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Book Reviews

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"Our Terrestrial Journey is Coming to an End": The Last Voyage of the Solar Temple

Jean-François Mayer

(Translated by Elijah Siegler)

We, Loyal Servants of the Rosy Cross, declare that, as we left one day, we will return stronger than ever . . . for the Rosy Cross is immortal . . . Like Her, we are of all time and no time.[1]

The mysterious circumstances surrounding the dramatic "transit" of fifty-three members of the Order of the Solar Temple (OTS, *Ordre du Temple Solaire*) in Switzerland and in Québec in October 1994 have spawned an unprecedented wave of public speculation and conspiracy mongering. The subsequent death of sixteen people in France in December 1995 and of five more in Québec in March 1997 have only added to these conspiratorial speculations. Ironically, Joseph Di Mambro, Luc Jouret, and those who, over the course of months, methodically prepared their own deaths and the deaths of dozens of others were quite concerned about the impact their departure would have on the public mind and spent many hours creating a kind of legend that would survive their earthly exit. Why else would they have felt the need to send manifestos justifying *post mortem* their decision not only to order members but also to television stations, newspapers, and some other correspondents (including the author of this article)? The Swiss investigators found a tape, dating probably from the spring of 1994, in which one can hear the core group discuss the "departure." There is a telling exchange between Joseph Di Mambro and Luc Jouret:

JDM: People have beaten us to the punch, you know.

LJ: Well, yeah. Waco beat us to the punch.

JDM: In my opinion, we should have gone six months before them . . . what we'll do will be even more spectacular . . . .[2]

"More spectacular": such are the words used by Joseph Di Mambro himself. A movement such as the Solar Temple cannot escape its media-saturated era. It worries about its public image until the very hour of the "crowning of the work," to use its own vocabulary. Many fringe movements tend to cultivate a very high estimation of their own importance, and the OTS was no exception. The core members of the group understood themselves as an elect people who had incarnated periodically on Earth since ancient times in order to fulfill a cosmic mission. They had gathered together for that purpose and were ready to sacrifice their lives for its sake. Especially toward the end, some internal texts disclose these grandiose perspectives:

Do you understand what we represent? We are the promise that the R[osy] C[ross] made to the Immutable. We are the Star Seeds that guarantee the perennial existence of the universe, we are the hand of God that shapes creation. We are the Torch that Christ must bring to the Father to feed the Primordial Fire and to reanimate the forces of Life, which, without our contribution, would slowly but surely go out. We hold the key to the universe and must secure its Eternity.[3]

In reality, like so many other movements that see themselves on the cutting edge of cosmic progress and who assign to minor events in their own history a global significance, the Solar Temple was in fact a tiny (and actually declining) group whose claim to cosmic importance would have been viewed as dubious by most commentators. But through a sensational act of self-immolation that compelled the attention of both popular and academic observers, the leaders of the Solar Temple came close to creating a durable legend for their esoteric order.

Unfortunately for the order's leaders, documents exist which, when analyzed carefully, begin to deconstruct this legend. If everything had worked as Di Mambro planned, no trace would have remained. Nothing, not even the bodies themselves, would have been recovered: "We will not let our bodies dissolve according to nature's slow alchemy, because we don't want to run the risk that they become soiled by frantic lunatics."[4] The Solar Temple's thorough preparation for their mysterious exit, however, could not take into account certain technical problems: some of the devices intended to start the fire did not function properly, which made it possible for the investigators to seize a large number of written documents (in part found on

computers that survived the fires relatively unscathed) as well as video and audio cassettes belonging to the group's archives. It is upon these sources that this article is in large part based.[5]

JOSEPH DI MAMBRO, THE GOLDEN WAY FOUNDATION, AND THE NEO-TEMPLAR MOVEMENT

Joseph Di Mambro was born in Pont-Saint-Esprit, in the French department of Gard, 19 August 1924. At the age of sixteen, he began an apprenticeship as a watchmaker and jeweler and very soon became fascinated with esotericism. In January 1956, he joined the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC), to which he would belong until at least 1968. In the 1960s, he apparently established links with several persons who would later play a role in OTS history, including Jacques Breyer, the initiator of a "Templar resurgence" in France in 1952 to which several groups, including Di Mambro's OTS, trace part of their roots.

Several major points of doctrine, as well as an embryonic circle of disciples, began crystallizing during the 1960s. After visiting Israel and dealing with legal problems in Nîmes in 1971 related to swindling and writing bad checks, Di Mambro set himself up in Annemasse, near the Swiss border. In 1973, he became president of the Center for the Preparation of the New Age, which was presented as a "cultural center for relaxation" and a yoga school. The center became a full-time job by 1976. That same year, eight people (seven of whom resided at a common address) formed a building society and purchased a house named "The Pyramid" at Collonges-sous-Salève, close to Geneva. Of these eight people, four would lose their lives in October 1994. The building society in fact sheltered an esoteric activity: the consecration of the Temple of the Great White Universal Lodge, Pyramid Sub-Lodge, was celebrated on 24 June 1976. Internal documents show that, of the fifty-three believers who died in October 1994, at least twelve already belonged to the group by the end of 1977.

The next step commenced on 12 July 1978 with the creation of the Golden Way Foundation in Geneva. This foundation would remain at the very heart of activities undertaken by Di Mambro's various groups over the ensuing years. Thanks to substantial financial sacrifices made by several members, the foundation bought an attractive property in a suburb of Geneva that was the site of meetings open to nonmembers. The Golden Way Foundation was above all a front for a nucleus of people called simply the "Fraternity,"[6] who took part in esoteric rites in a communitarian setting. This communitarian ideal played a role in attracting people to the group and also led later to disappointments

when the gap between the ideal and the reality of everyday lifebecame untenable for certain members. People belonging to the "Fraternity" held all assets in common; along with them lived people belonging to what was called the "Community," who kept their income, paid a rent, and bought tickets for food and beverages. In the context of the 1970s, it was only one attempt among many others at developing an ideal communal life. Indeed, one member who joined at that time had lived in the New Age community of Findhorn, Scotland, and was hoping to find something similar in the Golden Way.

Excerpts from an account given at a 1994 OTS meeting provide us with retrospective (and no doubt idealized) glimpses into the experiences of the pioneer members of the brotherhood:

> Meeting at first in a house which they called "the Pyramid," where every evening was devoted to rituals and meditation, they later moved near Geneva, to a large property which was discovered to be an ancient Templar command post. . . . There, living in a perfect fraternity where all was equally shared—salaries were put into a common fund and everyone received in return an equal share—they devoted all their free time to the cause of spirituality. Daily ceremonies quickly became operational at the highest degree, even more so because hermeticists, alchemists, and spiritually elevated people joined in. The Masters of the beyond regularly manifested themselves, with a presence visible, audible, and olfactory.

