God's hand and streaming to my left and now to my right. The rays of light are graces. The rays of light are penetrating into your hearts. Thank you for your petitions. Not a single one do I miss. All will be carried to the Throne of God."[20]

As Christian notes of the fifteenth century, apparitions have long followed established literary conventions: "Apparitions borrowed from legends, and over time they became legends."[21]

Anthropological studies of Marian apparitions concentrate on structural descriptions of ritual and sacred space, but John Eade and Michael Sallnow suggest that apparitions can also offer a "textual pilgrimage."[22] Traditional discourse and texts give apparitions their

structure and context, regardless of whether the pilgrim visits a physical space or "cyberspace." With their clear dependence on traditional visionary discourse, an e-mail listserve, and extensive publications, Fowler's apparitions constitute a textual pilgrimage. By referring directly to previous Christian visionaries and by inscribing her visions on paper before reading them, Fowler makes the written text a primary means of communication and a focus of her message. The e-mail listserve creates a disembodied cyberspace in which these messages appear, in seemingly random rotation, over the Internet. Listserve members also exchange messages, most often in the form of requested prayers and petitions. When she appears before the crowd reading her transcribed vision, Fowler models the spiritual behavior of *lectio divina.*

If Conyers belongs to a tradition of religious discourse and pilgrimage, then what social function does it serve? Anthropologists are divided between the idea of pilgrimage (1) as the reinforcement of social roles and structures (following Durkheim) and (2) as an anti-structural, universalistic phenomenon promoting *communitas.*[23] But since participants are diverse, it is not immediately clear that Conyers fits only one of these models. Conyers provides a setting in which to practice a popular kind of Catholic piety—pilgrimage to a Marian devotional site—which may suggest the social reinforcement model.[24] The messages and structure of the Conyers phenomena are conventional and unoriginal, except for a certain folksy style in Fowler's delivery:

> While driving in her car, Nancy said, "I really like this cruise control because it allows me to set it so it drives the car and I can pray my Rosary."
>
> Jesus then said, "If only My children would see My gifts that way."[25]

Fowler's admonitions to maintain the sacramental life and to obey Church authorities also suggest the social reinforcement model. On the other hand, former Atlanta Archbishop Lyke's warning about Fowler may indicate a concern not only about authenticity but also about an anti-hierarchical *communitas*: "Priests are not to accept invitations to lead pilgrimages or visits to Conyers, nor are they to initiate such. . . . It is important that we not create the perception or impression that I or the Archdiocese endorse or authenticate these alleged apparitions."[26]

To build on the metaphor of textual pilgrimage, we can consider Conyers, and even individual participants, as a "realm of competing discourses."[27] For some people at certain times, Conyers represents *communitas*, while for others, it reinforces traditional norms of Catholic piety and teaching. The sheer numbers and diversity of participants at Conyers would make a single perspective on its meaning incomplete.

Written accounts of Conyers take several forms. In *Wake Up America! Take My Heart, Take My Hand*, Ann Marie Hancock celebrates the Conyers apparitions as truthful, inspirational events.[28] Enthusiastically confessional in tone, the book includes interviews with Fowler, testimony from clergy, reports of miraculous healings, and "scientific studies" that claim to affirm the authenticity of the apparitions. Taken as a whole, Hancock's book endorses Nancy Fowler's apparitions on two grounds: faith and fact.

One can also read about Conyers in the newspapers and follow television coverage of the events, which depicts both the site and the activities surrounding Nancy Fowler. Each month, especially when the weather permitted good attendance, area news media crowded an area near the farmhouse designated for cameras, crews, and their vans. Journalists have focused on testimony about miracles as well as on Fowler's personality and such key players as the Archbishop of Atlanta. But journalistic accounts leaves out the apparitions' cultural context and history and remains relatively silent about such conceptual issues as belief. The conflicting depictions of Conyers as a devotional site for believers and a media spectacle create the need for first-hand observation.[29]

Descriptions of the location and actions surrounding this phenomenon, as well as conversations with participants, are indispensable to understanding it. The considerable body of literature produced and distributed by organizers of the gatherings conveys a partial and highly conventional version of these gatherings at Fowler's farmhouse. But readers of this literature might never discover that 20,000 to 80,000 people visited Conyers each month to recite the Rosary, climb the Holy Hill, and take Polaroid snapshots of the farmhouse and the sky during apparitions. After hearing reports about the apparitions from the media and from students, I decided to visit the farm on a scheduled apparition day. As it turns out, this ethnographic experiment had negative lessons—it taught me that what really happens there is complex and relatively unspectacular. In the spirit of Karen McCarthy Brown's *Mama Lola*, which breaks down the distinction between insider and outsider, the following narrative is impressionistic and includes my own reactions.[30]

NARRATIVE: MAY 13, 1994

Participants assemble and begin reciting the Rosary at about noon. About an hour later, from inside the "Apparition Room" of the farmhouse, a soft-spoken man reports what Fowler sees and hears over a loudspeaker. The apparition gives the ordinary Rosary devotion an extraordinary dimension.[31] The people of the crowd are not simply

witnesses to the miracle; they contribute to it. It seems to work like efficacious grace in reverse, from the grassroots up, with a self-described "plain Jane" as focus. It occurs to me that this populism and female authority may be what trouble the Atlanta archbishop.

When the apparition concludes, the man's voice announces that the Virgin Mary's image is ascending to the ceiling, and immediately hundreds or perhaps thousands of cameras begin clicking. This is the high point of the day, when devout participants become more typically American spectators. Some audience members clutch stacks of snapshots from previous occasions. One family has framed a Polaroid in which they see telltale gleams of miraculous light. A man sits in a lawn chair with his young son watching the print develop. "Didn't get much this time," he says. But a woman nearby tells me she saw the image of Our Lady going up the chimney with her arms extended.

Nancy Fowler appears on her front porch at about two o'clock wearing a pale green blouse and a long brownish skirt. Her graying hair blows in the breeze as she addresses the crowd. After every clause, a man translates simultaneously into Spanish. About seven priests and lay people (men and women) stand in a row behind her. There is something superfluous about the reading of the message, because it repeats word for word the account of the apparition given by the man who is now translating into Spanish. It serves as a kind of ritualized recitation of the "spontaneous" event that has just happened.



The visionary, Nancy Fowler (center, holding microphone), announcing Mary's message from the porch of the Apparition Room. (Photo courtesy of Victor Balaban)

Not much in the message is novel: repent, say the Rosary, give everything to Jesus, go to the sacrament of confession, pray. At one point she loses her place in the text; the man holding her clipboard finds it again. The only mention of current events is the "strife" in the former Yugoslavia and Africa. "Look at our cities," she says. "How can we say that we're one nation under God if we live with laws that are a mockery of God?"

The most surprising announcement comes later in the address, when Fowler reports that the Virgin has decided she will not appear any more on a monthly basis. Fowler's delivery is more impromptu at this point and sounds almost sheepish. She will appear again, she says, but only in times of "great need and trial." There are other, approved apparition sites, such as Fatima, she says, implying that her followers might consider taking their spiritual business elsewhere.

Today about 40,000 people from all over the country have come to see Nancy Fowler. About a hundred buses are parked close together in the area near the house. There is also a sizable area for handicapped parking. The closest vehicles are the eight trucks and vans from the news media. Local Atlanta television stations and one Spanish-speaking station share a premium viewing area with a dozen or so other reporters near the front of the house. Cameras and microphones are trained on the porch. There isn't this much press presence every month, but today there is a story about a family and friends praying for the safe return of a young student who has disappeared.

Fowler concludes by discussing the visual details of today's and other recent visions. In patterns and iconography that have been formulaic since the thirteenth-century Eucharistic visionaries, Fowler describes seeing the crucifix glowing and a host around the face of Jesus, along with "many many saints." She interprets this vision as meaning that Jesus is living bread and eternal light. At Mass this morning she saw the host burst into light when it was elevated. In another vision, Mary descended on a great pillar, followed by two blood red columns. Fowler notes that the vision is very much like a dream of nineteenth-century visionary St. John Bosco. The columns are red because of the persecution of the Eucharist. "But you know what? The immaculate heart will reign when it stands on top of that column!" [Applause.]

TRADITION, RITUAL, AND TECHNOLOGY

Simple observation of the gatherings at Conyers cannot determine the motives, experiences, or beliefs of participants. Some preliminary observations are, however, warranted. First, while participants are numerous and diverse, the gatherings provide a coherent and recognizable setting that draws from the traditional discourse of Marian

apparitions and Catholic piety (e.g., Rosary recitation, Eucharistic visions, injunctions to partake of the sacraments, references to visionaries like St. John Bosco, and apocalyptic messages). Second, the fact that Fowler's visions are announced ahead of time and that recitation of the Rosary precedes them further ritualizes the event and connects participants directly to the miracles. By creating a ritualized space, devotees help bring about the apparitions: "As the Prayer Group began the first Sorrowful Mystery [of the Rosary], The Agony in the Garden, Nancy said Our Loving Mother's face became sad."[32] Third, the widespread use of cameras at Conyers suggests that this technology serves not only to record what takes place but also to provide a new instrument of religious expression and testimony.

At Conyers, the poles of spectacle and devotion seem interdependent. The media and some participants view Fowler as spectacle, but thousands of others, without cameras and apparently absorbed in quiet prayer, appear less interested in miracles than devotion. Still, the miracles are the ostensible reason for the gathering. The notion that such beliefs should die away in a more "rationalized" and technologically advanced age has faded significantly from scholarship on religion, as have many other negative assumptions about premodern religions. Throughout the study of religion and increasingly in the popular media, reports on the robustness of all kinds of religion have become commonplace.

It is also no longer a shock to point out the multiplicity of human beliefs. Current thought on human nature—in cognitive science, philosophy, literary theory, and cultural studies—has developed sophisticated ways to talk about the apparent contradiction between believing one can photograph the Virgin Mary and demanding rigorous empirical tests in assessing other phenomena (e.g., cars, taxes, and the law). Mary Douglas writes, "We moderns operate in many different fields of symbolic action . . . we do not bring forward from one context to the next the same set of ever more powerful symbols: our experience is fragmented. Our rituals create a lot of little sub-worlds, unrelated."[33]

But what is especially interesting in Conyers is the paradoxical use of cameras not so much as tests but as vehicles of belief and ritual participation. More than any other modern household object, the camera has become the premier tool of empirical proof; the camera does not lie. At Conyers, cameras may perform several functions: for some they would always confirm authenticity, for others they would always disprove it, and for still others they would affirm authenticity only under certain conditions. Beliefs in the authenticity of supernatural or miraculous events could be sketched on a continuum from complete acceptance to total dismissal.[34] While some need very little evidence to support such beliefs, others, like Jean-Paul Sartre, seem unwilling to accept any evidence for supernatural reality:



Miraculous photographs at Conyers, Georgia: One of the folk devotions that is emerging among Marian pilgrims is taking photographs of the sun and looking for signs of Jesus or Mary in the shapes that result. Marian symbolism has traditionally been associated with the sun, based partially on the Book of Revelation, whose figure of "the woman clothed with the sun" is believed to represent Mary. (Photo courtesy of Victor Balaban)

If an angel comes to me, what proof is there that it's an angel? And if I hear voices, what proof is there that they come from heaven and not from hell, or from the subconscious, or a pathological condition? What proves that they are addressed to me? What proof is there that I have been appointed to impose my choice and my conception of man on humanity? I'll never find any proof or sign to convince me of that.[35]

Cameras thus support a range of beliefs and enable some to change their beliefs. Beliefs may be hidden or latent, waiting to be brought out by the stimulus of a Polaroid.

"To photograph," writes Susan Sontag, "is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power."[36] For the thousands of photographers at Conyers who ritualistically capture evidence or potential evidence of the apparitions on film, Sontag's point is relevant. Just as the communal recitation of the Rosary before and during the apparitions suggests an *effective* role for participants, so with the cameras, to photograph is even to constitute the thing photographed.[37]

The Conyers photographers appropriate and constitute reality by appropriating a technology that defines reality as imitation. Jean Baudrillard attributes the proliferation of Polaroids and video to a culture of "frantic self-referentiality" in which the simulacrum replaces the original:

> This is the special effect of our times. The ecstasy of the polaroid is of the same order: to hold the object and its image almost simultaneously as if the conception of light of ancient physics or metaphysics, in which each object was thought to secrete doubles or negatives of itself that we pick up with our eyes, has become a reality. It is a dream. It is the optical materialization of a magical process. The polaroid photo is a sort of ecstatic membrane that has come away from the real object.[38]

At Conyers, the camera is not an instrument of "objectivity" but rather a perception-heightening ritual object.

Victor Balaban, author of an essay on Fowler, posted a question on the Conyers listserve as to whether the photographs taken there are miraculous. He then summarized:

> I thought that people might be interested to know that the responses I got (about 7 or 8) were all of the opinion that the photographs taken at Conyers are not miraculous. I don't know if that is representative of the views of everyone on the list, but I thought people might be curious to know.[39]

Balaban's notice generated the following response from listserve member Matias Serani:

> The pictures that are taken in Conyers, GA are only to be seen with the eyes of Our FAITH. Anything else is just a waste of time on our behalf, so for that reason dear friends I suggest you do not dwell on the details obtained in these pictures, but focus on what Our Most Holy Mother is trying to communicate to us.[40]

Serani's statement affirms the apparition's authenticity. But by emphasizing faith and minimizing the photos, he tacitly acknowledges other belief perspectives. The head of the listserve, Jim Drzymala, later issued a statement asking listserve members to "refrain from posting anything to this list that is not related to the Conyers apparitions."[41] For these two listserve devotees, the discussion of miraculous photographs seems to arouse discomfort.

Like the camera, the computer serves to reinforce various types of belief and practice among participants at Conyers. The Conyers e-mail listserve is an electronic mailing list that had about 400 subscribers in 1995.[42] At an average of about one message a day, the listserve circulates the text of Fowler's apparitions. There are also occasional petitions and

offers to send petitions for sick or troubled individuals. By sending messages that are often unsigned, the listserve creates a timeless, decontextualized effect. The date of a posting may bear no relation to the date of the reported event. Timelessness may also be inherent in some types of message, for instance, messages concerning mystical union. The following message, entitled "December 29, 1994 Part 4," was posted on March 21, 1995:

"Oh dearest daughter, I love you. Now don't you feel like you are in Heaven? [Nancy later said that at that moment she felt the real presence of Jesus and the Blessed Mother like she experienced when Jesus took her to Heaven.] When you pray and really give Me your heart, then you have a special union with Me. Union with Me is Heaven. If you want more moments of Heaven, then have more moments of union with me."

Nancy said, "I think I am understanding that Heaven is a place and a state of your soul."

"Now you can teach My theologians some things. Tell all of them, I desire they have a bigger heart and less intelligence."

George said, "Maybe they [the Church] should have people with bigger hearts and less brains being the theologians."

Jesus replied through Nancy, "Let them figure it out. They are smart. You know that I had fun with My scribes and My pharisees. They thought they had the answers and I showed that they did not."

Nancy said Jesus was smiling.

Through the complexity of e-mail technology, messages like these take on a heightened authority and simplicity; Jesus speaks through Mary against the theologians, but only in this timeless, visionary cyberspace.[43] Subscribers may download files at any time, and they post new messages on miracles, special intentions, or upcoming trips to Guadalupe, Lourdes, or Medjugorje, without setting them in any particular time or place. The listserve operates with remarkable smoothness, as if the technology is a transparent and obvious vehicle for expression. (The admonition from Drzymala to restrict postings to Conyers-related phenomena, mentioned above, is an exception.) While it follows traditional Marian discourse, this textual pilgrimage is not linear, but highly adaptable and personalized. Like the camera, the computer becomes a tool for appropriating and expressing religious experience.