The Golden Way Foundation had impressive headquarters, but in order to spread its ideas on a larger scale the group needed a communicator. Enter a Belgian homeopathic physician, Luc Jouret (born 18 October 1947), who was likely introduced to Di Mambro by one of the victims of October 1994. On 30 May 1982, Jouret and his then wife[7] were "accepted in the Golden Way" and took the oath of "Knights of the Rosy Cross." Di Mambro confided to some members at the time that Jouret had charisma and, being a physician, would be taken seriously; therefore, he should be pushed into the limelight, while Di Mambro would remain discretely backstage.

From that moment on, Luc Jouret became the propagandist for the group. Beginning in 1983, he gave lectures in Switzerland, France, and Canada. Cultural clubs were created and, from 1984 to 1990, the organization operated as a tripartite structure involving (1) public lectures and seminars given by Jouret and a few others under the label of Amenta; (2) an exoteric structure, the Archedia Clubs, for those wishing to go further; and finally, for a limited number of candidates, (3) an initiatory order (organized as the esoteric counterpart of the clubs) called the "International Order of Chivalry, Solar Tradition."[8] Obviously, the group hoped to attract a wider audience, and it thus prepared structures meant for a much larger movement than it ever became. The success of Luc Jouret, a gifted speaker who easily attracted

hundreds to his lectures, could only add fuel to the fire of such hopes. The fact that Jouret was able to draw such large audiences to his lectures is proof that the topics he was dealing with were of interest to at least a part of the cultic milieu of the time.[9] However, because of the seeker's mentality typical of the cultic milieu, most of those who came to Jouret's lectures did not want to commit themselves on a firm basis and, despite the lecturer's success, significant growth for the OTS in terms of committed membership never materialized.

The group's Templar activities[10] had their roots in a 1952 "resurgence" in which the French esoteric author Jacques Breyer (1922-1996) played a central role. While reluctant to take upon himself any administrative responsibility in those Templar circles claiming some link with the "resurgence," Breyer enjoyed the role of an elder advisor to whom those groups turned at crucial times in order to ask his opinion. Di Mambro did so several times.

Although Di Mambro's OTS considered the 1952 resurgence as a "first impulse," the real resurgence began for them on 21 March 1981. On that day, "knights" met at the Golden Way Foundation headquarters "to renew their oath of allegiance to the Order of the Temple and to the XXIIIrd Occult Grand Master to come."[11] One of the goals of the meeting was to achieve "Templar unity," and for this purpose the heads of two Neo-Templar Orders had been invited—Jean-Louis Marsan, Grand Master of the OSTS (*Ordre Souverain du Temple Solaire*, i.e., Sovereign Order of the Solar Temple) and Julien Origas, Grand Master of the ORT (*Ordre Rénové du Temple*, i.e., Renewed Order of the Temple). Like Di Mambro, both Origas and Marsan had been connected with the resurgence initiated by Breyer. "Templar unity" was not achieved, but such meetings show that members of these neo-Templar groups were partly interacting in the same milieu, with each group maintaining its specific features. For instance, the ORT was originally sponsored by Raymond Bernard (born in 1923), head of AMORC for French-speaking countries, who functioned for a time as the secret Grand Master of the ORT.[12]

After the death of Julien Origas (1920-1983), Luc Jouret briefly took control of the ORT as Grand Master, but immediately found himself confronted with opposition from Origas' wife and daughter. At the same time, some Canadians linked to the ORT expressed a strong interest in Jouret's message. During this period of crisis (March 1984), Luc Jouret, Joseph Di Mambro, and a Canadian member went to consult Jacques Breyer. Breyer told them that he thought it possible to develop something out of the small Canadian nucleus through restructuring the local groups and transferring the center of the OTS's activities to Canada. Breyer's advice was connected to apocalyptic considerations typical of his way of thinking: the "age of plagues," needed to open people up spiritually, was about to come because of the earth's growing

corruptions. The area around Toronto, Breyer claimed, would experience less upheaval during this time of troubles. In 1984, the Golden Way Foundation financed Joseph and Jocelyne Di Mambro's emigration to Canada; according to Breyer's advice, the Di Mambros first moved to Toronto. And Breyer himself, at a conclave of ORT officers during Easter 1984 in Geneva, informed the gathered people that the deposit was "to be transported to Canada" where a "Noah's ark" was to be built.[13]

From 1984 forward, the movement had two centers of activity—French-speaking Europe and Québec. The presence in Canada was also meant to reach the English-speaking world, mainly the United States:

> The Executive Council of this New Order decided that, in line with the historic destiny of the Order of the Temple, the headquarters of the Order should be located somewhere on the North American continent. The reason for this decision is simple. North America has become the source of most of the new impulses which determine the way life evolves on this planet. It is therefore fitting that the modern Knight Templar of the old continent should play his part in the Age of Aquarius by adding his inspiration to that which his counterparts in the New World will bring to the planet.[14]

However, despite the beginning of a translation project designed to make certain rules and ritual texts available to English-speaking audiences, the order never had more than a handful of isolated members in the United States. In January 1989, at the height of its development and before internal turmoil took its toll on membership, OTS had 442 members, of which 90 were in Switzerland (monthly revenues: $12,600), 187 in France ($12,700), 53 in Martinique ($3,400), 16 in the United States ($1,125), 86 in Canada ($7,000) and 10 in Spain.

FROM SURVIVALISM TO SELF-DESTRUCTION

In addition to these revenues, several well-endowed members donated large sums that amounted to hundreds of thousands (and up to millions) of U.S. dollars over the years. These donors hoped that their generosity would permit the financing of "life centers" on farms acquired in Canada and in Cheiry, Switzerland, in 1990. But the group's leaders diverted part of these donations into other areas, including their own travel expenses and living costs for community members with no external means of support. The constant need for funds led to financial problems, which were perhaps not entirely unrelated to the events of 1994.

Beginning in the 1990s, several members began distancing themselves from the order. Important donors among these members

wanted to recoup at least some of their money, and the group's revenues began to decline. Di Mambro had long pretended (since at least the late 1970s) to represent the "Mother Lodge" and to receive his orders from mysterious "Masters" in Zurich. The theme of "Unknown Superiors" is a commonplace of occult movements such as Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, and the I AM Activity. However, around 1990, Di Mambro's son Elie (1969-1994) began seriously to doubt the existence of the "Masters" of Zurich and discovered that fakery had been practiced by his father to produce the illusion of spiritual phenomena during the ceremonies celebrated in the order's sanctuaries. These phenomena—which included apparitions of spiritual entities—had been a major reason why several members had accepted Di Mambro as what he claimed to be. Even today, several leading former members remain convinced that, notwithstanding occasional fakery, some of the phenomena were authentic. Elie spoke openly about what he had discovered, which led to the departure of fifteen members. In 1993, there was a wave of resignations of French members who saw that their donations ended up as home improvements for their leader's residence. In February 1994, two members from Geneva sent an open letter to announce their decision to leave the movement, because "real fraternity [did] not exist in this structure, as extolled in the teachings." They were also worried about what happened to their contributions, observing the absence of the "life centers" which were supposed to be created.[15] And these were not the only examples of defections.

Throughout the years, according to explanations provided by former members, Di Mambro had grown more authoritarian. He no longer helped with the daily chores, as he had in the original community.[16] He wanted to gather bright people around him, but probably was also afraid of potential competitors. There was never any attempt at a takeover, but there were rivalries among Di Mambro's underlings, and some people felt that he was playing a game of divide and rule while expecting unconditional obedience from all members.[17] When speaking to the police, a Canadian member who broke with the Solar Temple in 1993 summarized the feelings of many defectors: "I did not feel that the people were living what they preached. And I was tired of the infighting and never being able to find out what was going on, so I left."[18]

A report on the organization's situation in Europe written to Di Mambro on 10 December 1993 by a Swiss OTS officer reflects the growing dissent that was affecting the group at this time. The document also shows how a longtime follower who had developed serious doubts about Di Mambro's honesty nevertheless wanted to persevere in serving the ideal he had dedicated his life to for so many years. This loyalty had tragic consequences, as he was murdered in October 1994 as he was about to leave the farm where he lived with other members. The report states,

> Rumors about embezzlement and various [forms of]skullduggery are propagated by influential ex-members. Many members . . . have left or are leaving. They feel their ideals have been betrayed. . . . It is even said that you have fallen because of money and women, and you're no longer credible. This is very serious for the Order's mission.
>
> There are even more serious grumblings, and you know them. Here they are: everything that we saw and heard in certain places has been a trick. I have known this for some time. Tony [Dutoit][19] has been talking about this for years already. . . . I have always refused to pay attention to these rumors, but the evidence is growing, and questions are being asked. This calls into question many things I've seen, and messages. I would be really upset if I had to conclude that I had sincerely prostrated myself in front of an illusion!!! . . . There is enough stuff here to send less committed people packing. And all the resignations and departures of recent times just confirm it.
>
> I don't want to analyze the reasons that could lead to such trickery, which was motivated by good intentions no doubt, but which transgressed the rules of common sense, when we see the mess we're in now. It's also been said that Zurich has never existed, that it's pure fantasy. . . .
>
> As for myself, I believe in the cosmic law. I believe in the message received 2000 years ago by which I aim to live. I believe in the life ethic which my parents taught me and which I aim to apply. I believe in a conscience which I aim to find within myself. If I go down this path, I cannot be wrong. And no rumor, true or false, could deter me from what I have to do. I will continue to work in the Order and for the mission as long as you need me and as long as I can do it.[20]

These controversies were not confined to the OTS sanctuaries. During the 1980s, the Solar Temple had more or less escaped anti-cult polemics. Jouret had two lines written about him in an entry on the ORT in a booklet put out by a French anti-cult group in 1984,[21] but in the 1987 edition, both he and the ORT were left unmentioned. Oddly enough, in the end critical coverage did not come from Europe or Canada, but from the island of Martinique: on 10 September 1991, Lucien Zécler, president of the local branch of the Association for the Defense of Families and Individuals (ADFI), the leading anti-cult movement in France, sent a letter to several associations and centers in Québec, asking for information on the OTS. The request followed the decision of several citizens of Martinique to sell their worldly goods, leave their families, and move to Canada to escape coming disasters. At the end of 1992, a former member of the OTS went to Martinique to publicly denounce the Solar Temple, which provoked local media coverage.

Not long after, Luc Jouret ran afoul of law enforcement officials in Québec after he encouraged trusted members to buy guns illegally. The police were investigating anonymous threats from an unknown

terrorist group at the time and, when tipped off by an informer about the attempt by an inexperienced OTS member to get three guns with silencers, began to watch several members of the group. The members were arrested in March 1993. The Canadian media reported the story and published extracts from police wiretaps revealing the homeopath's unusual interest in fire arms. This gave the OTS more unwanted publicity and cooled the enthusiasm of several members, even though Jouret and two of his followers were given the relatively mild sentence of one year of unsupervised probation and a fine of one thousand Canadian dollars (to be paid to the Red Cross) for buying prohibited arms.

These problems, internal and external, are crucial in understanding the OTS's gradual distortion and disintegration. Di Mambro had gathered around him a group that lent an appearance of reality to the fictions he created. And now this imaginary universe began to come under critical scrutiny. The head of the Solar Temple apparently decided to respond by taking himself and his followers away from the scene altogether.

Throughout the 1980s, the Solar Temple's doctrine had grown increasingly apocalyptic. Even in his public meetings, Luc Jouret frequently alluded to cataclysmic upheavals that threatened the planet with imminent destruction. The apocalyptic thinking of the Solar Temple had clear ecological connotations, and Jouret's lectures often described the earth as a holistic living entity who could no longer endure what humankind was inflicting on her.[22] The concern of the leaders for the environmental situation seems to have been a sincere one: Di Mambro kept several video recordings of TV reports about ecological problems; in his home, investigators also found a testament showing that Di Mambro and his wife had considered listing ecological organizations in their will.

The Solar Temple's message was survivalist as well. We have already seen that this had caused the group to establish a base in Canada, which was considered to be a safer place. In 1986, the temple published in Toronto two volumes under the title, *Survivre à l'An 2000* (*Survival beyond the Year 2000*). The first volume was mostly doctrinal. The second dealt with the subject in a very practical way, establishing guidelines as to what provisions to store in order to survive a disaster that would destroy all essential technologies and what to do to survive atomic, bacteriological, or chemical warfare. In addition, it provided a detailed first aid manual. Nothing in these volumes would lead one to suspect suicidal tendencies; to the contrary, it seemed as if the adepts hoped to find themselves among those who survived the apocalypse unscathed.