There have also been attempts to confirm the miracles by measuring energy waves at Conyers and on Fowler herself. Extensive documentation of testing done by at least seven scientists and physicians in 1993 appears in a book and video called *Why Do You Test Me?*[44] The battery of tests included a psychological exam, EEG brain wave measurements, and

atmospheric testing in the Apparition Room and at the farm. Before the tests began, Fowler reported a vision in which Jesus said, "Watch what I will do."[45] In every case, the scientific testing reported that Fowler was physically and mentally healthy but that her brain waves and the atmosphere registered extraordinary readings. Atlanta neurologist Ramon M. Sanchez even found numerological significance in the EEG data: "Satan is appearing to Nancy during this time and you can see this 6 hertz occurring and reoccurring, so you are getting this pattern of 666. Is this wild or something? And with Christ it is 333."[46]

Test results also appear in a chapter of Hancock's book called "The Scientific Studies." According to Hancock, the author of the following report, Dr. Philip Callahan, "is internationally recognized for his studies involving extensive artistic and infrared analysis of the Image of The Virgin Mary in the basilica of Guadalupe" and of the Shroud of Turin:[47]

I spent the morning up to 10:30 measuring the Atmospheric Schumann frequencies on the cross hill near the apparition room. The ELF Schumann atmospheric frequencies, 1-70 Hz, were extremely high in the area. This is generally true of all apparition sites I have measured e.g., Knock, Kerrytown Ireland, Lourdes, and La Salette, France and Medugorji [*sic*]. The VLF atmospheric frequencies from 100 Hz to 400 Hz were also very strong as is usual in apparition area. . . . Astonishly [*sic*] the oscilloscope showed that within 20 to 30 seconds Nancy went into the 8 Hz meditative state. . . . Even more astonishly [*sic*] she soon started generating what are known as group or bullseye waves (waves that go out in ripples from the center like throwing a rock in water). It would take a textbook of mathematics to explain the physics of such waves. I have never received such energy from any living creature before (plants or animals) with my detector and oscilloscope.[48]

The oscilloscope, which measures unseen forces, joins the camera in legitimating the miraculous nature of the apparitions. The quantity and quality of these waves, which only a "textbook of mathematics" could explain, nevertheless defy scientific explanation. The reality that appears ordinary without scientific instruments becomes astonishing. While the ostensible purpose of these studies is to authenticate the apparitions, they also provide new modes for traditional religious expression: the brain waves and atmospheric radiation indicate the miraculous but conventional figures of Mary, Satan, and Jesus.

Other reported miracles include smells and visions of roses, rosaries turning gold, and medical healings. For many miracles, efforts have been made to authenticate the events empirically. On April 13, 1996, a friend of Fowler, George Collins, addressed the pilgrims gathered at Conyers in Fowler's place, partly to announce that Fowler would no longer make regular public appearances. During his remarks, which appeared on the Conyers listserve, he spoke about miracles:

God has given us many signs here. The sun spins and many people are able to see it. We don't encourage you to look at it but many people report the sun is spinning. Others smell roses. Many, many people have smelled the roses. The gold dust. There are numerous signs but they are signs to help us increase our faith. That is the important thing.[49]

While increasing faith may be the true purpose of the signs, Collins's need to say so suggests a variety of beliefs and practices among participants, including those who seek healing and cling to Polaroids. When one listserve member asked whether rose petals really fall from the sky at Conyers, another replied,

When I was in Conyers in May 1994, fresh petals of Ylang-Ylang, a fragrant flower from the Philippines fell. . . . I was praying by the Statue of Virgin Mary that was surrounded by pine trees. My mom, wife, sister and everybody at that location saw it. I even kept some of the petals and put them in a bottle of oil I bought from Padre Pio's church in Pennsylvania.[50]

Another writer reports running computerized metallurgical tests on a rosary that "turned gold":

We tested the rosary . . . showed no signs of gold, just the original components. BUT > a very close observation under a microscope revealed the exact same colors as my gold wedding ring. So> conclusion, Yes they turn golden color. Sometimes even before your eyes. The result> Veronica Garcia calls them candy kisses from Heaven.[51]



These "miraculous photographs" are taken home by pilgrims and become holy objects in their own right. (Photo courtesy of Victor Balaban)

Even scientific tests with negative results can intensify belief in the Conyers miracles, because these tests represent new songs in the traditional key of Marian discourse.

CONCLUSION

Conyers is a setting where the traditional discourse of Marian apparitions gains added legitimacy through technological means. For thousands of people, the reported miracles and messages from the Virgin Mary follow a pattern familiar at many apparition sites around the world. The conventions of women visionaries and Marian apparitions—Eucharistic visions, allegorically-interpreted images, apocalypticism, ritualized Mariology, and miraculous phenomena such as healings and spinning suns—constitute a kind of canonical text for participants to read and interpret.[52]

Marian devotion is centuries-old, but Fowler belongs to the modern wave of apparitions that dates back to the nineteenth century. Like LaSalette and Lourdes, Conyers represents a "feminized" and popular form of piety. But unlike her nineteenth-century counterparts, Fowler and her supporters recruit technology for this traditional (and some say anti-modern) purpose. If Fowler's apparitions, by their appeal to miracles and tradition, resist contemporary social values, they do so with state-of-the-art technology.[53]

Adherents exploit a variety of technologies, including cameras, oscilloscopes, and a computer listserve, to affirm the authenticity of the apparitions. Far from transforming or challenging the tradition of apparitions, these technologies have been fully assimilated into this tradition by the devout participants. Conyers thus illustrates the remarkable robustness—even revival—of Marian apparitions in the face of contemporary scientific and social values. What cultural and religious factors can explain this revival?

Marian apparitions continue to thrive in part because they accommodate many interdependent groups—traditionalist Catholics seeking a return to pre-Vatican II devotions and certainties, Hispanic-American Catholics, seekers of healing, doubters, and the religiously curious, to name only a few. The apparitions are able to draw widespread public attention because the mass media has discovered their appeal. Accounts of Marian apparitions are as likely to appear on the evening news as on such popular programs as *Strange Universe* or *The Unexplained.* Marian devotion may also fulfill a number of religious and psychological needs not met by male images of God and a patriarchal church structure.[54] Finally, apparitions continue to succeed because they are allowed to do so. Even though the Archdiocese of Atlanta has kept Fowler at arm's length, the Church strongly encourages Marian devotion and pilgrimage to approved apparition sites.

ENDNOTES

[1] Victor Balaban, "The Marian Apparition Site at Conyers, Georgia," in *Religions of Atlanta* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 220-21. See also his photoessay of the same title in *Religious Studies News* (November 1996): 9 ff. I wish to thank Jessica Meltsner, Darleen Pryds, and Matthew Martin for helpful comments on drafts of this essay, an earlier version of which I presented to the Southeastern Committee for the Study of Religion in March, 1995. John Rakestraw helped me to clarify my thinking on the concept of belief. Gary Laderman allowed me to read a draft of Balaban's essay. Donna Arauz went to Conyers before me and gathered important information. Phillip Lucas and an anonymous reader for *Nova Religio* provided insightful and helpful suggestions. I especially wish to thank Nichole Arnault for many hours of research on this project.

[2] See http://www.conyers.org

[3] Balaban, "The Marian Apparition Site in Conyers, Georgia," 216.

[4] William A. Christian, Jr., *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 5. Three of the main scholarly works on Marian apparitions are Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); David Blackbourn, *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a Nineteenth-Century German Village* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); and Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

[5] Christian, *Apparitions*, 8.

[6] Ibid., 3, 8.

[7] William Christian, Jr., *Visionaries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 2-3; Blackbourn, *Marpingen*, 36; and Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary*, 9.

[8] Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary*, 11.

[9] Blackbourn, *Marpingen*, 30-31.

[10] Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 38. For a history of Mariology, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

[11] Albert A. Caprio, O. P., "The Apparitions of the Virgin Mary," 1, available on the World Wide Web at: http://info.rutgers.edu/catholic-center/publish/FrAICaprio/Apparitions.html.

[12] See also Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Pelikan, *Mary*; and Joan Ashton, *Mother of All Nations* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989).

[13] Christian, *Apparitions*, 82-84, 146-7. See also Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary*, 247-50, and Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 209-10.

[14] Ingo Swann, *The Great Apparitions of Mary* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 211-15.

[15] An influential figure in this area is Catholic thinker St. Louis-Marie de Montfort (1673-1716). My thanks to Steve Perry for pointing this out to me.

[16] Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary*, 247. Apocalyptic themes are also prominent in the nineteenth century. See Blackbourn, *Marpingen*, 33-34.

[17] *"To Bear Witness that I AM the LIVING SON of GOD,"* vol. 2, compiled by Our Loving Mother's Children (Newington, VA: 1992), 75.

[18] See, for example, Hadewijch of Brabant, "Visions," in Elizabeth Petroff, ed., *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press), 195. See also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 122 ff.

[19] Petroff, *Women's Visionary Literature*, 31. See, for example, the eucharistic context and visual detail of the vision from January 12, 1993:

"Before the Mass Nancy saw a very bright, white light over the crucifix. During the Mass at

the Gospel, Nancy saw a separate, all white image of a man standing behind the podium. At the Consecration of the Mass, Nancy saw the chalice burst into a great white light and the light remained over the chalice for a long time. Shortly afterwards Nancy saw a giant size, all black image of a beast-like man appear. This man was snatching away the chalice . . . . Jesus then said, 'The evil one does not want people to drink of the cup of salvation. He wants to take the cup of life away from them'" (Conyers listserve message, LISTSERV@UBVM.CC.BUFFALO.EDU, posted February 16, 1995).

[20] *"To Bear Witness that I AM the LIVING SON of GOD,"* vol. 2, 47. As part of the tradition of women visionaries, the Fowler apparitions become part of a debate on whether, by providing divine messages without the sacramental help of male priests, they challenge or subvert the patriarchal structure of the Church. Or is Fowler's gift, together with her obedience to the Church, the exception that proves the rule, a kind of special case of female insight that only reinforces women's usual distance from authority? There is certainly nothing subversive about Conyers, unless thousands of people praying peacefully at a farm under a lay woman's leadership is subversive. In *Fragmentation and Redemption*, Bynum argues that this question and the related debate on *communitas* depends on whether one takes men's or women's point of view: "If one looks with women rather than at women, women's lives are not liminal to women—but neither, except in a very partial way, are male roles or male experiences" (Bynum, 48).

[21] Christian, *Apparitions*, 208.

[22] John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred* (London: Routledge, 1991), 3-4.

[23] See Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 37, and Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 3-4. See also the discussion of Italian carnivals in Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum, *Black Madonnas* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 90-92. Turner and Turner list four main kinds of Christian pilgrimage: prototypical, syncretistic, medieval, and modern/personal. Of course, pilgrimage to Conyers most closely fits the last category, though it shares characteristics of each. Medieval pilgrimage was highly conventionalized, and Conyers shares some of these conventions: people travel in groups (often by chartered bus); they observe ritual behaviors in different areas of the farm, such as a Holy Hill, a well, and a path with the Stations of the Cross; and some also visit local restaurants in the spirit of the bumper sticker that says, "Eat, Drink and See Mary."

[24] The space set aside at Conyers for people with illness and disabilities reflects another convention of Marian pilgrimage:

> "Interviews with sick pilgrims at Lourdes during the summer of 1984 revealed that 'healthy' pilgrims of all nationalities approach and treat them in a way analogous to the way saints are treated. The 'healthy' asked the sick to pray for them or for those close to them; the sick were given small gifts and pious objects, and were spontaneously stroked and caressed by strangers . . . and they were massed together at the front of rituals and were generally accorded a favoured treatment in all areas of the town." (Andrea Dahlberg, "The Body as a Principle of Holism," in Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 46)

[25] Conyers listserve message, posted February 8, 1995.

[26] Memorandum of Archbishop Lyke to Archdiocesan priests, January 17, 1992, quoted in Ann Marie Hancock, *Wake Up America! Take My Heart, Take My Hand* (Norfolk, VA: Hampton Roads, 1993), 195-96. Lyke's successor, Archbishop John Donoghue, has reaffirmed this position. For a well-developed statement of Catholic doctrine on visions, see Karl Rahner, *Visions and Prophecies* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963).

[27] Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 5.

[28] Hancock, *Wake Up America!* A Spanish version of the book also appeared in 1993.

[29] When I visited Conyers as an observer, I hoped to approach several people to conduct interviews, but I hesitated on the grounds that I would have felt invasive or inappropriate interrupting the Rosary or the recitation of the apparition message. If the press looked like disbelievers in search of a spectacle, they were at least welcome witnesses, like the Roman soldier. I, on the other hand, had no such legitimacy (and I was also traveling with

a friend and my family, including a fussy two-year-old). In some ways, then, my ethnographic experiment failed; I didn't get much of a scoop. On the other hand, I found myself astonished by the intensity and focus of this massive group. There was little evidence of mass hysteria.

[30] Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Scholars in the humanities, such as Moshe Idel, are turning increasingly to ethnography as a supplement to more traditional, text-centered methods. The hermeneutic turn within anthropology makes this partnership even more plausible. This paper argues for a limited use of ethnographic research for the study of Nancy Fowler's apparitions. My prototype for the selective use of ethnography comes from Idel's *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 25-26.

[31] See Catherine Albanese's distinction between "ordinary" and "extraordinary" religion in *America: Religions and Religion* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1992), 6.

[32] *"To Bear Witness,"* vol. 2, 47.

[33] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1976), 68-69.

[34] The variety of belief positions may be classified as follows:

(1) Complete Acceptance
(2) Affirmation
(3) Testing to Confirm
(4) Testing with Expectations of Confirmation
(5) Genuine Agnosticism: Testing May or May Not Confirm
(6) Testing with the Expectation of Denial
(7) Testing to Deny
(8) Limited Interest in the Event as Spectacle
(9) Indifference
(10) Total Dismissal

[35] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism and Humanism," in *A Casebook on Existentialism*, ed. William V. Spanos (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1966), 280-81.

[36] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Anchor, 1990), 4.

[37] My colleague, Darleen Pryds, also suggests that the photos could provide instant souvenirs for Conyers visitors.

[38] Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1988), 37.

[39] Conyers listserve, message posted November 19, 1995.

[40] Conyers listserve, message posted November 20, 1995.

[41] Conyers listserve, message posted November 17, 1995.

[42] Balaban, "The Marian Apparition Site in Conyers, Georgia," 224.

[43] See Stephen D. O'Leary, "Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59 (1996): 781-808. Perhaps not incidentally, the official Website of the Roman Catholic Church, Catholic On-line, begins with the following caption: "Catholic Online . . . Dedicating our on-line presence to Our Lady of Guadalupe," available on the World Wide Web at: http://www.catholic.org/index2.html.

[44] Ron Tesoriero, *Why Do You Test Me?* (Gosford, Australia: Published by the Author, 1994).

[45] Ibid., 18.

[46] Ibid., 74. By reporting these findings, I make no judgment on their validity. The emphasis here is on what participants do and say about the Conyers apparitions.

[47] Hancock, 50.

[48] Report by Philip Callahan, in Hancock, 51-52. Compare the role of doctors at Lourdes and San Giovanni Rotondo (Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 20).