How, then, can one explain the reversal that led a core of members to choose collective self-immolation? Besides survivalism, there were other latent themes, always on the same apocalyptic foundation, which

had the potential to encourage somewhat different pursuits in the group.[23] In a certain way, the Solar Temple's goals were classically gnostic in that they ultimately aimed at "the release of the 'inner man' from the bonds of the world and his return to his native realm of light."[24] The manifesto-testaments sent just prior to the events of October 1994 echo such feelings: "We, Servants of the Rosy Cross, forcefully reaffirm that we are not of this world and we know perfectly well the coordinates of our Origins and our Future."[25] "Always belonging to the Reign of the Spirit, incarnating the subtle link between Creature and Creator, we rejoin our Home."[26] The most devoted Solar Temple adepts would push this reasoning to its extreme logical consequences.

According to several testimonies gathered by the investigators, the theme of "transit" began to be evoked by Di Mambro in 1990 or 1991. It meant a voluntary departure or a consent to bring the germ of life to another planet. It was necessary to be ready to leave at any time in response to the call. Di Mambro said he did not yet know what the mode of transit would be: he presented the metaphor of a passage across a mirror and evoked the possibility of the coming of a flying saucer to take faithful members to another world. On this last point, it is worth noting that, at some of Luc Jouret's seminars which I attended in 1987, a comic strip called *Timeless Voyage* was on sale.[27] This strip tells the story of a group of UFO believers who, before the imminent "great mutation," are brought on board a "cosmic vessel" to "Vessel-Earth."[28] Solar Temple members were thus already familiar with this type of scenario well before 1990. An ex-member explained to the investigators that talks about transit never implied suicide, but rather the idea of being saved from disasters. Perhaps the theme of "transit," rather than marking a break with survivalism, should be interpreted as a reorientation towards a survival in other dimensions following the irreversible worsening of the situation on this planet.[29]

If we believe their declarations to the police after the events of 1994, most of those members who had heard about the idea of "departure" or "transit" considered it as rather nebulous or interpreted it innocuously as a departure to other geographical locations (for example, leaving Geneva). When members wanted to know more, they sometimes received evasive answers:

> Transit was the return to the Father, the return to the Unity, after having left Earth. . . . Two or three years before October 1994, I discussed with —— what was meant by the concept. She told me that I shouldn't worry, that I wouldn't realize, that we would all leave together, as one. At the time, naively, I never thought that meant collective suicide.[30]

Some members had known a little more precisely how things would happen. One remembers that Di Mambro "started talking about transit

to another world. He said that this would be accomplished by shift in consciousness and we wouldn't be aware of it."[31] But this operation presupposed a certain degree of preparation:

> [Di Mambro] explained to us that one day we'd all be called to a meeting at which a transit would be accomplished. It had to do with a mission, with a departure towards Jupiter. . . . He said to his listeners that they had to be on call twenty-four hours a day so as not to miss the departure and that once the order was given, we would have to move quickly.[32]

This helps to explain the speed with which some of the victims suddenly abandoned everything to head to their mysterious demise. But if this confirms the emergence of the idea of "transit" well before October 1994, it does not explain the reasoning that led Di Mambro toward this plan of action. Outside of possible explanations linked to Di Mambro's mental state, it seems likely that criticism by ex-members, episodic public exposure in Martinique and Québec, and disappointed hopes for success led the Solar Temple's leadership to revise their view of the future. In addition, the wiretaps of Luc Jouret made by the police in Québec during the 1993 investigation reveal that the charismatic physician was in a depressed mood, constantly complaining about feeling tired and expressing eagerness to leave the world. Still, no one factor is sufficient in and of itself, especially since the collective self-immolation involved not just one individual but the order's entire core group. We can not rule out the possibility that some elements in the decision still remain unknown to us.

The first known version of a text explaining "departure" had been written by February 1993. This coincides with the opening of the investigation into the group by Québec police on 2 February 1993; since some sources suggest that Jouret may have gotten word of the investigation before the police interventions of 8 March 1993, we do not know with absolute certainty whether the text was written without knowledge of the investigation in progress.[33] At any rate, even if the problems in Martinique and in Québec confirmed Di Mambro and his close associates in their plan to leave a world perceived as unjust and doomed, these events did not initiate the idea of departure: the attempt at buying guns indicates that the idea was already under consideration prior to these investigations.

PASSING THE TORCH

The fact that texts trying to explain and justify the "transit" (including two of the four which were sent to the media in October 1994) were written by 1993 reveals that a group of people methodically prepared

for their deaths over a period of many months. To be ready for the passage to other spheres, the most dedicated members progressively severed all ties with the outside world. Messages received from other dimensions came to bolster them in their resolve to quit this planet. For example, a series of five messages collected under the title, "The Polestar," and supposedly delivered by "the Lady of Heaven," were received between 24 December 1993 and 17 January 1994. The first message calls on the recipients to root out their "terrestrial attraction" and talks about Jupiter as their "Next Home." The second message exhorts them to "put [their] last things in order to leave Earth free and clear." The third message declares, "We want you free to rejoin us, without feeling constrained, without feeling pressure, but of your own free will," and warns, "If you do not try your hardest to escape the attraction of this Earth, woe is you!" The fourth message repeats, "It is now time to leave humanity to its deadly destiny, you are done with it. Don't look in the world for whomever or whatever to save. Close the door on humans." As for the fifth message, it announces in a solemn tone that "no Light will stay on Earth" and can be summed up by the sentence, "Retire, let go of this Earth without remorse."[34]

It no doubt took a great deal of persuasion to convince a nucleus of members to accept such a radical step. Some documents reflect the hesitation that was probably expressed and the arguments used to reassure and maintain adherence to the plan. A few of these arguments were in keeping with classic themes of millenarian literature not otherwise found in the group's teachings:

> The idea of the passage from one world to another might worry some of you. I assure you that you are going towards a marvelous world which could not be, in any case, any worse than the one you are leaving.
>
> Know from now on that after the passage, you will have a body of glory but you will still be recognizable. You will no longer need to eat but if you want to eat, you will be able to do it without earning your bread with the sweat of your brow.
>
> Your eternal body will be subject neither to aging nor to pain nor to sickness.[35]

According to Solar Temple beliefs, the departure was only possible because on 6 January 1994 the mysterious "Elder Brothers of the Rosy Cross" "effected their Transit for an Elsewhere that only the initiates know and serve."[36] Taking off towards superior dimensions, the "Brothers" in some way carried Solar Temple members in their wake, allowing those who were worthy to ascend to a higher level. Significant allusions to this subject can be read in notes found on a diskette in one of the chalets in Salvan (Switzerland): "Take the place of the E[lder] B[rothers] on Venus, so that later on J[upiter?], we will be reunited.