[49] Conyers listserve, message posted April 19, 1996.

[50] Conyers listserve, message posted April 1, 1996.

[51] Conyers listserve, message posted November 13, 1995.

[52] This textual dimension of the Conyers apparitions relates directly to the idea of sacred text, which I call the *scriptural function*, in my book, *Walter Benjamin and the Bible* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

[53] This embrace of technology would seem to differ from nineteenth-century apparitions, which were part of "a revolt against modernity" and a battle of "faith against reason, superstition against science" (Blackbourn, *Marpingen*, 374).

[54] See Pelikan, *Mary*, 218-22, and Carroll, *Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 222.

Field Notes: The Family/Children of God Under the *Love Charter*

John M. Bozeman

The Family (also known as the Children of God and as the Family of Love) is one of the most famous and controversial of the new religious movements that emerged during the late 1960's and early 1970's. While most of the group's beliefs and practices have their roots in Christian evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, The Family is better known for its apocalyptic "forsake-all" message, its aggressive recruiting techniques and authoritarian leadership style, its strict communitarian structure, its extreme membership mobility and fluid leadership, its novel reinterpretation of traditional Christian sexual ethics (including at one time "Flirty Fishing," which allowed female missionaries to physically express God's love by engaging in sexual activity with potential converts), and its past harsh criticism of both mainline churches and American social and political injustices.[1] The group has also gained notoriety for its occasional practice of communicating with the disembodied spirits of believers from the past (known within the group as "heavenly messengers"), a practice that has led some critics to label the group as occult.

The Family's unusual history has been a mixed blessing for the group. On the one hand, its unconventional identity has allowed it to reach people repelled (or simply ignored) by more conventional religious organizations. On the other hand, the religious and secular press, and sometimes also the scholarly establishment, have often focused more heavily upon the group's colorful past than upon its current beliefs and practices.[2] This focus on the past is misleading, however, because The Family has from its beginning reinvented itself every three to five years through an ongoing series of internal reorganizations and prophetically inspired doctrinal developments. This column will therefore focus on recent changes within The Family. In particular, we will look at the effects of police raids, the subsequent establishment of a group constitution, the leadership succession following the death of the founder, and the advent of a new ministry of reconciliation aimed at members who left or were expelled in the past.

In the early 1990's, Family homes were raided by the police in Spain and Australia. The grounds for the raids were allegations of sexual abuse of the group's children by adult members. While at some point in the past there may have been instances of such abuse—like some other groups originating during the hippie era and sexual revolution, there had at first been a rather naive attitude toward children and sexuality—The Family's hierarchy had begun to take corrective measures at least as early as 1985-1986, and such practices were excommunicable offenses by 1988. Unfortunately for The Family, knowledge of these internal reforms was not shared by the various local authorities in charge of the investigation; The Family had led a largely underground existence since the early 1970's, and the only information easily available was from hostile sources and based on questionable and/or outdated information.

In the past, The Family had often simply packed up and left when faced with hostility; however, by the time of the raids, circumstances had changed. Earlier attacks had usually been in the form of petty local harassment or deprogrammers targeting specific individuals. With the new raids, however, government agencies were now contemplating blanket detention of all the minors in a Family colony, with loss of custody of the children and youth a very real possibility. Furthermore, The Family had come to believe that the recent crackdown was in part caused by political pressures originating from the U. S. The implication of the raids was clear: the nuclear families composing the larger Family organization could return to conventional society, or the group would be destroyed by police and social service agencies placing the children in permanent foster care.

This situation was intolerable for both older and younger generations of The Family. The older members had abandoned, often at considerable personal cost, what they viewed as a hopelessly corrupt American "system"; now, some fifteen years later, the system appeared to be seeking them abroad with the intent of either destroying their families or, at the least, undoing a missionary enterprise that took years to establish. The younger members also found the situation untenable. The youth had little desire to be separated from their parents and friends. Furthermore, unlike their counterparts in Western secular society, the youth were fulfilling a vital role in the life of The Family; they were being raised to be the future missionary leaders of tomorrow. The younger members thus occupied positions of considerable responsibility within the group, planning, missionizing, fund-raising, and contributing to home maintenance and upkeep at levels approaching that of the first generation adults.[3] Being returned to conventional society would have meant a loss of social function and prestige, and would have jeopardized their eschatological role as the harbingers of the imminent Kingdom of God on earth.

The police raids thus resulted in a drastic change of policy: The Family, rather than trying to flee, chose instead to retain lawyers to defend the right to practice their way of life. At the same time, The Family began to reemerge as a public presence, particularly in the United States. The group's communal homes, including several in the Washington, D. C. area, were opened for public inspection. Representatives of the group began to contact both journalists and scholars in order to invite them to learn more about the group. The Family also raised eyebrows in 1992-1993 by sending representatives to the annual conferences of scholarly organizations such as the Communal Studies Association, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and the American Academy of Religion, a practice which has continued to the present.

The result of this new policy of openness has been the publication of a number of new studies about The Family[4] and a moderation in the number of hostile attacks from the news media. It may also have helped The Family to win their cases in Spain and Australia. These initial engagements with the journalistic, scholarly, and legal establishments turned out to be of far greater value to The Family than anybody might have expected at the time. A short time later, Family homes were again raided, this time in Argentina and France; at roughly the same time, the shoot-out at Ruby Ridge and the Branch Davidian conflagration in Waco greatly heightened awareness (and in some quarters, suspicion) of radical apocalyptically-minded organizations.

The Family's new policy of openness allowed both scholars and the press to remain reliably informed concerning new developments in the group, in particular a major transition that was about to occur. In November of 1995, David Berg (also known as Uncle Dave, Moses David, Mo, Father David and, within the group, "Dad") died at the age of 75. Berg had been living in seclusion for years, partly because of his declining health and partly because his teachings had made him the object of a great deal of controversy. Following his passing, his wife, Maria (known within the group as "Mama"), took over the running of the group, assisted by long-time member and confidante Peter Amsterdam. David Berg's passing did not catch the group by surprise. For almost a year prior to his death, The Family had been working on a 200-page group constitution called the *Love Charter*. This document, which can be found on-line at http://www.thefamily.org/dossier/charter/charter.htm, was and is a product of the group's leadership. Father David had proofread the entire document three weeks before his death. However, the charter was also developed after extensive consultation with the rank-and-file membership; over 200 Family member delegates had spent weeks in workshops examining working drafts and, in the process, submitted hundreds of pages of suggestions and revisions.[5] The *Love Charter* spells

out in considerable detail The Family's structure, the rights and responsibilities of both regular members and leadership, the roles of adults, youth, and children, the procedures by which a person may join or leave the group, and the grounds for and methods by which a person may be disciplined or excommunicated. The charter also provides guidelines and rules for day-to-day matters such as recreation, personal hygiene, food and drink, and sexual relations.

The purpose of the document is two-fold. First, it is intended to provide a clear presentation of the group's beliefs and practices in order to prevent further unfortunate misunderstandings with police and social service agencies. If allegations are leveled against the group, The Family can now produce a document showing what current policies are on such sensitive topics as sexuality and child-rearing methods.[6] Secondly, the charter is intended to explain to the members themselves exactly what their rights and responsibilities are within the community while simultaneously encouraging individual initiative. The goal is to prevent the abuses of authority that were alleged to have happened in the past when the leadership misunderstood or misapplied some of Father David's hyperbole-filled teachings; at the same time, standards are set which members are expected to meet or exceed. In terms of encouraging individual initiative, the charter allowed members greater opportunity to pursue educational and vocational interests outside of the group's communal homes, and allowed for individuals to transfer more easily between the homes.[7]

Yet another significant shift within The Family has been a change in the way the group deals with peripheral and ex-membership.[8] The Family has traditionally seen itself as God's elite force whose mission is to call the world to salvation before the rapidly-approaching end. At times, particularly in its early history, this sense of urgency resulted in the group taking a harsh attitude toward members who, for various reasons, were unable to devote their full attention to the all-consuming task at hand. In 1989 a new category of live-out membership was created called "TRF (pronounced 'turf') supporters"; such persons would contribute a portion of their income and fill out monthly Tithing Report Forms. Full-time members, on the other hand, were known as "DO" members, as they could receive and read "disciples only" literature.[9]

Perhaps not surprisingly, TRF members soon came to be viewed within The Family as second-class citizens.[10] However, in 1994-1995 efforts began to be made to improve relations between the two groups. The *Love Charter* allowed The Family's young adults much greater opportunities to explore other vocations; TRF status, and the hospitality of TRF member homes, allowed the youth a way to sample conventional life without cutting all ties to The Family. On the other hand, TRF families (to the great surprise of both TRF and full-time Family members) found many of their own children envious of the simultaneous freedom and

responsibility offered to the youth of full-time Family members. This attraction led many TRF families to pursue a higher level of contact with the communal segment of the group. This increased contact between full-time and TRF members was given an even higher priority in 1996 when The Family's leadership received divine approval of this development through prophecy. Most recently, the TRF and DO designations have been set aside; full-time members are now called "Charter Members" because of their full adherence to the *Love Charter.* TRF members, on the other hand, are now called "Fellow Members" who, while bound to uphold certain standards, do not have to follow the entire charter. Interestingly, some of the Fellow members have voluntarily chosen to form their own group homes and to live even more disciplined lives than is required by the *Love Charter.*[11]

As alluded to earlier, this new spirit of reconciliation has not been confined to TRF members. In 1994 The Family began a concerted effort to contact former members. Mailings to ex-member networks such as the subscribers to *No Longer Children* (a newsletter run by hostile ex-members) were initiated; a toll-free number (1-800-4-AFAMILY) was also established for this purpose. Perhaps most significantly, in 1996 Maria published a public letter of apology for the past intolerance and "unloving behavior" shown to ex-members.[12]

What is the ultimate significance of these changes within The Family? Has the group simply capitulated to the materialist, capitalist society that it once condemned? Or could it be, as some of The Family's harsher critics have charged, that all of the changes are simply public relations ploys designed to curry favor with law enforcement agencies, while leaving the organization fundamentally unchanged? The answer appears to be neither. Rather, the group appears to be going through a period of internal renewal. A rising second generation of members is in the process of making Father David's message their own; to this end, The Family is deciding what should be retained from the past and what needs to be retired. From a sociological perspective, this is a wise move: in a group that has historically averaged six children per family, the first generation is now a distinct minority. Rather than fight this demographic tide, The Family has welcomed it and encouraged the youth to occupy positions of responsibility within The Family community. With this development has come new understandings of The Family's message, understandings which were formulated during the capitalistic 1980's and internet-savvy 1990's rather than during the counterculture of the 1960's and 1970's.

Will second-generation youth choose to stay in the group, or will they leave to pursue other interests? And if they stay, will the distinctiveness of Father David's message remain, or will it be lost among the other peripheral branches of Protestant Christianity? Immediately after the *Love Charter* was placed into effect in 1995 there was a great

deal of colony-hopping within the Family as the youth found that they could transfer between homes more easily than they had been able to in the past. Also, a sizable exodus began as a number of young members began to opt for the newly-respectable TRF status, or else left the group completely. However, the migration between homes has now moderated considerably as the novelty has worn off.[13] Furthermore, the trend toward departure from The Family appears to have reversed in 1996-1997, with a significant number of TRF/Fellow members choosing to become Charter members. There has also been a recent increase in the number of young Family members desiring to enter the mission field. Of course, only time will tell which, if any, of these trends will continue; however, The Family is also working to increase intra-group educational and vocational opportunities, which should serve to further moderate the allure of secular society.

Currently The Family numbers about 14,000 members, roughly a third of which are over twenty-one years of age. Three-quarters of the membership are Charter members. These members are located in 85 countries, with slightly more than half of the membership in North, South, and Central America. At present, spiritual morale within the group appears to be high. A recent self-administered survey indicates that a significant majority believe they receive prophecy (that is, receive a direct communication from the godhead) at least once or twice a week. In addition, a sizable percentage within The Family continue to practice "sharing," that is, having pre- or extra-marital sexual relationships with other adult Charter members, often without the use of birth control.[14] Such practices, along with certain doctrinal beliefs (such as a tendency toward universalism) continue to act as grave obstacles to improving relations with Evangelical Christians and other conservative religious bodies. On the other hand, The Family's extremely literal understanding of the Bible, strongly Christocentric supernaturalism, and opposition to abortion are a stumbling block to the building of closer ties with religious liberals. Thus, while toning down some characteristics that caused problems both internally and with the surrounding culture in the past, The Family appears to be well prepared to continue propagating its distinctive doctrinal message and lifestyle for the foreseeable future.

BRIEFLY NOTED

RECENT AUM SHINRIKYO FINDINGS: Japanese new religion Aum Shinrikyo made headlines after its leader, Shoko Asahara, allegedly masterminded a nerve gas attack on a Tokyo subway on March 20, 1995. This gassing killed 12 and injured hundreds more. Further investigation has recently uncovered evidence that the group's terrorist activities may have been much more widespread than was earlier realized. Articles in

the May 26, 1998 *New York Times* and May 27, 1998 *Washington Post* cite court testimony indicating that the attack was only the last, and most successful, in a long series of hostile actions that had begun as early as 1990. These earlier attacks had employed biological agents, including botulin toxin and anthrax, and had targeted Tokyo Bay-area U.S. Navy bases, a large nearby airport, and Tokyo itself. These efforts at biological warfare were unsuccessful, however, with only members of the group itself becoming ill. The group then turned to sarin nerve gas as a more effective weapon.

In 1994 the sect carried out a sarin attack in Matusmota, Japan, which killed seven and injured dozens more. After this came the Tokyo subway attack, with future strikes planned for the United States. The goal of the group was apparently to create enough destruction and panic to allow Aum Shinrikyo to take over Japan, and eventually the entire world. One of Asahara's lieutenants, surgeon Ikuo Hayashi, has received a life sentence. Asahara himself will be tried separately and could be sentenced to death.

PAGANS READMITTED TO STONEHENGE: For the first time in a decade, a limited number of Druidic and pagan worshippers were allowed to celebrate the summer solstice at Stonehenge. The British government had banned access to the site in 1988 following problems with vandalism and large-scale disorderly conduct by religious seekers. The Associated Press reports that about one hundred persons were allowed onto the site, including Rollo Maughfling, the Archdruid of Great Britain. Representatives of other pagan organizations including competing Druidic sects, white witches, and sado-masochist groups, were also present.

FREDERICK LENZ DEAD: Frederick P. Lenz III, Zen Buddhist instructor, musician, computer programmer, and author, was found dead on April 13, 1998. The cause of death appears to have been suicide. The writer apparently drowned after he and an unidentified woman intentionally took overdoses of Valium. Lenz, also known as "Rama," had spent a number of years teaching Buddhism. He later shifted his vocational focus to writing software and teaching computer seminars. Lenz was perhaps best known for his two best-selling novels, *Surfing the Himalayas* (1995) and *Snowboarding to Nirvana* (1996). He and his musical group, Zazen, also produced a number of rock and "new age" albums. Critics accused Lenz of exploiting his followers (which may have numbered in the hundreds) sexually and financially, a charge which Lenz himself denied. Lenz maintained a website at http://www.fredericklenz.com.

RELIGION AND PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS: The Council on Spiritual Practices now has an extensive website dealing with the religious use of

psychoactive drugs. The CSP's Entheogen Project webpage (http://www.csp.org/entheogen2.html) offers a large bibliography on entheogens (substances taken to cause or heighten spiritual or mystical experiences), along with a key-word searchable index; significant mention is also made of legal and policy issues. Similarly, the CSP's "entheogen chrestomathy" site (http://www.csp.org/chrestomathy) contains extended bibliographic information and excerpts from some 400 books, dissertations, and journals.

NEW JOURNAL ON AFRICAN CULTURE: Contours is a new multi-disciplinary journal exploring the experiences of persons of African descent throughout the world. The journal will publish refereed articles, fiction, poetry, and social and cultural commentaries and invites submissions for its premier issues. Scholarly articles will be considered from disciplines such as sociology, political science, history, religious studies, anthropology, psychology, art, film, music, literary and cultural criticism, and medicine. The deadline for the first issue is August 1, 1998, with later submissions considered for the next volume. The preferred language for submissions is English, though manuscripts will be accepted from other languages; non-English language articles will be published in English translation. For more information, contact *Contours*, Duke University, Box 90719, 121-N Carr Building, Durham, NC, 27708. Phone (919) 660-3197; fax: (919) 660-3198. E-mail: llhorn@acpub.duke.edu. To submit books to be reviewed, please send a review copy to: Professor Sheila Smith McKoy, Book Review Editor, *Contours*, English Department, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, 37235.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES:

American Academy of Religion (AAR)—November 21-24, 1998. Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotels, Orlando, Florida. This is the largest annual meeting of religion scholars in the United States and will include several sessions of interest to students of new religions. Additional information is posted at http://www.jv-site.org and http://www.aar-site.org. (The 1999 Annual Meeting will be held in Boston, Massachusetts, November 20-23.)

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. 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.

Sociedad Espanola de Ciencias de las Religione (SECR)—February 3-6, 2000. La Laguna, Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain. This meeting is of the Spanish branch of the International Association for the History of Religions. The principle subject to be addressed in the conference will be millennial fear in religion. Thematic areas of the conference will include: psychological and sociological implications of millennial fear and the responses of different religions; fear of death and fear of the end times; millennial fear in new religious movements and the New Age; and fear of belief and fear of unbelief. Conference languages will include Spanish, English, Portuguese, Italian, French, and German. Abstracts are due by October 15, 1998, with papers due by March 15, 1999. Send abstracts to Coloquio Milenio: miedo y religion, Facultad de Geografia e Historia, Universidad de La Laguna, Campus de Guajara, E-38205 LA LAGUNA, Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain. Phone 34922317737-36; Fax 34922317723. E-mail: milenio.miedo.religion@ull.es.

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion/Religious Research Association (SSSR/RRA)—November 6-8, 1998. Hotel du Parc, Montreal, Canada. This year's conference will include topics such as the Canadian religious experience, contrasting and changing patterns of religious identity, and religion and modernism. There will also be two tours, one of Montreal's historic cathedrals, and another of Canadian new religious movements. Information is posted at http://fhss.byu.edu/soc/sssr/meetings.html.

Please note new address: send news and notices to John Bozeman, 5946 Mimosa Drive, Orlando, FL 32807, or e-mail jmb5b@yahoo.com.

ENDNOTES

[1] David Van Zandt, *Living in the Children of God* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 22-29; Roy Wallis, *Salvation and Protest: Studies of Social and Religious Movements* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 51-90.

[2] See, for example, Miriam Williams, *Heaven's Harlots: My Fifteen Years as a Sacred Prostitute in the Children of God* (New York: William Morrow, 1998). This expose is based on events that occurred in 1986 and before.

[3] Susan Palmer, "Heaven's Children: The Children of God's Second Generation," in *Sex, Slander, and Salvation: Investigating the Family/Children of God*, eds. James Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Stanford, CA: Center for Academic Publications, 1994), 17-20. Susan Palmer explores the role of children within The Family more fully in her as-yet unpublished paper, "Childrearing in the Children of God: Endtime Expectations and Otherworldly Evangelism," presented at the 1994 Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

[4] See, for example, Lewis and Melton, *Sex, Slander, and Salvation.*

[5] "The Family Adopts a Charter of Responsibilities and Rights! [press release]," World Services, 1995, 1-4.

[6] Maria Berg, "An Answer to Him that Asketh Us!" *New Good News*, no. 653 (October 1995): 1-11; Peter Amsterdam, "World Services' Response to Mr. Justice Ward," *New Good News*, no. 653 (October 1995): 12-17.

[7] Peter Amsterdam, "Moving Forward: The Need for Change!" *New Good News*, No. 615 (February 1995), 1-15.

[8] Peter Amsterdam, "The Ministry of Reconciliation," *New Good News*, No. 653 (October 1995): 18-25.

[9] *Statement on TRF Supporters* (Zurich: World Services, 1995).

[10] Charlotte Hardman, "Keeping the Faith and Leaving the Army," in *Sex, Slander, and Salvation*, eds. Lewis and Melton, 97-112,

[11] Maria Berg and Peter Amsterdam, "Bridging the Gap!" *New Good News*, no. 696 (October 1996); Lonnie Davis and Claire Borowik, *The Family's Ministry of Reconciliation* (Washington D. C.: The Family, 1997).

[12] Maria Berg and Peter Amsterdam, "Bridging the Gap!" *New Good News*, no. 696 (October 1996), 11-12; Lonnie Davis and Claire Borowik, *The Family's Ministry of Reconciliation* (Washington D. C.: The Family, 1997), 1-6.

[13] Lonnie Davis and Claire Borowik, Interview with Author, May 21, 1998; Peter Amsterdam, *Victory Review '97!* (Zurich: World Services, 1998).

[14] Ibid.

Book Reviews

James Dobson's War On America. By Gil Alexander-Moegerle. Prometheus Books, 1997. 306 pages. $25.95 cloth.

Gil Alexander-Moegerle, co-founder with James Dobson of Focus on the Family and a related religious broadcasting empire, chronicles his former patron's egotism, dictatorial methods, activities on behalf of the Religious Right, and intrusion into the private affairs of employees and associates. Dobson appears as a driven, ambitious overachiever who, despite a lifetime of giving sound, commonsensical advice on marital relations and childrearing to others, has little time for his own family and demonizes all who disagree with him. Dobson appears as spiteful towards rivals, including former associates, even to the point of threatening the business of religious publishers who continue to carry titles by persons with whom Dobson has fallen out. His organization's support of the religious right is described as "people of faith doing politics ignorantly and dangerously" (p. 12).

While giving credit for the good Dobson has done (and not all of it in spite of himself), *James Dobson's War on America* is an unhappily alarmist book, as lacking in nuance and as simplistic as any of Dobson's own dicta or the "Red Scare" literature of the past. For example, the book ends with an implied warning that, unless Dobson and his ilk are stopped, America will end up like Ulster, Iran, or Afghanistan. But students of historical theology would recognize in Dobson's beliefs a near classic Arminianism, which mainstream history usually presents as a liberal development in theology. This irony seems lost on both author and publisher.

The religious right is neither as bizarre as its critics would have us believe, nor does it corner the political follies market. Daniel Patrick Moynihan called attention to the connection between family breakdown and social pathology long before Dobson. In the abortion debate, it is the pro-life side which supports the key liberal doctrine that rights belong to the voiceless and unorganized (the unborn child), while the pro-choice side presents harsh necessity-based arguments worthy of Wilberforce's parliamentary opponents. The fact that Roe's lawyers lied before the Supreme Court is surely as worthy of widespread outcry and censure as any of Dobson's antics.

James Dobson may indeed be guilty of holding debatable views, following unethical practices, and treating employees shabbily. But, reprehensible as his actions might be, they do not quite add up to a war on America.

Peter J. Herz, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale

Encyclopedia of Sacred Places. By Norbert C. Brockman. ABC-CLIO, 1997. 342 pages. $65.00 cloth.

Sacred places have existed since extremely ancient times. During the 1950s, Neanderthal skeletons dating from around 50,000 years ago were discovered fifteen feet below the floor of Iraq's Shanidar Cave. Archaeological excavations revealed that some of the Neanderthals had been instantaneously killed and buried by rock falls there. However, something unusual in Neanderthal contexts was also discovered—an intentional burial. Soil samples taken from around the burial showed that it had been surrounded by flowers picked from the surrounding hillsides. Almost 40,000 years later, in what would someday be France, another group of hunter-gatherers engaged in rituals within a cave. Today, Lascaux is well-known for its beautiful paintings of ice-age animals, geometric forms, and theriomorphs. Research suggests that many of these paintings were associated with shamanistic practices.

Catal Huyuk was a Neolithic village set upon Turkey's Anatolian plateau. Shrines built there contain paintings and sculptures depicting women and bulls. Some showed women giving birth to the bulls. Archaeologists have interpreted these images as references to fertility. Four thousand years afterwards, farming peoples in Britain began work on what would become the two-mile wide complex of sacred places known today as Avebury. Communal tombs in use for over a millennia, vast stone circles, long corridors of standing monoliths linking the Great Circle to the ruins of a charnel house, and the largest earthen mound erected by humans in Western Europe all stand as testament to rituals that once served to link the dead with agricultural fertility.

Shang emperors in Bronze Age China also made offerings to agricultural deities. For generations, ceremonies occurred at the base of Hua Shan. Later, Taoists sought insights on this massif. Monasteries and temples were founded on the highest and most inaccessible peaks. The search there for the Tao, the spiritual essence of life, is in some ways reflected by contemporary practices in another rocky area located half-way around the world. Sedona, Arizona, is a popular destination for New Agers seeking spiritual enlightenment. Through the power of "vortexes," the power of quartz crystals (purchased in one of the many

stores), and the spirituality associated with Native American sites in the area, visitors often hope for a deep and personal experience with the sacred.

All of these places share the ability to express, for one person or another, a sense of the numinous. They all serve as connection points with the sacred. They all have the power to awe adherents. Yet, for all these commonalties, each is associated with a very different tradition. This small sample of sites, extrapolated out across the tremendous temporal and cultural variety represented by sacred places, indicates the complexity involved in writing any sort of comprehensive book about them. Truly, crafting such a book is fraught with difficulties. However, in the *Encyclopedia of Sacred Places*, Norbert C. Brockman accepts the challenge.

Brockman has produced a good overview. He treats a wide range of traditions and time periods. Since the book covers so much ground, descriptions and discussions are kept at a fairly superficial level. Most of the entries occupy only a page or two, making it an excellent introductory text. Though developed with the layman in mind, its breadth actually makes it suitable and educational for the specialist as well. Given the huge spectrum of places and traditions dealt with, organization becomes extremely important. Brockman has successfully categorized a cumbersome mass of material into a form that is easy to use and follow.

Readers are provided with a number of ways to cross-reference the places mentioned in the encyclopedia. An alphabetical listing, of course, is the primary organizational structure. Individual entries include descriptions of a site's history, physical appearance, and its meaning to those involved in its construction or use. Black and white photographs help convey a sense of place. At the end of each entry are references to other books and articles. A series of twelve maps precedes the alphabetical listing. Together, they cover the world's continents and regions. Each map indicates actual site locations. Following the alphabetical listing are appendices. One organizes sacred places by religious tradition, and another by country. Finally, an index serves as one more referencing tool. All told, the hundreds of maps, pictures, and a multiplicity of organizational strategies are to be applauded. Each contributes additional information and texture to an already comprehensive text.

One of the book's most unusual and interesting aspects is the inclusion of sites such as Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and Gore Island among those that are considered sacred. Auschwitz was the largest Nazi death camp. Brockman openly admits that these sites are not sacred as the word is traditionally defined. Even so, he says, they do "exert a powerful hold on our spiritual sensibilities. They are memorials that mark the

triumph of enduring faith over evil." The choice to present them is bold. They have a far different feel about them than, say, a Hagia Sophia or an Ayer's Rock (Uluru). As places of suffering and death, none are enjoyable to read about. Descriptions are hard-hitting and unadorned—even painful. Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Gore Island, and others like them address tenets shared by many of the world's religions and spiritualities. Through these tenets, issues of ethics and morality are raised. Implicit questions about relationships to others and to the divine are brought to light. Thus, even though their inclusion may stretch the standard definitions of sacredness nearly to the breaking point, they nevertheless have a direct bearing upon the discussion and therefore belong, even if somewhat uneasily, within a book like this.

Brockman's work does contain some areas of misinformation. Though rare, they still have the general effect of weakening the book's impact and overall trustworthiness. Consider for example the entry entitled "Cahokia Mounds." Within it is a claim that, while human sacrifice and cannibalism were practiced by the Cahokia peoples, these practices were unknown to other Native American groups. This is untrue. Northwest Coast societies were certainly known to sacrifice slaves and to place their bodies beneath foundational house posts. Sacrifice also took place among Pawnees and peoples of the Southeastern coastal regions. Cannibalism occurred from time to time among Native Americans living on the plains and prairies. Native Americans inhabiting the eastern United States also engaged in cannibalistic rituals from time to time.

Likewise, the Irish monument of Newgrange is described as a Bronze Age construction. Although it was indeed built, as Brockman states, approximately 5,000 years ago, it was erected by Neolithic, not Bronze Age, peoples. The Irish Bronze Age did not begin until roughly two thousand years later. It is also mentioned that in pre-Christian times a sun idol named Dagha was associated with Newgrange. Often written as "The Daghda," this entity was a father-god of the Irish Celts. It was his son Oengus that was a sun deity.

Not only is there misinformation regarding several ancient sites, but, on the whole, ancient places are conspicuous through their absence. This statement requires qualification. The encyclopedia does include many ancient places. "Ancient" is a relative term. It can be argued that the Middle Ages are ancient. The time of iron is even more ancient, and that of bronze older yet. The sack of Troy, immortalized by Homer in *The Iliad*, belongs to the Bronze Age of the Myceneans. Thebes and Luxor thrived in Egypt during approximately the same era. Among the ancient sites that rose, fell, and persisted between that time and this are Ise, Izumo, and Shinto shrines in Japan; Machu Picchu, Cahokia, and the Moose Mountain Medicine Wheel in the Americas; Rapa Nui on Easter Island; and Delphi in Greece. By pushing the clock back to the

beginnings of agriculture, Carnac, Stonehenge, Avebury, Ggantija, and T'ai Shan can be included. Unfortunately, in the *Encyclopedia of Sacred Places* their numbers are small.

These criticisms notwithstanding, the *Encyclopedia of Sacred Places* is still a fine book. Its breadth is admirable. Its treatment of differing traditions is respectful, and its inclusion of nontraditional sites like Auschwitz and Gore Island is courageous and laudatory. Without a doubt, there is room for improvement. Still, on the whole, the *Encyclopedia of Sacred Places* is a book well worth reading.

Joel Geffen, Ellensburg, Washington

Mysticism after Modernity. By Don Cupitt. Blackwell Publishers, 1998. 160 pages. $21.95 paper.

In *Mysticism after Modernity,* British theologian Don Cupitt presents an extended essay on what he perceives to be the meaning and role of mysticism in a world in which the postmodern worldview has become normative. Readers are likely to find this short work both fascinating and frustrating—fascinating in its peculiar interpretations of the nature of mystical experience and frustrating in Cupitt's frequent use of sweeping generalizations and unorthodox interpretations which are presented with sparse supporting evidence or argumentation.

Cupitt begins with an analysis, not of mystical experience itself, but of mysticism as a concept. More specifically, he identifies the concept of mysticism as a rather recent invention, tracing its roots to the late nineteenth century. Cupitt also explores the role of mystical experience as a means by which the Christian church, deprived of objective proofs of God's existence by the explanatory power of modern science, sought to find empirical proof of its theistic belief structure by appealing to internal, subjective realities which could not easily be discredited by science.