They will precede us, make room for us, show us the way and we will follow them." According to the declarations of a witness who later perished during the second "transit" in December 1995, Jouret, at a small gathering just before the events of October 1994, explained that if the leadership would cross a new step in effecting a passage from matter to essence, all the subsequent levels would automatically progress one degree.

Even within this perspective of escape from worldly catastrophes and transit to a better world, however, the order's leaders deemed it fitting to leave something behind for posterity. Only this desire to leave a legacy can explain why the leadership continued to be as active as ever while making preparations for their exit. The exact date of "departure" was probably decided on short notice: the outline of the internal monthly instructions meant for distribution to the members, which was found by police in the chalets in Salvan, continued until May 1995. These instructions were prepared by Jocelyne Di Mambro, who knew about the self-destruction project. If the day or the month had been set a long time in advance, she would certainly not have taken the time to prepare instructions for the period after the set date. The will to leave a legacy and a following behind after the "transit" also shows itself in the initiative of summer 1994 (and up to the eve of the events) to start up a new organization, the Rosicrucian Alliance (*Alliance Rose-Croix*, ARC).

Over the years, it appears the group devoted a great deal of energy to organizing and reorganizing its various subsidiaries. As early as 1991, documents had suggested that the Templar Order should soon make room for "a new Rosicrucian Fraternity"; but there was resistance to this idea in some OTS sectors by believers who were attached to the Templar form. Although there is no real historical connection between the medieval Templar Order and Rosicrucian doctrines, the conjoining of the Temple and the Rosy Cross was nothing new, since such theories had originally appeared in Western occult circles during the eighteenth century.[37] According to the teachings of the Solar Temple, "the true Order of the Rosy Cross is . . . the Order of the Temple in its center. . . . More than an esoteric institution at the heart of the Order, it was and it is in truth its secret Church."[38]

At a first meeting in Avignon on 9 July 1994, ninety-five out of the one hundred eighteen people present responded positively to the proposition to create a new association. The ARC's constituent assembly, a purely administrative operation, met with a few people present in Montreux on 13 August 1994. Of the four committee members elected that day, two were found dead in October. The real launching of the ARC took place at a second meeting in Avignon on 24 September 1994, with the theme "The new mission of the Rosy Cross"; the invitation

described the new order as "the natural successor to the OTS."[39] One hundred people were present including eighty-eight dues-paying members plus some of Di Mambro's entourage. The documents revealed a desire to simplify the organizational structure. Participants had the feeling of a new beginning; the notebook of one of the participants had listed under 24 September, "Meeting of the New Alliance in Avignon."

A PERSECUTION MANIA

Many of those present on 24 September 1994 were not aware that the hour of the "departure" was approaching. Joseph Di Mambro and those close to him were becoming more and more discouraged, as an audio cassette from spring 1994 in which several core members of the group discussed their "departure" demonstrates. Di Mambro is heard saying,

> We are rejected by the whole world. First by the people, the people can no longer withstand us. And our Earth, fortunately she rejects us. How would we leave [otherwise]? We also reject this planet. We wait for the day we can leave . . . life for me is intolerable, intolerable, I can't go on. So think about the dynamic that will get us to go elsewhere.

Compared with other controversial groups, the Solar Temple encountered very modest opposition; it would be excessive to use the term "persecution," despite what the group's spiritual testament would have us believe. In fact, Di Mambro's loss of a sense of reality made any opposition or criticism intolerable. The legal problems encountered by Jouret and others in Québec in 1993 did nothing to assuage his growing sense of paranoia. After all, the press had reported that several members of the group had been subjected to official surveillance and wiretapping.[40] This led the core leadership to believe themselves the object of omnipresent police control and the victims of traitors who had infiltrated the movement.

Jocelyne Di Mambro's difficulties in getting her passport renewed only exacerbated these suspicions. This and the fact that Di Mambro sent a posthumous letter to Charles Pasqua (then French minister of the Interior) gave rise to speculation concerning a mysterious political or criminal background for the OTS's leader. The explanation is simpler. Di Mambro had traveled several times to Australia, where he attempted to create a "life center." Suspicious international monetary transfers drew the attention of the Australian police: during the month of October 1993, Di Mambro received on three separate occasions 100,000 dollars from Switzerland, money which was then deposited into bank accounts

he had opened in Sydney. Canberra Interpol asked the French police for information regarding Di Mambro, who had no known resources. The French police squad in charge of financial improprieties wondered if it might be a case of illegal trafficking in foreign currency.

The French consulate in Montreal also became suspicious of the Di Mambros. In March 1994, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the Ministry of the Interior to advise whether it should extend Jocelyne Di Mambro's passport, as the family was unable to provide proof of their residence in Canada and had changed residence five times in five years. Even stranger, Joseph Di Mambro had obtained no less than five passports in seven years, and his visas showed he had made numerous short international trips, including several to Malaysia. By October 1994, the inquiry headed by the financial squad of the French judicial police was still ongoing. As for Jocelyne Di Mambro's passport, the French embassy in Ottawa finally renewed it, but only for three months, and this gave rise to a strange incident. Jocelyne Di Mambro hired a Montreal lawyer to defend her interests in the passport renewal affair. Through an unknown channel (perhaps simply the French consulate?), the lawyer heard about the investigation of his client and her husband and seems to have become reluctant to be associated with the couple and their possibly questionable business affairs. He wrote to Jocelyne Di Mambro on 25 August 1994 to explain to her that the affair had implications that were "political as much as they were legal," and that the non-renewal decision came from the French Ministry of the Interior and was linked "to a police investigation of a criminal matter." Even as he told his client that he would no longer be representing her interests, he advised her to "take very seriously the results of the investigation by the French authorities."[41]

In point of fact, during the investigations following the events of October 1994, nothing came to light confirming a surveillance of the group during this period.[42] Not only did the financial investigations squad of the French police likely have more urgent business to attend to, but the matter appears to have been related only to unexplained financial transfers by an individual French citizen and not by the leader of a small apocalyptic order. The police in Québec ceased their surveillance of the Solar Temple after the incident with the illegal gun purchase in 1993, and the French *Renseignements généraux* (political police), which also keep an eye on religions and "cults," knew little about the Solar Temple. But one can imagine what the lawyer's statement could have meant for an increasingly paranoid leadership, which now believed that its worst suspicions were confirmed. It is significant that the document sent in October 1994 to Charles Pasqua (enclosed with the Di Mambro's passports) was written on a computer at Salvan on 30 August 1994—just after the Di Mambros received the

letter from their Montreal lawyer. As Minister of the Interior, Pasqua was held personally responsible for the problems they encountered: "We accuse you of deliberately wanting to destroy our Order and having done so for reasons of state."[43] Such writings confirm the Di Mambros' growing persecution paranoia, but lend no credibility to the theories linking the letter to Pasqua with mysterious underworld connections.