Mysticism after Modernity moves into more interesting territory when Cupitt presents his own interpretation of the nature of mystical experience. Cupitt sees mysticism as a thoroughly political phenomenon. Writing in a Marxist-sounding context, Cupitt argues that Christian orthodoxy was constructed not as an attempt to articulate some sort of transcendent truth which saves souls, but rather as an ideological superstructure whose purpose was to legitimate the authority of the Church-State power structure. Mystics, however, often challenged orthodox dogma, and hence functioned as political subversives by undermining the authority of the church. Cupitt seems to be asserting that this political role of mysticism was not just some secondary and unintentional side effect of mystical experience, but rather the primary,

intended purpose of the writings of the great mystics. He refers to mystical writings, for instance, as examples of "using language mockingly to subvert absolute power." Cupitt also expresses a strong distaste for any type of absolutism and a fondness for anarchy, and praises the mystics for their own tendencies in the same direction, stating that "The mystic is a religious anarchist and utopian."

As a deconstructionist, Cupitt is fond of emphasizing the role played by language and writing in constructing reality. Applying this perspective to mysticism, Cupitt presents the rather peculiar argument that mysticism isn't primarily about religious experience at all, as is mistakenly assumed by scholars who study mysticism. Rather, Cupitt argues, mysticism is primarily an act of writing or using language in a clever manner to undermine the dogma of the patriarchal church. Cupitt rejects the traditional understanding of mysticism, in which the primary event is viewed as some sort of internal experience of a sacred or numinous presence and the mystic's writing is seen as an attempt to communicate the content of that internal experience through the use of the written word, often done in a manner perceived by the mystic to be ineffective due to the ineffable nature of the experience. For Cupitt, the writing itself is the primary event, and the experience is relegated to secondary status at best. Asserting that "there is no such thing as experience outside of and prior to language," Cupitt observes regarding a poem by St. John of the Cross that the poem is not a metaphorical description of a religious experience, but rather, "The poem came first; it is the starting point, and not some putative 'experience.'" Cupitt offers a similarly unorthodox interpretation of Meister Eckhart, concluding that, "He doesn't describe his experiences . . . he merely plays dazzling games with language."

Having rejected the traditional view of mysticism as an experience of a divine reality, Cupitt then sets out to salvage a place for mysticism in a postmodern world. Cupitt asserts that any kind of theistic belief or metaphysical realism which posits some type of spiritual reality is no longer tenable in our times. As an alternative, however, we can participate in what he calls the "mysticism of secondariness," which is an embracing of the Godless world of pure flux and relativism. This "mysticism minus metaphysics" rejoices in the details of everyday life, fully recognizing its finite nature and lack of absolutes. Far from longing for the security of a transcendent absolute, Cupitt claims to be content, and even ecstatic, over the fact that "It is enough for everything to be secondary, for everything to be relative." And, rather than falling into despair over the recognition that we live in a Godless universe, Cupitt proclaims, "That existence is purposeless is to me religiously wonderful."

Postmodernists are likely to find all this enjoyable reading. Others may find it a bit frustrating, given that Cupitt makes sweeping generalizations and draws controversial conclusions with little effort at supporting his position. Students of new religious movements, for

instance, are not likely to accept his confident assertion that theistic belief is practically dead: the ever-increasing number of new religions based on theistic belief suggest otherwise. Similarly, it is not quite clear how the "mysticism of secondariness" is such a wonderful thing: Cupitt declares it to be an appealing experience but doesn't really explain why one should rejoice in the recognition that there are no spiritual realities, that all values are relative, and that we are all finite creatures headed toward annihilation.

Nonetheless, frustrating aspects aside, this is a challenging little book that deserves to be explored by students of mysticism and religious experience.

George Adams, Susquehanna University

The Role of Social Change in the Rise and Development of New Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands. By Manfred Ernst. LIT-Verlag, 1996. Vol. XVIII. 355 pages.

This publication is based on a research project carried out on behalf of the Pacific Council of Churches and the Pacific Theological College in Suva, Fiji Islands between 1990 and 1993. The findings were originally published in 1994 (*Winds of Change—Rapidly Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands*, Pacific Conference of Churches) and later submitted as a PhD thesis to the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy at the University of Hamburg. The book offers a contribution to the study of contemporary Christianity in the Pacific Islands and a Pacific perspective on new religious movements (NRMs).

The introduction defines the scope and aims of the survey, reflects on working conditions and research methods, and provides definitions of key terms such as "evangelicalism," "fundamentalism," and "parachurch." The body of the study begins with the observation that in the last three decades, NRMs—mostly of Christian non-mainline origin—have shown rapid growth and currently number about twenty percent of the population in the Pacific Islands. Against this background, Part I gives a descriptive overview of the various Christian denominations and focuses on new religious groups (NRGs) and parachurch organizations. According to the author's typology, the "most widespread NRGs" (such as the Assemblies of God or Jehovah's Witnesses), the "most recent arrivals" (such as the Church of God/Tennessee or the New Apostolic Church), "breakaway NRGs" (such as the Christian Fellowship Church, which separated from the Methodist Church in the Solomon Islands), and "Evangelical-Fundamentalist parachurch organizations" (such as Campus Crusade for Christ or Wycliffe Bible Translators

International) show in varying degrees a significant growth rate in comparison to the Protestant mainline churches. These findings are confirmed by material presented in subsequent chapters.

Part II presents six case studies that reflect on the impact of NRGs in various socio-cultural, economic, and political areas of the Pacific. In the author's condensed summary, detailed and comprehensive data support the finding that the "third wave of Christian mission," especially in the 1960s, has brought rapid changes in religious affiliation. This wave has caused the present decline in membership within mainline Protestant churches, a decline that has so far not occurred within the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, growing theological fundamentalism introduced by the majority of NRGs brought about a polarization between ecumenically-oriented and evangelical-fundamentalist Christians. Part III analyzes the forces behind the rapid growth of NRGs and develops interesting perspectives on the responsibilities of affected mainline churches.

According to the underlying theory of this study, the "rapid growth of NRGs is mainly caused by rapid social change and its multifaceted effects" (p. 293) and "can be traced back to a general ideological expansion of cultural values from the United States, which were compatible with the worldwide expansion of the capitalist mode of production" (p. 289). As to the future role of NRGs in the Pacific, the author asks whether they will be able "to maintain the rigid separation between the passive waiting for a divine salvation and a better life hereafter, and a possible alternative with active involvement of individuals in social movements to realize the Kingdom of God on earth" (p. 289).

This study stresses aspects of socio-economic development and social change. However, additional factors may help to explain the rapid growth of NRGs in the Pacific Islands, such as the possible catalytic effect of the interplay between concepts of fundamentalist origin and traditional indigenous religion. Additional research using religious studies perspectives may bring about further clarification of these issues. Another question is whether NRGs practice the "rigid separation between the passive waiting for a divine salvation and a better life hereafter" and active involvement in social movements to realize the Kingdom of God on earth that the author suggests. Examples from other areas of the world show that some fundamentalist or parachurch movements are—against all expectation—actively involved in development projects, social programs, etc. It is still a question whether the clear-cut line between ecumenical and politically active churches, on the one hand, and fundamentalist and politically passive para-churches and groups, on the other, is as valid as it appears to be.

These and other questions, however, do not minimize the value of this publication. The book fills a gap in the study of NRMs, and it is indeed no exaggeration to say that the author has laid the foundation

for future research in this field. At the same time, the author knows that his study has to be complemented both by similar studies in other areas of the Pacific and by in-depth studies of selected NRGs. Furthermore, he is aware of the necessity to broaden the basis of future research by collecting empirical data from Third World countries outside the Pacific and by establishing closer interdisciplinary cooperation between scholars. Hopefully, this invitation finds a lively response; there is a vast field of research waiting to be explored.

Klaus Hock, University of Rostock

African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture. Edited by Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau. Routledge, 1997. 467 pages. $24.95 paper.

This volume is a collection of twenty seminal essays on African-American religion and culture by leading scholars in the field. The essays, many of which have appeared in earlier publications, cover a range of topics which themselves suggest the broad expanse of the field. The book is impressive, however, not only for the great range of topics it covers, but also for the wide range of scholars who are represented here. Since the essays, in many cases, represent the major areas of study of these scholars, they provide a wonderful entry into the work of some of the leading scholars of our time. The editors, therefore, are not off base when they claim in the Introduction that their book is an effort to address the need of providing an "entry point for persons seeking an initial orientation to the field."

We have a wonderful blend of younger scholars in the field, such as Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, and Timothy Fulop, together with such seasoned veterans as Vincent Harding, Charles Long, and C. Eric Lincoln. The mention of this latter group makes it immediately apparent that, in African-American religion as in other disciplines, the established voices tend to be males. The inclusion of many of the younger women scholars in the book is an admirable way of recognizing the central role women have played and continue to play in African-American religious history. The essays by Gilkes and Higginbotham are important, in great part, because they document both the contribution of black women and the kind of racist and sexist thinking which has for so long left research about them out of the established canon of African-American religious scholarship. Gilkes, in her essay, "The Roles of Church and Community Mothers," documents the various leadership roles that African-American women have historically played in the church and in other religious and social organizations. And Higginbotham, in her essay, "The Black Church: A

Gender Perspective," argues convincingly that black women have been in the forefront in their demand for equal rights for blacks and women. She contends, furthermore, that an evaluation of their contribution must go beyond a consideration of the work of female ministers, as important as that is.

Given its range of topics and its inclusiveness, I believe the volume to be especially useful as a textbook in an undergraduate or introductory graduate course on African-American religion. Many of the critical essays which I regularly assign to undergraduate and graduate students are collected in this single volume. Were it to be used as a text, however, it would be helpful to have on hand a companion volume of primary readings, such as Milton C. Sernett's *Afro-American Religious History: A Documentary Witness* (1985). The brief abstracts preceding each essay as well as the manner in which the essays are arranged also enhance the book's value as a classroom text. In fact, the various sections of the volume ("Models for Studying African-American Religion," "Slave Religion," "The Black Church North of Slavery," "Emancipation, Mission, and Black Destiny," "Urbanization, New Religious Movements, and Social Activism," and "African-American Religious Culture") could well constitute important headings in a course outline. My discussion of the book as a classroom text, however, is not meant to overlook or minimize its essential value as an important research source for students and scholars of African-American religious history.

John O. Hedges, University of Tennessee

In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. By Mattias Gardell. Duke University Press, 1996. 482 pages. $49.95 cloth, $19.95 paper.

The author of this impressive study is a member of the theology department at Uppsala University, Sweden. His book provides a competent, empathetic account of the Nation of Islam (NOI) from its humble beginnings in the inner cities of the United States during the Great Depression to its decline following the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1978. While Gardell pays ample attention to the movement's formative years, his primary focus is on its rejuvenation under the leadership of Minister Louis Farrakhan. It was Farrakhan himself who granted the author permission to conduct research on the NOI and encouraged him to investigate "everything from every angle" (p. 7). The result is a book of outstanding clarity in which the author shares both his personal observations and understanding of the NOI with respect to its history, its ideology, its relationships with other movements, its roles, its functions, and its many transformations.

In the Name of Elijah Muhammad successfully combines history and participant observation. The author includes interviews with Farrakhan and other prominent NOI members, internal NOI documents, speeches, and recently released FBI files that shed light on the circumstances surrounding the murder of Malcolm X. According to Gardell, the FBI is clearly to blame for the manipulation of events that created a wedge between Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad and also is responsible for media reports discrediting Elijah Muhammad and his followers. As early as 1962, FBI documents identified the NOI as an organization that was "violently anti-white, anti-Christian, anti-integration, and anti-United States" (p. 5).

The author is to be commended for his thoroughness. Chapters One and Two provide a useful overview of black nationalism and black American Islam prior to 1930, while Chapter Three describes the rise of the NOI from 1930 to 1975. Chapter Four addresses intelligence operations directed against the NOI, and Chapter Five deals with Elijah Muhammad's successor—his son, Wallace D. Muhammad—who attempted to transform the movement into a depoliticized, nonradical, Sunni Muslim organization. Chapter Six contains a discussion of the messiology of the NOI under Minister Farrakhan, while Chapter Seven provides an in-depth analysis of the NOI creed (a welcome corrective to simplified media reports). Chapter Eight carefully documents the shifting relationships between the NOI and the international Muslim community, including the Libyan connection. Chapter Nine examines accusations of anti-Semitism that have plagued Farrakhan and the NOI and explores some possible connections between the NOI and the Far Right. Chapter Ten looks at the roles and functions of the NOI in contemporary American society (e.g., its impact on black youth movements and hip-hop).

This well-researched study features an extensive bibliography and incorporates materials that have not been available to previous scholars. What sets this study apart, however, is its careful attention to doctrine. Gardell takes NOI theology seriously. Future researchers need to examine the creeds of new religious movements as carefully as theologians and church historians analyze the doctrinal statements of the early Christian church. The initial years of any religious movement represent a period of tremendous theological speculation, creativity, and debate. Too often, these early theological speculations and debates are lost to later historical examination.

In summary, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad* provides the most comprehensive account to date of the NOI. It is also engagingly written and should be accessible to general readers. Gardell's approach is laudatory for its attention to theology and ideology and for its welcome coverage of NOI relations with other groups such as mainstream Islam,

the Black church, the Jewish community, and white nationalist (neo-Nazi) groups. Highly recommended.

Stephen D. Glazier, University of Nebraska

American Extremists, Militias, Supremacists, Klansmen, Communists, and Others. By John George and Laird Wilcox. Prometheus Books, 1996. 443 pages. $18.95 paper.

This is the second edition, under a new title, of *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen, and Others On The Fringe,* a very handy guide to so-called fringe/extremist political and religious groups of both the Left and the Right. John George and Laird Wilcox are long-time observers of such groups—George as a professor of political science and sociology at the University of Central Oklahoma, and Wilcox as the founder of the Wilcox Collection of Contemporary Political Movements housed at the University of Kansas, the largest such collection in the United States.

The reissue and renaming of this book appears intended to capitalize on the increased media and scholarly interest in extremism in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing and other incidents involving alleged right-wing groups. Left-wing groups profiled here (including the Communist Party USA, the Socialist Workers Party, and the Black Panthers) are all political in orientation, although it is probably true that many of their members have displayed a religious-like devotion to their cause. On the right, all but one of the groups profiled here seem to have started with religion as a firm foundation. Most are Christian at base, although some might have permitted non-Christians to join, as in the militia movement and the John Birch Society. The authors include the Nation of Islam and the Jewish Defense League in this section, as well as the Larouche Network, which some observers have called a religion in itself.

For the beginning researcher in this field, the most useful section is Part I, in which the authors provide a detailed analysis of extremism. A historical overview of American extremism provides necessary background information to understanding groups on both sides of the aisle. There is also helpful information concerning the motivations for joining extremist groups, and a chapter written by Wilcox that successfully attempts to define extremism—an often misused term.

The value of this book for the scholar interested in new religious movements also lies in the overview of extremism. This information will aid one's understanding of how and why people are attracted to fringe religious groups. The attention paid to the religious backgrounds

of many extremist groups will also help researchers comprehend their activities and ideologies.

When the first edition was published in 1992, I found it to be a rather helpful reference to an often confusing subject. I am glad that this edition carries on in this tradition, and that the authors have maintained their high standards.

Lin Collette, Union Institute

Hitler's Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth, and Occult Neo-Nazism. By Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke. New York University Press, 1998. 280 Pages. $24.95 cloth.

More than any single post-War figure, Savitri Devi (1905-1982) may be credited with keeping alive the flame of occult National Socialism—a belief system whose roots may be traced to the mystical explorations of such nineteenth-century Ariosophists as Guido von List and Rudolf von Sebottendorff, and to such quasi-secret organizations as the Thule Society and the Edda Society. Goodrick-Clarke, whose doctoral dissertation on the Austro-German roots of occult National Socialism, published as *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazi Ideology, the Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890-1935* (New York University Press, 1992), remains the definitive work on the subject, is a uniquely qualified biographer for the peripatetic Devi.

Devi, who was born Maximiani Portas in Lyons, France, was a fanatical adherent of German National Socialism and saw in the figure of Adolf Hitler an avatar—indeed a veritable incarnation of Vishnu—and in the 'iron men' of Germany (particularly the elite cadres of the SS) a super race whose victory would cleanse and redeem the earth. Yet Devi sat out the war in the relatively safe confines of Calcutta, contenting herself with passing on such low-level intelligence as she could glean to the German consulate. She would never forgive herself for this weakness, and much of her post-1945 activism may be seen as an attempt to redeem herself for having not given more to the cause of the Third Reich in its hour of greatest need.

Devi, however, was far more than a Nazi wannabe, and Goodrick-Clarke's remarkable intellectual biography follows Devi's unsettled life as she wandered the world in a quest for esoteric truth. That search was built on the foundation of several ideological core beliefs, including an Aryan Golden Age myth and an abiding anti-Semitism. The latter in Goodrick-Clarke's account may be traced to her distaste for the ruthless appropriation of land by the Jews, both in the account of the Old Testament (Genesis and Exodus) and in the 1929 unrest which she went

to the Holy Land to witness. Her anti-Semitism in turn reinforced her rejection of Christianity in favor of a pagan worldview.

It was her search for the Aryan Golden Age which most defined her life, however, and it was a search for the roots of the Aryan race which brought her to India, where she learned both Hindi and Bengali, accepted employment with the Hindu revivalist Hindu Mission, and married her husband and lifelong friend, a pro-Nazi Hindu named Asit Krishna Mukherji. Goodrich-Clarke provides a thoroughly researched exploration of the context of Devi's Hindu activism through the lens of the Hindu independence struggle and the leading figures of the Hinduttva movement.

After the war, a desolate Savitri Devi returned to Europe and undertook with a passion what would be her life's work—the rallying of the scattered Nazi faithful, research into what she passionately believed would be the Fourth Reich's religion of nature, and the publication of books extolling National Socialism, animal rights, and what in a later day would be called deep ecology. Here, Goodrick-Clarke is at his best, offering succinct summaries and acute analyses of the largely out-of-print body of Devi's writings. Here, too, the author is able to trace Devi's semi-clandestine meetings with the network of German Nazis employed for their 'unique skills' by governments around the world; with the Nazi underground connected with the ODESSA network; and with the neo-Nazi revival under such leaders as George Lincoln Rockwell in the United States and Colin Jordan in England.

In a controversial conclusion, Goodrick-Clarke places Devi as a key figure in the current convergence of National Socialism with manifestations of New Age and deep ecological thought. Here, the author's distaste for the anti-rationalism represented by this convergence is clear:

> Deep ecology, biocentrism, nature worship and New Age paganism reflect a hostility toward Christianity, rationalism and liberalism in modern society. Although these radical movements have their roots in left-wing dissent, their increasing tendency towards myth and despair indicate their susceptibility to millenarian and mystical ideas on the far right. Neo-Nazi and fascist activists now actively seek to infiltrate the ecological and esoteric scene. The cybernetic encirclement of man and his complete divorce from nature could well foster a more fundamental alienation. In a congested and automated world, Savitri Devi's sentimental love of animals and hatred of the masses may find new followers. The pessimism of the Kali Yuga [Hindu period of degeneration] and her vision of a pristine new Aryan order possess a perennial appeal in times of uncertainty and change.

Jeffrey Kaplan, Renvall Institute of Historical Research, University of Helsinki

God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission. By R. Marie Griffith. University of California Press, 1997. 275 pages. $24.95 paper.

In *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission,* R. Marie Griffith presents an ethnography of Women Aglow, an evangelical Christian women's parachurch organization. Giving readers rich insight into the religious lives of women associated with Women Aglow in New England, *God's Daughters* details the complex religious and social values at play in this highly successful, gendered ministry. In studying Women Aglow, Griffith found that the women involved with the organization primarily are white and at the median age of fifty. Many of these women grew up in the retrogressive 50's, but their adulthood experiences have been challenged by the gender fluidity marking the late twentieth century. By joining together in Women Aglow and drawing upon their conservative evangelical tradition for prayer, healing, and transformation, these women are "making room" for the construction of new selves in what they pray will be a transformed society.

In this welcome addition to the growing body of literature on women's religious lives, Griffith displays a firm grasp of the spirituality of a generation of evangelical women who often have been written about but rarely listened to. The book is recommended for library purchase, as well as for anyone engaged in contemporary research on gender and religion.

Brenda E. Brasher, Mount Union College

Art and Religion in Africa. By Rosalind I. J. Hackett. Cassell Publishers, 1996. 226 pages. $29.95 paper.

Art and Religion in Africa is an extensively researched, carefully organized, and intelligently presented study of the multidimensionality of African art. The strength of the work is in the case studies Hackett uses to illustrate and define the interconnectedness of social relationships, religion, and artistic expression across a broad range of African societies and ethnic groups. At the same time she dispels prevalent Western misconceptions surrounding the creation, use, and meaning of certain works such as the Mangbetu human effigies from Zaire, long interpreted to be memorial effigies of ancestors and deceased rulers.

The reader is constantly reminded of the importance of visual art in African tradition and culture. The intersection of religion and art is especially apparent in the chapters dealing with funerary goods, shrines, and masks, and the book's photos and illustrations demonstrate the scope of artistic styles ranging from realistic to abstract.

The prolixity of the introduction is perhaps the book's one weakness. Many of the discussions of "the underlying rationales" of the classification and contextualization of African art are interesting but lend little to the overall strength of the work.

The total volume of cultures, belief systems, and social activities covered is amazing and should have broad appeal to students of anthropology, history, and religion alike. The discussion of the incorporation of Christian and Islamic symbols and themes into "traditional" art and religion points to the compromise between tradition and change and considers the influence of a developing market economy for African art.

This is not, nor should it be, a quick read. It should be examined slowly and savored as the valuable and absorbing reference work that it is. Anyone desiring to gain deeper insight into the art and religion of Africa could probably find no better starting point.

Rebecca Powers, Ilisagvik College

Women In Religion. Edited by Jean Holm and John Bowker. St. Martin's Press, 1994. 181 pages. $45.00 cloth, $16.95 paper.

Women in Religion is part of the "Themes in Religious Study" series developed by Jean Holm with John Bowker. Most of the authors appear repeatedly representing a particular tradition for each topic. Each essay in all of the books assumes an introductory-level reader for religious studies as well as for the particular themes.

These books are clearly designed for the textbook market as each volume treats, in the same order, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Chinese Religions, and Japanese Religions. Introductory courses following the "Great Traditions" or comparative religions models might find a refreshing course strategy by choosing several from among the ten books in the series. For example, *Attitudes to Nature, Picturing God, Rites of Passage, Sacred Writings, Myth and History,* along with this book, *Women in Religion,* would achieve the requirements for the standard course and customize the course for particular emphases. They might be particularly helpful in multiple-sectioned introductory courses, offering both curricular consistency and individual accommodation. The strategy might be adaptable for a single classroom, permitting students to make their own choices among the texts, while student papers and projects could focus on particular issues.

How would it work the other way around? How effective would the volume be in Women's Studies or Gender and Religion courses? The book is useful for general survey courses, as part of the package, but not for gender and religion courses.

Holm ends her preface, "Finally it can be misleading to encounter only one aspect of a religion's teaching. The themes in this series are part of a whole interrelated network of beliefs and practices within each religious tradition, and need to be seen in this wider context." As her statement suggests, the book's strength is within its own network more than as a stand-alone volume. How does it compare to other introductions to women and religion? For those looking for a basic supplementary overview in such a course, it is superior to Ferguson's *Women and Religion*, but perhaps not as useful as the Sharma and Young edited volumes of *The Annual Review of Women in World Religions* or Carmody's *Women and World Religions.*

Perhaps the richest essay in the collection is Rita Gross's "Buddhism," an adept overview with lively scholarship. The "Hinduism" chapter by Sharada Sugirtharajah balances perceptions of women with participation by women. The discussion of *sati* is particularly well written for introductory students. Occasionally the optimistic tone can be merely bland, as in Alexandra Wright's "Judaism," which says, "We do not see the portrayal of an ideal state of marriage. The conflicts and jealousies as well as the happier aspects of family life are portrayed in the narratives about Jacob and his family and many others." Hmmm, let me recall some of those happier family moments in the midst of deception, bitterness, and rape. The book is packed with insights as well as information, as in D. P. Martinez's "Japanese Religions," which helps the student avoid mistaking the worship of Amaterasu with matriarchy, and also effectively tells about the cult of Jizo-sama. Overall, the book is a positive presentation of domestic and anomalous histories of women, as well as mythic feminine images.

Lynda Sexsen, Montana State University

A War of Witches. By Timothy J. Knab. Westview Press, 1998. 224 pages. $16.00 paper.

Struggles over land and its resources are as old as the history of humankind itself. Modern newspapers are constantly reporting about conflicts over oil in the Middle East, for instance, or over logging in the Pacific Northwest. Similar conflicts, though much older, are known from such sources as Celtic mythologies and the scriptures of the Old Testament. It is therefore not surprising that anthropologist Timothy J. Knab found evidence of a battle over land—and an internecine battle at that—among a group of Indians living in Mexico. Even so, there are

many surprises indeed within the backdrop of this particular contest. These are skillfully unfolded in his book, entitled *A War of Witches.*

For instance, it is revealed that, although Spaniards overran the indigenous populations of Mexico more than five centuries ago, remnant pre-conquest beliefs persist into the present day. Not only do beliefs persist, but they do so with great potency. Among these traditions is a detailed knowledge of beneficial and toxic plants and the practice of assuming animal shapes. More startling, perhaps, is the claim that present-day Indians have a thorough knowledge of Talocan, the Aztec underworld. Knab's Indian informants tell him that Talocan is a dark and dangerous place. Within it are entities who live by eating the bodies of the dead. One of them is Ipalnemoani, the source of all life. The ancestors also live in Talocan. Witches have the ability to visit the Aztec underworld through dreams. There they may take actions designed to help or hurt others.

It is into this Aztec reality that Timothy Knab is drawn. As he gains the trust of his witch informants, and as they pull him further and further into their world of dream and witchcraft, an incredible story unfolds. The story revolves around competition over land. It is one in which people turn viciously on one another, murdering through the use of witchcraft. Dream journeys into Talocan on the part of the author play a key role in uncovering the actors and events in this spellbinding tale.

Although published as an anthropological work, *A War of Witches* is just as pertinent for scholars of religious studies and psychology as it is for anthropologists. It also raises important questions about the nature of reality and the human mind. Further, it places the beliefs of Knab's informants within a religious framework shared by many agricultural and essentially polytheistic societies around the globe. Finally, it is valuable that the author places this story within the context of contemporary global economics and its usual effect upon the impoverished; a forced replacement of food crops by cash crops serves as the catalyst for the heightened social stresses that accompany starvation and fear.

Timothy Knab deserves accolades for writing such a powerful drama. He is also to be complimented for maintaining a high level of respect for the beliefs and privacy of his informants. *A War of Witches* is an entirely fascinating, informative, and thought-provoking book that is well worth reading.

Joel Geffen, Ellensburg, Washington

Sacred Art of the Earth: Ancient and Contemporary Earthworks. By Maureen Korp. Continuum Publishing Company, 1997. 146 pages. $29.95 paper.

A new form of art has emerged from the American landscape. Some intentional sticks and stones in the woods, a spiral jetty in the Great Salt Lake—such forms lead some to wonder if they are fixed to prompt an uncommonly common glimpse of the sacred on the earth. Some are even led to ask whether they have something in common with the great mounds of the Midwestern river valleys or a medicine wheel in Montana constructed long ago by peoples indigenous to this continent.

Maureen Korp takes us on a quest for the sacred in architectonic, or historically constructed, space in her interdisciplinary analysis of ancient and contemporary earthworks. Her integration of history of religions and art history approaches is bold. Her vivid descriptions of antique gardens and avante garde earth art are quieting. Photographic illustrations beckon.

Modern earthworks mark the landscape; they manipulate our contemporary perception of the earth and create expectations as to what we *might* envision there. But is this description true of places ancient Native Americans marked? Korp's response, she herself admits, is "pinched" at points. Perhaps this marking of places is most cogently summed up by Yurok artist Rick Bartow: "Our experience of the spiritual is manipulated for us by what we think we *ought* to see rather that what we *do* see" (p. 26). Though Korp provides us with in-depth discussions of the works of six contemporary artists, she does not offer a single thick description of an ancient North American example. Instead, she draws on the generalized theories of historians of religion and linguists. Can we assume, then, as Korp does, that the expectations and experiences of contemporary pilgrims are the same as those of more ancient inhabitants of this continent?

Sacred sites are marked to be so. They are places marked with intentions, prompting experiences visitors expect to have—experiences of something "wholly other," perhaps, or maybe even of *kratophany.* The contemporary earthworks Korp inquires into are the creations of artists. Their forms are envisioned, but their forms must be manifested some*where,* and most especially, *there* in *that* place. They orient us to our world.

Is there an element of the sacred here, a common dialectic between the human and the earth, which transcends time and culture, yet is rooted to place? Perhaps there is; many historians of religion certainly sustain these sorts of ambiguous metaphysics. But to *assume* a connection, a pattern, or an archetypal experience of some sort to be in common between contemporary, American artists and ancient inhabitants of this continent neglects the responsibility a scholar has for *establishing* connections. If it is true that an experience of the sacred is

constructed to create expectations as to what "we *ought* to see rather than what we *do* see," as Bartow suggests, then we need to realize that scholars, like pilgrims en route to a sacred place, also have expectations about what they *ought* to see. When we assume, our vision is crippled. When we speak of others without listening for their voices, we signify ourselves through others and make them transparent in the process.

I expect the general reader, academically inclined or otherwise, will find a rewarding experience in the pages of her descriptions of truly fascinating places. The art historian might find new power in the methods of the historian of religions for describing and interpreting human, religio-aesthetic experience. Some historians of religion will certainly find Korp's contemporary subjects, these emergent earthworks, fertile ground for further inquiry. Critically inclined readers, however, might be given pause—pinched even—at points.

Sean M. Connors, University of California, Santa Barbara

Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man. By Gopi Krishna. Shambhala Publications, 1997. 252 pages. $14.00 paper.

The Sanskrit technical term *kundalini*, once known only to Indologists and yogis, has become something of a household word in some segments of western society; it is now found in most college dictionaries, a sure sign of its acceptance into American vernacular English, and nearly all South Asian-influenced new religious movements (NRMs) talk glibly of *kundalini* and its effects. The responsibility for shaping the NRMs' understanding of *kundalini* can be ascribed almost exclusively to Gopi Krishna's voluminous writings on the subject, especially his first book, newly reissued, which serves as the *locus classicus* of the word for most Westerners. For this reason alone, scholars of NRMs ought to have a basic familiarity with the book.