Another text found on Jocelyne Di Mambro's computer and written after a conversation with an unknown speaker adds further evidence of a growing sense of persecution:

> We are far from knowing the whole truth about the surveillance. Police all over the world are concentrating on us. Our file is coded, nobody has access except the leaders (it is on Pasqua's desk).
>
> We don't know when they might close the trap on us . . . a few days? a few weeks?
>
> We are being followed and spied upon in our every move. All the cars are equipped with tracing and listening devices.
>
> All of their most sophisticated techniques are being used on us. While in the house, beware of surveillance cameras, lasers, and infra-red.
>
> Our file is the hottest on the planet, the most important of the last ten years, if not of the century.
>
> However that may be, as it turns out, the concentration of hate against us will give us enough energy to leave.[44]

The alleged surveillance was construed as one more proof that the group was really what it claimed to be, the vehicle of a mission of cosmic magnitude. The previous document also mentions two members (one of whom died in Switzerland and the other a year later in France) suspected of infiltrating the movement. Several texts written during that period warn against "traitors," and the group believed in the right of applying "justice and sentence" to those who showed disloyalty. In a videotape dated September 1994, Di Mambro explains that "justice and sentence" are the equivalent of "vengeance," but in an impersonal sense. In the spring 1994 audio track about the "departure," Di Mambro talks about those "who had committed themselves and then no longer wanted to remain involved. That changes nothing about their commitment. . . . You'll see, you'll see how things will go for them." The letter to Charles Pasqua is explicit:

> If we must apply our justice ourselves, it is because of the fact that yours is rotten and corrupt. . . . It behooves us, before we leave these stinking terrestrial

planes, to reduce certain traitors to silence, which you and your agencies have directly or indirectly manipulated . . . to destroy our honor and our actions.[45]

While it cannot be doubted that the external opposition encountered by the Solar Temple strengthened the resolve of its leaders to depart for a higher plane of existence,[46] the root of Di Mambro's decision to launch the process which led to the "transit" is most closely connected to internal dissent (the theoretical idea of the possibility of having to "depart" having already been present longer in the ideology of the group, as we have seen). Di Mambro nourished a deep resentment toward critical members and former members, although these dissidents had kept their criticism within the confines of the group and had not gone public—except for the ex-member who spoke with the media in Martinique in December 1992 and who had repeated her accusations to the Canadian media in March 1993.[47] In the important tape recording (mentioned earlier) of a discussion within the core group in spring 1994, Di Mambro declared to his most trusted disciples,

> There are people who claim that I have taken everything for me. . . . what I have taken, I haven't taken it for me, since I leave everything behind. But I will leave nothing, I will leave ashes, I will leave nothing to the bastards who have betrayed us. The harm they have done to the Rosy Cross, that I cannot forgive; what they have done to me, it doesn't matter. But the harm they have done to the Rosy Cross, I won't forgive it. I cannot.[48]

Di Mambro still harbored feelings of betrayal and resentment during the final hours of his life. On 3 October 1994, when the "transit" had begun and a number of victims had in all likelihood already lost their lives, Di Mambro (or one of his assistants) wrote two drafts of letters to a general attorney which accused two former members of blackmailing him and of tarnishing the Temple's reputation.[49]

THE CREATION OF A LEGEND

As already asserted, however, it was not just a matter of "leaving" and punishing "traitors," but of accomplishing these ends in such a manner as to leave behind an enduring legend. The group was convinced that it belonged to "the pivotal elite" which "has been removed from the collective by superhuman effort." The temple "did not recognize" itself "as belonging to the human world, but to the race of Gods."[50]

The leaders of the Solar Temple explained their actions in the texts sent to the media from a Geneva post office on 5 October 1994,

and in three videocassettes which were shipped to a French OTS member by another trusted member at the same time. Two of these cassettes are titled "Testament of the Rosy Cross," and the third is titled "Joseph of Arimathea—Messages."

The lengthy recording of the "Testament of the Rosy Cross" opens with the symbol of ARC (a double-headed eagle behind a rose with a cross). On the screen a seated woman appears[51] who reads a text; in the background, a rose emerges from a misty landscape; as background music, the Grail theme from Richard Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* plays throughout the entire lecture.[52] The lengthy "testament" is read with a growing exaltation; there are several mentions of "departure." This "Testament of the Rosy Cross" is most interesting because of its synthesis of Solar Temple beliefs on the eve of the group's self-immolation.

The testament first underlines man's mission as mediator between God and the Earth: "We are the focalization on which the Creator rests. . . . Today, we are in the final cycle of conscious creation; we must be able to control these bodies . . . and, with full maturity, to leave the mother [i.e. the Earth]. . . . We must not bring back consciousness to the state before the fall, but become aware of this state, enrich it with the painful experience of the fall and redeem our being, so that we could continue after the fall with a capital of enriched consciousness-energy-love." In this way, the spirit is able to follow its route across the sublimation of matter and, enriched by its experience in matter, "start up a superior cycle of evolution."[53]

According to the testament, 26,000 years ago the Blue Star (related to Sirius' energy) left on the earth "Sons of the One"; it appears in the sky every time its help is needed and responds to magnetization when humanity undergoes its crises of transmutation. The years 1950 to 1960 saw a growing change in the consciousness of human beings. Humanity is passing through periods of preparation called "tribulations," successive cycles of seven years which end in 1998. The circumstances of the "departure" are then explained:

> In the 1980s, the Sons of the One called the Blue Star. With man's consciousness still too fragmented, it was asked of the spiritual forces to intervene and to allot an additional period of time to move back the date, to slow down the irrevocable changes on Earth. . . . The Earth was given an additional seven years to prepare. . . . This delay acts like a rubber band which, when stretched to its limit, becomes unstable and too powerful. This limit has been reached. . . . and we still need more time. But this delay given to us has nonetheless allowed beings to hear the message, to prepare and to participate with full consciousness in this unique event which we call the passage. The passage, which is also the gathering of the Sons of the One. The Blue Star has come to magnetize the last workers and bring them back towards those of the first hour. The time of return is at hand and the astrological influences are affecting all the physical and non-physical planes.

They work on the hearts and spirits of all those who accept their divine origin and are ready to play their part until the end. At the moment of passage, the Blue Star . . . will instantly transform in a flash the carriers of life and of the consciousness.