The book's subtitle, *The Evolutionary Energy in Man,* states Gopi Krishna's main thesis: *kundalini* is the force underlying all human genius and creativity; when the *kundalini* is fully awakened, even average Joes become transformed into supermen, showing the rest of us the way to the next stage in human evolution. As evidence, Gopi Krishna presents an account of his own traumatic spiritual/biological evolution.

As Gopi Krishna tells it, his *kundalini* became aroused almost accidentally, presumably as a result of his many years of yoga and meditation practice; however, it soon became clear that something was seriously amiss. As the unleashed *kundalini* energy ran wild through his system, Gopi Krishna was subjected to years of life-threatening physical and psychological torment. Only the most careful regulation of diet and exercise enabled him to survive the ravages of the misdirected

energy. Gopi Krishna's desperate search for authorities, living or textual, who could explain his suffering was fruitless. He eventually concluded that both scholars and yogis are almost entirely ignorant of the real workings of *kundalini* and set out to find answers for himself. The story of his discoveries is sometimes fascinating but more often tedious in the extreme, especially given the overwrought Victorian prose in which it is expressed. After the fourth or fifth dramatic crisis, I found myself rather uncharitably hoping he would simply die and get it over with. Eventually, of course, the *kundalini* energy was stabilized, and Gopi Krishna became a genius, writing ornate poetry in languages he had never studied, among other marvels.

In format the book consists of Gopi Krishna's biographical account—his creative theories inserted between narrative passages—alternating with James Hillman's often insightful psychoanalytic commentary. The new forward by Gene Kieffer does little more than illustrate the hyperbolic legend that has grown up around Gopi Krishna and his work. Especially revealing is this quote from the late Frederic Spiegelberg: "We have here, in this wholly unintellectual personality, a classic example of a simple man, uneducated in yoga . . ." (p. 5) Whatever one thinks of Gopi Krishna, it is clear that he was an intellectual by nature and training; his two years of college and decades of intensive self-directed study placed him in the upper reaches of the Indian intelligentsia of his day. It is the *myth* of Gopi Krishna that makes him an unlettered peasant, for without this assumption the objective evidence for the miraculous transformation he supposedly experienced disappears.

In many ways, *Kundalini* should be seen as a cautionary tale. The arousal of this dormant force comes with considerable cost. If Gopi Krishna was not a neurotic before the experiences began, he certainly became one for the many years they lasted. Whatever *kundalini* is, the awakening process is nothing to embark on out of boredom or curiosity.

It was Gopi Krishna's fondest wish, expressed through all his many books, that the *kundalini* phenomenon would soon be investigated by scholars using the full rigor of modern scientific methods. Thirty-one years after the publication of his first book, the work has barely begun.

Scott Lowe, University of North Dakota

Talking With Angels. A Document from Hungary Transcribed by Gitta Mallasz. Translated by Robert Hinshaw assisted by Gitta Mallasz and Lela Fischili. Daimon Verlag, 1997. 450 pages. $19.95 paper.

Talking with Angels is a complex, fascinating, and upsetting book. It is a dialogue with the supernatural involving three young women and a man

during the height of Nazism in Hungary. The small group, living on the outskirts of Budapest, gathered regularly on Friday afternoons to seek spiritual knowledge and to discuss their inner paths to enlightenment.

The book's transcriber is Gitta Mallasz (she consciously rejected the notion of authorship), a former champion swimmer in Hungary and the only non-Jewish member of the small circle of seekers. The group's central psychic is a woman named Hanna—unfortunately we never learn more about her identity and background—who hears the messages from the celestial beings termed Angels. Sometimes, however, "HE" speaks, and we know that this voice is supposed by the group to be that of God. Hanna is a prime example of the Eastern European women who aided those seeking contact with spirits of the dead and other residents of the hereafter. The angelic messages were directed to the various members of the group: questions were asked and answers were provided through Hanna, who exhibited no signs of awareness of her physical body. The messages were then written down by Gitta Mallasz in Hungarian, and eventually commentary was provided for each message.

The three women were all upper middle class, well educated, and prosperous in Hungary's interethnic business community of the inter-War period. They had studied extrasensory perception, the works of Lao-Tse and Carl Jung, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the Bible. They were all multilingual; in fact, Gitta's first language was German and not Hungarian as she was born in Austria in 1907. For seventeen perilous months, the four seekers met at regular intervals to discuss the meaning of life and to seek answers to existential questions. Those who are ready to comb through these extraordinary passages will find a gold mine of complex images derived from Christian fundamentalism, Chinese philosophy, shamanistic incantations, and Eastern European folk wisdom.

Some of the discussions with the angels are outright poetic, sacrosanct and hallucinatory. Some are blatantly humble and straightforward: at one point Gitta asks the angels, "What is the quickest way to find my place?" Answer: "By not hurrying. . . . The one who hurries, hurries only towards death." How apocalyptic and true this message was! As the Hungarian Arrow Cross (Nazi) commandos were rampaging throughout the city, the four women and an additional 72 mostly Jewish women and children found refuge in a textile factory under the tutelage and the protection of the Papal nunciate in Budapest and, strangely, the local district SS group. On 24 November, the refugees were rounded up, taken away, and later consumed by the deadly fires of Nazi concentration camps.

What makes this book so fascinating is the next forty years of the life of the sole survivor, Gitta. After the 1956 revolution, she managed to go to France and settle in the Dordonne region, eventually marrying another Hungarian refugee. After a 1976 radio appearance, Gitta's life

was to change forever. She became a public figure in Western Europe giving lectures, touring alternative religious circles, and publishing extensively on her *Weltanschauung*. *Talking with Angels* is an eloquent testimony to the powers of spiritual rejuvenation and psychic cohesion in the midst of the most brutal repression known to humanity.

László Kürti, University of Miskolc, Hungary

Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium. By Donald E. Miller. University of California Press, 1997. 253 pages. $27.50 paper.

Convinced that "the untold story of American Protestantism is the growth and proliferation of independent churches" (p. 19), Miller offers a rich and engaging ethnography of three "new paradigm" churches. He argues that the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, the Calvary Chapel, and the Hope Chapel have been able to sustain impressive growth because they have responded effectively to widespread distrust of institutionalized religion and to a profound yearning for "spirituality" by communicating their Christian message in culturally relevant forms. Their strategy is aptly summarized by a member of Calvary Chapel: "Let's just meet people where they're at, and then minister to them" (p. 67).

Miller shows clearly how the ritual life, leadership, and organizational structures of the new paradigm churches have democratized religious life, created multiple opportunities for direct experiences of the sacred, and provided "community, safety, life transformation, and hope" (p. 185) for middle-class Americans who have been disoriented by rapid social and cultural change. Miller sets his analysis within the framework of the American "religious economy" as described by Rodney Stark and his collaborators, and details the competitive advantages that the new paradigm churches enjoy over their entrenched mainline counterparts. As both a sociologist of religion and a liberal Episcopalian, Miller is convinced that Christianity must continually reinvent itself in order to survive.

He thus concludes his study with a series of suggestions about how the mainline churches might adapt in order to maintain or increase their market share. His fundamental assertion, which relies on a Jamesian understanding of religious experience, is that churches which most effectively offer their participants the opportunity for a deep encounter with the sacred will be the most successful.

Miller's sympathetic presentation of the new paradigm churches is founded on thorough fieldwork. His study is provocative in the broader questions it raises about American Protestantism and the centrality of religious experience and generally persuasive in its analysis. But, while

he vividly captures what the "postmodern sects" have accomplished by expressing a Christian message in culturally current forms, a fuller consideration of whether only the form and not the content of the gospel has been changed might have added depth to his analysis. After all, few Christian groups, whatever the form in which they communicate their message, would be willing to admit that they have altered the original message. The new paradigm churches' self-conscious "postmodern primitivism" (pp. 24, 125) itself constitutes an important legitimizing strategy that merits further reflection.

Eugene V. Gallagher, Connecticut College

The Odin Brotherhood: A True Account of a Dialogue With a Mysterious Fraternity. By Mark L. Mirabello. Holmes Publishing Group, 1997. 94 pages. $19.95 cloth.

Some Neo-Pagans claim that adherents of Norse religion are racist and point to Hitler's appropriation of Teutonic myths as evidence of this, while Norse religionists themselves debate the significance of race and ancestry. Mirabello's book provides no evidence of overt racism, but neither does it address these accusations. In fact the book is as interesting for what it leaves out as for what it covers. Written in the form of an interview with the "Odin Brotherhood," the book explores basic components of the Odinist worldview such as deities, rituals, the afterlife, and Norse eschatology. But it tells readers little about what the lives of contemporary practitioners might be like and provides no historical context, analysis, or interpretation. Many of the author's questions are answered with cryptic and obscure responses such as, "there are certain secrets that must not be revealed" (p. 37). If this book is truly "designed for the student of occult religions," then it leaves the student's questions unanswered more often than not. Because the Odinist, we are told, should be a "god-like man," a "war-lord" who belongs to a "secret aristocracy" of "extraordinary mortals," it is not surprising that his secrets are hidden from "ordinary" humans.

Another explanation for this secrecy is that the brotherhood had to hide its beliefs from Christian persecutors. Like other Neo-Pagans who are reclaiming pre-Christian religions, the Brotherhood wants to reduce a complicated historical process to the simple opposition between victims and victimizers: Christians, "who were black with hate," murdered Odinists and destroyed their temples (p. 12). But, ironically, persecution strengthened the brotherhood, and perhaps it is by emphasizing their victimization at the hands of Christians—"the Brotherhood bears the teeth marks of Christianity"—that Odinists create a strong sense of identity (p. 19).

Although the brotherhood claims that "monotheism is preposterous," the poetically described but bloody and violent end of the world is presaged by increasing sexual perversity characterized by "spores of decadence" and "infestation," rhetoric reminiscent of that used by pre-millennialist Christians in their battles against gay rights and "the occult." "Destruction is a form of hygiene" claims the Brotherhood (p. 89). But, unlike most Christians, Odinists place the end of the world in a cyclical framework in which destruction is a form of purification that brings about world renewal: "the pulverized remains of this universe will give birth to a new universe" (p. 90). According to the brotherhood, even the gods are defeated in a final battle against monsters and giants. The elitism apparent in many of the brotherhood's answers is tempered by the mortality of gods and Odinist heroes, who are ultimately fated to die like the rest of us.

Sarah Pike, California State University, Chico

Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images. By David Morgan. University of California Press, 1997. 283 pages. $35.00 paper.

WARNING: OBJECTS IN MIRROR MAY BE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR. How does a culture propelled by iconoclasm respond to the history and condition of its own visual religiosity? How uneasy is Western culture's relationship with sacred imagery? Christian piety shadowed by the Second Commandment, the Protestant Reformation, as well as the mass reproduction of images, has a troubled vision. David Morgan demonstrates, however, that the icon has not been extinguished from Protestant popular religion, but rather that the interpretive framework has altered from space to time, from direct experience to memory palace. In iconoclastically ordered piety, popular imagery functions both didactically—images are childhood's pointers toward sacred words—and nostalgically—the images return the adult to childhood's hidden past.

Christ and the Virgin have the uncanny knack of appearing on the side of corporate buildings, in the condensation of a freezer case, in a tortilla, in the shadow of an old screen door. That our cognition is re-cognition should not surprise us, but that screen doors and tortillas reference the visual conventions of European history might give us pause. We cannot fail to construct meaning in surprising visual phenomena, to give the new the contours of the familiar; neither can we fail to invest meaning in commonplace sights, to give the ordinary the contours of the mysterious. The study of sacred art is too often confined to temple walls or chapel ceilings. Morgan says, "there is something irresistible

about the fact that human consciousness owes so much to cardboard icons and plastic buttons."

Morgan's popular culture study focuses on religion by means of responses to the mass-produced images from the 1940's paintings of Jesus by Warner Sallman. It is a portrait that claims an invisible sitter; it satisfies popular conventions of realism–though the painter and viewers know better–and it also satisfies pious conventions of the transcendent, that which is beyond image. The portrait reassures the viewer that, although the claim of the portrait is transcendent, the signals of the painting are as familiar as the chesterfield sofa or chenille bedspread.

"But how else can we express the feeling within our hearts?" writes one of 531 voluntary respondents to the author's inquiry placed in denominational publications regarding Christians' feelings toward the popular image by Warner Sallman, "Head of Christ." Morgan suggests that we must revise our assumptions regarding Protestant iconoclasm, even Catholic popular devotions. His meticulous interest in his voluntary survey occasionally threatens to smother his intelligent, original thoughts on visual culture. This is a worthy entry in the history of Christianity and a model of popular culture studies (where so many have succumbed to the triviality they perceive in their subjects). It is also a fine treatment of the complexities of iconoclasm, a major contribution to text and image studies, and a responsible contribution to American studies, art history, and gender studies.

It is a challenge for an art historian to examine sacred images in an iconophobic context, one where pictures come with nervous disclaimers that they are merely memory aids and not art or the holy. It is also a challenge for a social historian to take up the complexities of images in a field of sacred meaning that claims no ambiguities. Yet Morgan more than meets the challenges; his analysis is invaluable for scholars in a variety of fields. It is an interdisciplinary work, although its techniques and conclusions are primarily sociological, which may narrow his range of insight. Overall, the book is lucid, courageous, and valuable.

Lynda Sexson, Montana State University

Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching. Edited by Jacob Needleman and George Baker. Continuum, 1997. 450 pages. $24.95 cloth.

This work consists of a collection of forty-some selections of varying length, each presenting a contributor's thoughts on the life and works of G. I. Gurdjieff (1866-1949), the controversial and enigmatic Russian-born philosopher and—in the eyes of some, including many of the

contributors—spiritual master. All of the selections are written by enthusiastic supporters of Gurdjieff and his teaching, with several selections written by former students.

For those who are familiar with and attracted to the works of Gurdjieff, this book will be a very enjoyable read. Others, however, are likely to have a quite different experience. In the Foreword to the book, Bruno de Panafieu, editor of the French edition, states that, "The aim of this book is to make the Gurdjieff teaching more accessible to the public." Such an objective is not likely to be accomplished, given that most of the selections are written from a perspective that assumes familiarity with Gurdjieff's thought, a convoluted collection of ideas that even Gurdjieff never attempted to systematize, leaving that task to his follower, P. D. Ouspensky.

Indeed, the purpose of many of the selections seems to be simply to celebrate Gurdjieff as a great spiritual master, with little attempt to explain the content of his teaching. These are mostly essays written by disciples in praise of their master, rather than expository accounts of someone's life and teachings. As such, the book does not function as an effective introduction to Gurdjieff.

Deciphering the meaning of many of the selections can also be quite challenging, although this is partly due to the very nature of the Gurdjieff teaching. Gurdjieff, striking a note of kinship with other mystical traditions, insisted that the essence of his teaching was ineffable and could only be grasped through doing and being, as opposed to the limited act of rational thinking. Hence, the famous "sacred dances" choreographed by Gurdjieff were seen as communicating the essence of his wisdom in a more effective way than could be done by words. Unfortunately, with the claim to ineffability can come the license to say just about anything, and it sometimes seems that Gurdjieff and his followers do just that. As contributor Dorothea Dooling states, "Perhaps the only thing that can be said with certainty is that he [Gurdjieff] was either a fraud or a master." Many of these essays seem to confirm this observation and, depending on the reader's perspective, will be perceived as either profound wisdom or utter nonsense.