The Star will unleash its influence on the earth, and there man, the unbeliever, remaining on Earth, will hope for death. The Blue Star will leave, he will feel abandoned and he will be right, but it will be too late. The radiant Star will be gone, bringing with it every chance at redemption. Yet, if man had wanted to remember, wanted to hear, wanted to see . . . Why did he not seize his last chance, brought by the Blue Star?[54]

The third cassette is a composite of four elements: three messages received from above by one of the members and a strange sequence that Di Mambro wanted to leave to posterity. In a room that looks like a church crypt, we see through a doorway, in front of a large pillar, people's profiles, one by one, whom it is not possible to identify because they are dressed in ample capuchin capes pulled around their faces. They process in a slow and untiring march, each holding in both hands a lit candle. This mysterious procession is commented on by the voice of Joseph Di Mambro and a member of the fraternity:

JDM: Space is curved, time comes to an end . . . Our cycle is over, these images tell all.

F: On 6 January 1994, at 0h15m, the Elder Brothers of the Rosy Cross left their terrestrial planes, preceded by entities from the Great Pyramid who have gone back to their original planes. Programmed for all eternity, this unique event in history confirms the truth and the actualization of the prophecies that warned man that one day, because of [mankind's] disdain for the Word, the Gods would leave the earth. . . . A unique time is coming to an end as these knights, anonymous by choice, last carriers of the original fire, prepare in their turn to proceed, by their own means, with the liberation of the capital of energy-consciousness which the Rosy Cross bequeathed to them until the completion of the work.

JDM: The good-hearted man can live in this precise second . . . a sublime event: the passage of the cycle of Adamic man towards a new cycle of evolution, programmed on another earth, an earth prepared to receive the stored vibrations enriched by the authentic servants of the Rosy Cross.[55]

This solemn scene is meant to symbolize the final procession of the Knights of the Solar Temple, who are leaving this Earth: "Noble travelers, we are of no era, of no place."[56] If there were still a need to demonstrate that Di Mambro planned to create and leave behind a grand legend concerning his order's transit, this "choreography" offers persuasive evidence.

THE END OF THE SOLAR TEMPLE

On 4 October 1994, at 1:40 P.M. (Swiss time), Canadian police intervened at a fire in Morin Heights and discovered two adult corpses. On 6 October, the corpses of two parents who had been savagely murdered were found with their baby child hidden in a closet. It was later discovered that the murders had occurred on 30 September and that the perpetrators had subsequently flown back to Switzerland. Also on 4 October, a little before midnight, residents of the small Swiss village of Cheiry noticed that a fire had started at the La Rochette farm in the heights around the village. On Wednesday, 5 October, around 3 A.M., three chalets were in flames at another place in Switzerland, Granges-sur-Salvan. Twenty-three corpses were discovered at Cheiry, twenty-five at Salvan. In Cheiry, most of the victims had apparently been called to a meeting on Sunday and were probably already dead on Monday, 3 October. A total of sixty-five bullets were found in their heads, and most of the victims had absorbed a strong soporific before being shot. No firearm had been used at Salvan, where only members of the core group lived; they had been injected with a poisonous substance provided by Jouret.

It has been clearly established that some of the fifty-three victims were murdered, while others submitted to execution voluntarily. However, even if their deaths were technically assassinations (bullets in the head), we will never know with absolute certainty how many victims volunteered for their "departure" or how many realized beforehand that the fabulous voyage to another planet they had been hoping for would take such brutal form.

The fact that members who were fully cognizant of the macabre details of this "departure" and who were deeply affected by the loss of long-standing friends nevertheless decided, in December 1995, to themselves "leave" (again using firearms) in a clearing in French Vercors left many observers in such a state of incredulity that a number of journalists advanced the hypothesis of external intervention. But no such trace has been found (which would have been easy, since the area was snowy), and without ruling out the possibility that some victims did not fully consent or wanted to back out at the last minute, the deeds of these members are explicable without the intervention of a third party. It is true that several OTS survivors (including victims of the December 1995 "transit") were troubled over the methods used in October 1994. However, this discomfort did not stop a few of them from recognizing that they would have responded to the call if it had been addressed to them, or indeed from feeling a little disappointed not to have been invited to participate.

Several testimonies collected by the Swiss police after the event of December 1995 show that a process of reinterpretation was quickly

elaborated among the core of the surviving believers, leading to the conclusion that what happened was in fact positive and that those who departed had sacrificed to save the consciousness of the planet and to pave the way for others. In their eyes, the "departure" conjoined the horrible and the sublime in a strange harmony. They came to the decision to follow the same path, probably convinced that the first group was waiting for them.[57] The death of five more persons in Québec in March 1997 follows the same pattern, and the letter sent to the media by this handful of hard-liners articulates their doubts that there remain other people ready to follow the same path after them.[58]

Scholarly observers have advanced varied interpretations of the Solar Temple's saga.[59] Whatever the primary cause of the "transit," it was not a hasty decision, and the core group took time and care to legitimate ideologically the suicides and murders. This process probably also helped them reinforce each other in their choices, which had to be agreed upon collectively. Moreover, they likely celebrated ceremonies that ritualized their beliefs concerning the act they were about to commit near the time of the final departure. Texts detailing these ceremonies were discovered at Di Mambro's residence at Salvan. They strikingly illustrate the mind-set of the core group with regard to the coming transit:

> Brothers and Sisters of the First and of the Last Hour . . .
> Today . . . as we are gathered here in this Holy Place . . .
> The Great Terrestrial Cycle is closing in on itself.
> Alpha and Omega are fusing [to initiate] a new Creation.
> The Time of the Great Gathering is proclaiming the Departure of the Sons of Heaven.
>
> In the Name of a Will above mine . . .
> I am handing the seed of our Immortality and of our Transcendent Nature to the Infinite Worlds . . .
> At this Supreme Moment . . .
> The ruby power of the Work should free itself and rejoin the Levels of the Future . . .
> So that, engendered by ourselves . . .
> Like the Phoenix . . .
> We might be reborn from our ashes.
> Through the Sword of Light . . .
> Raised toward the Levels Above, what is refined should depart from the world of density . . .
> And ascend toward its Point of Origin.
>
> Our Terrestrial Journey is coming to an end . . .
> The Work is being completed.
> Everyone must return to their position on the Great Celestial Chessboard.[60]

We have to consider seriously the OTS's beliefs. Di Mambro acted at times like a common swindler, but he very likely remained convinced of his message and mission until the end. Certainly, internal dissent and outside criticism helped to convince hesitant members of the core group that radical methods were needed in order to leave Earth. But, although we will never know for sure, it seems doubtful that a lesser degree of public exposure would have prevented the "transit." Even if he was able to hide such feelings when it was needed, Di Mambro had reached the point that he could no longer accept questioning of or disagreement with his views. Convinced of their own superiority and insulated psychologically from countervailing perspectives, the leadership came to view any dissonant voice as unbearable.