Editors Needleman and Baker have organized the selections into sections on Gurdjieff and the modern world, encounters with the Gurdjieff teaching, comparative studies, music and movements, and "Perspectives from the Gurdjieff Work." Unfortunately, the editors provide no introductions to the selections, and consequently the reader does not know the context in which the selection was written (e.g., composed for this volume, selected from another book, etc.). There is, however, a very useful appendix which provides a short sketch of each of the contributors, thereby allowing the reader to get some sense of the author's relationship to the Gurdjieff movement.

Readers looking for a more informative (though highly critical) introduction to Gurdjieff and his followers might want to read Peter Washington's *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon* (1996).

George Adams, Susquehanna University

People Of The Rainbow: A Nomadic Utopia. By Michael Niman. The University of Tennessee Press, 1997. 304 pages. $50.00 cloth, $18.95 paper.

Michael Niman is an adjunct professor of American Studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo and a lecturer in the Communication Department at Buffalo State College. His well-written book describes a loosely connected set of groups, collectively called the Rainbow Family of Living Light, also referred to as the Rainbow Nation and the Rainbow Family. Members do not live communally, and their common identity is expressed only through regional and national meetings called "Gatherings." These events have been held since 1972, and their purpose is "to pray for world peace and to demonstrate the viability of a cooperative utopian community living in harmony with the earth." "Rainbows" are nonviolent, egalitarian, and "environmentalist."

Membership was originally drawn from two main sources—1960's peace activists and Vietnam war veterans. Since this origin, Rainbow members now come from many walks of life, including the homeless.

Rainbow ideology and material culture are eclectic, drawing rather indiscriminately from what Rainbows consider to be American Indian traditions, Eastern religions and philosophies, Christianity, and "paganism." The Family stands directly opposed to the materialistic, "exploitive" culture of Babylon, as mainstream American culture is termed.

Though there are Rainbow Families scattered internationally, this work mostly concerns the North American Rainbow Family and various regional American families. The North American Family's identity as a group emerges at an annual Gathering in a wilderness area. Though itself lasting about two months, the high point of the Gathering involves its Council, which occurs from 1-7 July. The Council comes to decisions for the Family by consensus. Family membership is open—anyone who attends the Gathering is considered a member.

The reader learns the mechanics of setting up a Gathering and the infrastructure and activities of this prolonged event, including the means of communication and social control. Since thousands of persons attend a North American Gathering, a multiplicity of needs, wants, and problems must be addressed.

Also described is the Family's fascination with their version of American Indian tradition, media coverage (mostly lacking), and the community's relationships with U. S. government agencies. The book concludes with an affirmation of the utopian character of the group.

The data for the book was obtained through extensive participant/observer fieldwork. Niman was a most conscientious and sensitive field-worker, obtaining much information from individuals with whom many researchers would have found it impossible to establish rapport. It is evident that he has a good background in the literature of utopian communitarian societies, both descriptive and theoretical.

This reviewer found the book to be well documented and very interesting. The Rainbow Family "comes to life" from the very first page. The account is at once sympathetic and yet objective. There are, in this writer's opinion, too few descriptions of past and present communitarian societies by professionals. To this small library, Niman's work is a valuable addition.

Christina M. Lemieux, Kutztown University of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education

Tabernacle of Hate. By Kerry Noble. Voyageur Publishing, 1998. 240 pages. $19.95.

With *Tabernacle of Hate*, Kerry Noble provides an insider's view of the gradual transformation of Zarephath-Horeb, a charismatic Christian intentional community which straddled the Arkansas-Missouri border, into the Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord (CSA), a heavily armed Christian Identity compound dedicated to revolutionary violence. Noble, along with his wife Kay, was one of the early members of Zarephath-Horeb, into which he was recruited by James Ellison as the group's Bible teacher during the course of a visit with friends living in the community. The evolution of Noble from Bible teacher to Identity theologian—and James Ellison from a charismatic Christian leader to "King James of the Ozarks"—is at the heart of *Tabernacle of Hate's* cautionary tale of Christian Identity and the American radical right.

For the scholar of religion, Noble's description of the early days of Zarephath-Horeb offers a fascinating microcosm of the many currents that were part of the radical Christian experiments of the 1970s. Among the community's original members were former members of the Children of God, who had either left the group in revulsion against David Berg's "flirty fishing" approach to witnessing or, in the case of one woman, apparently in protest against the practice being halted! Other members of the Zarephath-Horeb community were active followers of

the controversial teachings of William Branham who used every available opportunity to win converts to his ideas. Failing to find much of a market at Zarephath-Horeb, the Branhamites went their way.

In its early days, the Zarephath-Horeb community evinced little interest in politics, right-wing or otherwise. Race and anti-Semitism were utterly absent from the group. That would change by the late 1970s, however. Part of this was due to the leadership of Ellison and the changing composition of the Zarephath-Horeb community. Part too may be attributed to the temper of the times, to the active role of personal prophecy in the group, and especially to the fortuitous discovery of a cassette tape from Missouri Identity patriarch Dan Gayman and his Church of Israel. Gayman's teachings introduced Christian Identity to the community, which over a period of some six months of study and prayer came to adopt the faith without reservation.

As with all decisions at Zarephath-Horeb, the charismatic Christian belief in personal prophecy played a key role in this right-wing evolution. Prophecy played a dynamic role in decision making and offered women the only avenue to power within the community available to them. Prophecy thus paved the way for the transformation of Zarephath-Horeb into the Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord, as well as for the transformation of James Ellison from an apparently caring shepherd into the antinomian leader of a heavily armed End-Time Identity cult.

The change in Ellison is of particular interest. In the physical and emotional isolation of the CSA compound, Ellison came to view himself as the key player in the soon-coming tribulation and his followers as mere instruments of his glory. Typical of this transformation was the decision—supported again through prophecy—to allow men to adopt a polygamous lifestyle, with Ellison being the first to take a second wife. Polygamy split the group, with almost two-thirds of the faithful departing the community. For those who stayed, the damage to the marriages of even those who merely contemplated taking a second wife (including Noble in his remarkably self-critical recollection) was considerable.

What followed is well known. CSA became the elite training ground and armorer of the American Radical Right. Their literary output—from the vociferous *CSA Journal* to the remarkable *C. S. A. Survival Manual* which remains the movement's standard work on irregular warfare—set a standard in the Identity world of the early 1980s. Their crimes, ranging from shoplifting to arson to murder, actually pale in comparison to the acts which they contemplated but failed to carry out. The group's most audacious plan in fact was the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Center a full decade before Timothy McVeigh would finally commit the act.

In the end, CSA surrendered to federal agents without a shot being fired. Kerry Noble, by then utterly alienated from the group and its increasingly unstable leader, negotiated the surrender and was

subsequently sentenced to five years in prison for his role in the group's crimes. The last part of *Tabernacle of Hate* follows the demise of CSA and the redemption of Kerry Noble as he seeks to make peace with himself, his wife, and the wider society for what he and the Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord had wrought.

Some scholars may object to the book's format in which reconstructed dialog makes the book read more like a novel than a history, and the book would surely have benefited from the inclusion of an index. Nonetheless, *Tabernacle of Hate* is a uniquely valuable book that should be read by all serious students of new religious movements.

Jeffrey Kaplan, Renvall Institute of Historical Research, University of Helsinki

Old Wisdom in the New World: Americanization in Two Immigrant Theravada Buddhist Temples. By Paul David Numrich. The University of Tennessee Press, 1996. 181 pages. $25.00 cloth.

The Religion in Urban America Program at the University of Illinois in Chicago has sponsored a number of research projects around the country to investigate immigrant religious communities that have been established since the 1965 liberalization of American immigration law. *Old Wisdom in the New World* provides insight into two such Theravada Buddhist organizations: the Wat Dhammaram, a Thai temple and community center in Chicago, and Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara, a Sinhalese temple in Los Angeles. The former was established in 1976, the latter in 1980. Both evolved from earlier institutions, and Numrich explains in rather painstaking detail the various organizational peregrinations that resulted in the current institutions. He also provides a description of primary activities held at each center and profiles the people who attend.

This study elucidates several important distinctions. First, these organizations do not fit the standard profile of NRMs but grow out of an ancient religious tradition. Occasionally a difficult relationship develops between lay leadership and the monks who conduct the daily activities at each center. An interesting anomaly characterized as "parallel congregations" is also evident in both centers. On one hand, the centers were designed to provide Thai and Sri Lankan forms of Buddhism for immigrants from those respective countries. On the other hand, they have also attracted non-Asian converts with a deep interest in Buddhist practice. In general, the Asian members tend to emphasize ritual while the non-Asians seem attracted to meditation; nonetheless, "we will find some Asians who think a lot like American converts and some Americans

who sometimes behave like Asian Buddhists (ritually speaking, that is)" (p. 64). To illustrate this diversification among adherents, Numrich provides useful biographies of the head monks, leading Asian members, and select non-Asian converts (some of whom take special lay ordination). The attempt to educate the children of Asian immigrants in Buddhism and Asian cultures sometimes backfires; young Asian-Americans have commented that "Thai kids are boring . . . They seem more dependent on their parents . . . They all stay home until they're married" (p. 104). Such comments indicate the cultural and generational stresses encountered in the process of Americanization.

In general, Numrich's study is more descriptive than analytical. It would have been useful to include more discussion of how each center adheres to or diverges from the practical realities of Buddhism in its home country. Also, while he suggests that Americanized Buddhism will evolve into a distinct form, Numrich does not speculate on its content or appearance. Nonetheless, this book contains valuable material and merits inclusion in libraries with collections on American and Asian-American religion.

Christopher Key Chapple, Loyola Marymount University

Women in New Religions: In Search of Community, Sexuality, and Spiritual Power. By Elizabeth Puttick. St. Martins Press, 1997. 282 pages. $18.95 paper.

Sociologist Elizabeth Puttick has written a fascinating account of the role of women and gender in new religious movements (NRMs). Puttick was for five years a member of the Osho movement led by the controversial Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Guided by her own experiences and by the Osho movement's prominent place among post-war NRMs, she decided to focus on this group in her book. The author also incorporates information and examples from other NRMs based on Eastern traditions including Elan Vital, Tibetan Buddhist groups, Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO), and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). In one chapter Puttick explores various forms of Goddess Spirituality practiced by adherents of Feminist Witchcraft, traditional Wicca, ecofeminism, and Native American spirituality. In general, Puttick provides important background information to help her readers sort out the various NRMs, their leaders, and movement histories.

Puttick approaches her study of women's role in the new religions from the standpoint of a psychological investigation. She explores the complexity of intra-group relationships and power dynamics, paths to

spirituality, work roles, and leadership. While there are separate chapters on such topics as the master-disciple relationship, the abuse of power, sexuality and the spirit, and feminine spirituality, Puttick examines all these issues throughout the book. For example, in the chapter on female spiritual leadership, Puttick weaves all these topics into explaining why few women have ever become leaders in NRMs.

While we learn something about men's lives in these various groups, Puttick is particularly adept at teasing out the ways women shape their religious communities and are themselves shaped by their experiences in NRMs. One of Puttick's stated goals is to "throw some light on why women are drawn into these movements and what they get out of them" (p. 232). Puttick presents us with a complicated answer that centers on spirituality, then radiates out to include respect of women's potential as religious beings and working members of their communities. An understated subtext in the book is the author's attempt to explain why women (and in some instances men as well) join religious groups that seem unfamiliar at best, or fanatical and sexist at worst to Western audiences. By exploring the intricate picture of women's place in NRMs, Puttick is successful in making these women's choices seem comprehensible, rational, and, in some cases, liberating.

Perhaps a more appropriate title for this work would have been *Gender in New Religions.* Except for a chapter on women spiritual leaders in NRMs, we learn little about the whole experience of individual women. The reader does not always learn the identity of NRM members whose words are quoted in the text. Rather than focus on individual women, Puttick instead examines the genderized meanings of power, spirituality, and work within NRMs. She displays a feminist sensibility in exploring these themes. For example, Puttick spends a significant portion of the book examining the master-disciple relationship. She considers the many strands of this complex issue, exploring how both women and men react to this hierarchical and male-dominant relationship model. She points out the potential for abuse within this traditional relationship, and how some women have found themselves in vulnerable positions.

However, it is also clear that women have frequently gained positions of respect and status within some NRMs. Over the last thirty years the roles women play in many groups have changed just as women's expectations in outside society have changed. Surprisingly, we learn that many women who join Eastern-based NRMs have been actively involved in the women's movement. Puttick speculates that these women have taken their ideas of female strength and equality into their religious communities. Feminism is integral to the newer forms of Paganism, Wicca, and Goddess Spirituality.

The least satisfying chapter of the book is the last one, titled "A New Model of Spiritual Needs and Values." Puttick gives an overview of older models that have typologized religion. She chooses to describe in detail

Abraham Maslow's theories of human motivation, adapting them to NRMs and adding a gender component. The chapter also includes a brief overview of spiritual trends in Western society and some speculation about the future of religion. Except for the section revamping Maslow there is little here that might be called a "new model."

By placing an examination of gender and women's roles at the center of her study, Puttick has given us new insights into the complex dynamics at work in NRMs. This book thus not only uncovers multiple layers of information about NRMs, it also provides a valuable framework within which to examine women's experiences in other religious settings. It is hoped that this work will inspire more studies of women and gender in NRMs.

Wendy E. Chmielewski, Swarthmore College Peace Collection

Modern African Spirituality: The Independent Holy Spirit Churches in East Africa, 1902-1976. By Ane Marie Bak Rasmussen. British Academic Press, 1996. $59.50 cloth.

This book presents the reader with a detailed history of the emergence of four independent "Holy Spirit" churches in East Africa. Rasmussen has done painstaking research in the field in order to produce this comprehensive history, and her text is so rich in raw data that it plunges the reader into the joy and exhilaration as well as the pain and confusion of church members. This feat of the author (to make the life-world of church members come alive) does not detract from her scholarly task to analyze, compare, and theorize on the phenomena in question.

Rasmussen traces the beginnings and growth of the independent churches from their roots in the Friends Africa Mission during the 1920s and provides a plausible explanation for the highly unlikely event of a Pentecostal-type church arising from a Quaker Mission. She further describes the early years of the Holy Spirit movement when it exhibited many millenarian characteristics and indicates how some beliefs and a number of practices were modified over time. The descriptions of beliefs and practices such as worship, prayer, purification, and initiation are dense and reflect the author's thorough knowledge of her subject. The churches' establishment of organizational structures and achievement of official recognition also receives attention.

Throughout the book, Rasmussen compares the practices of the Holy Spirit churches with those of the Friends Mission and traditional religions in order to show how these churches established their own traditions but did not escape the imprint of earlier influences. One aspect of Rasmussen's findings which I found surprising is the apparently slight influence which the traditional religions of the region exerted on the

new churches, since some South African studies show much higher levels of syncretism.

The author comes to the conclusion that a number of factors are involved in the emergence of these churches. These include the social disruption caused by colonialism, the (sometimes unconscious) resistance to colonialism, and the emotional outlet, fellowship, and sense of belonging the new churches provided to an oppressed people. In these conclusions she supports earlier studies by, among others, Sundkler in South Africa and Daneel in Zimbabwe.

This book is a valuable contribution to extant knowledge. However, it is a great pity that it deals only with the history of the independent churches until 1976. The Preface mentions that Rasmussen continued her research in the field up to 1991, and one can only hope that someone will take up her unfinished task and make available the later findings as well.

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