Finally, the transit presented an attractive response to the movement's decline: the temple needed to be "re-dynamized" periodically. The transit also allowed the group to escape from perceived threats and offered a way to assert dramatically its claims before the entire world. Creators of their own legend, the core members of the Solar Temple considered themselves as an elect circle, heirs to an uncommon destiny who were invested with a cosmic task to fulfill. Believing that they would become gods, they followed the flute player in a dance of death and paid the ultimate price.

ENDNOTES

[1] Concluding text from two videocassettes titled, "Testament of the Rosy Cross," sent from Geneva to a member of the OTS on 5 October 1994.

[2] This quote is excerpted from a tape transcript made for the use of the police investigation. All documents without specific indication of source belong to the material gathered by the police and kept either in Fribourg or in Martigny (Switzerland). These documents are not individually numbered, and they are not presently accessible to researchers; the author has been able to use them solely because of his participation in the official police investigation of the Solar Temple case. Regarding quotes from interrogations conducted by the police with witnesses, they can be included only if the anonymity of the individuals quoted remains fully protected. For this reason, it is not possible to provide references in the usual way.

[3] Taken from a document dated 28 May 1994 found on one of the order's computers. Rituals celebrated toward the end, especially one called "The Return of the Fire," develop such ideas and show how the core members had the feeling of being in control of events when committing suicide and returning to their original home after having been enriched through their experiences.

[4] "Transit to the Future," one of four texts delivered to several dozen recipients on 5 October 1994. All the (unpublished) internal documents of OTS quoted in these footnotes were written in French, but their titles are translated here into English.

[5] An original, longer version of this study was published in French as *Les Mythes du Temple Solaire* (Geneva: Georg, 1996). A revised and updated Italian translation was published

the following year as *Il Tempio Solare* (Leumann [Torino]: Editrice Elle Di Ci, 1997). There is also an updated and extended German version, *Der Sonnentempel: Die Tragödie einer Sekte* (Freiburg: Paulusverlag, 1998). The English version has been rewritten to a large extent and also contains several passages and quotes which are not found in the previous versions. The author thanks the three anonymous reviewers for their critical comments: he has tried to take several of their remarks into consideration. Comparisons with other cases of suicide or violent action by religious groups, however, will be kept for a future article. This one concentrates exclusively upon the OTS case.

[6] There were always people who belonged to the inner "Fraternity" around Di Mambro and never to OTS itself. Hence the use of "OTS" as a generic label can be misleading.

[7] He divorced his first wife in January 1985, but she continued to follow the group and was found dead at Cheiry in October 1994.

[8] Although it is used here generically for describing the group, the name "Order of the Solar Temple" was only one label among several and was not always in use between 1970 and 1994.

[9] Some attendees with whom the author spoke did not like Jouret's apocalyptic leanings. He sometimes conveyed the ambiguous impression that he was possessed of both charm and fanaticism.

[10] An overview of the various (and sometimes unconnected) movements with reference to the Neo-Templar tradition is provided in the first part of an article by Massimo Introvigne, "Ordeal by Fire: The Tragedy of the Solar Temple," *Religion* 25 (1995): 267-83.

[11] Gaetan Delaforge, *The Templar Tradition in the Age of Aquarius* (Putney, Vermont: Threshold Books, 1987), 136. "Gaetan Delaforge" is the pseudonym of a North American OTS member (who is still alive).

[12] See Serge Caillet, *L'Ordre Rénové du Temple. Aux racines du Temple Solaire* (Paris: Dervy, 1997). There is no relation between the French citizen Raymond Bernard and his American homonym who wrote books on the "hollow earth" theory and other topics popular in some segments of the cultic milieu; according to information provided by Joscelyn Godwin, the (late) American Raymond Bernard's real name was Walter Siegmeister (Joscelyn Godwin, *Arktos: The Polar Myth in Science, Symbolism, and Nazi Survival* [London: Thames and Hudson, 1993], 122).

[13] Tape of conclave of ORT officers, Easter 1984, Geneva, Switzerland, found in personal archives of Joseph Di Mambro.

[14] Delaforge, *The Templar Tradition*, 138.

[15] Open Letter, February 1994. See footnote 2.

[16] However, there were several other members who remained totally devoted to Joseph Di Mambro, as their decision to follow him in death demonstrates. Regarding the question of the nature of Di Mambro's charisma, see Jean-François Mayer, "Les Chevaliers de l'Apocalypse: l'Ordre du Temple Solaire et ses adeptes," in *Sectes et Démocratie*, eds. Françoise Champion and Martine Cohen (Paris: Seuil, 1999), 205-23. The article also examines the interaction between affiliations with the Solar Temple and previous backgrounds in the cultic milieu:

[17] He justified this demand by claiming that he was only relaying the orders from the "Mother Lodge."

[18] Interrogation of former member by Canadian police, 28 December 1994. See note 2.

[19] Tony Dutoit, his wife, and their baby child were the first victims of the carnage of 1994, savagely murdered in Morin Heights (Québec).

[20] Report to Joseph Di Mambro by OTS officer, Switzerland, 10 December 1993. See note 2.

[21] *Les Sectes: que sont-elles? comment agissent-elles? comment s'en défendre? ce qu'il faut en savoir* (Paris: Centre de Documentation, d'Education et d'Action contre les Manipulations

Mentales, 1984), 49. In 1987, during a discussion with the author, Jouret did not hide his irritation concerning those two lines.

[22] For more details about the ecological concern behind the apocalpytic views of the Solar Temple, see Mayer, "Les Chevaliers de l'Apocalypse," 211-14.

[23] See also the interesting observations by Susan Palmer, "Purity and Danger in the Solar Temple," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 11 (1996): 303-18.

[24] Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 67. "The reawakening of the gnostic conscience in a few human beings is considered as the sign that the diffuse parcels of light dispersed in the world will reunite and that apocalyptic events are imminent" (Massimo Introvigne, *Il ritorno dello gnosticismo* [Milano: SugarCo, 1993], 15-16).

[25] "To those who can still hear the voice of wisdom . . . we send this final message," Manifesto-testament of OTS, 1994, 2.

[26] "Transit to the future," Manifesto-testament of OTS, 1994, 5.

[27] Appel Guery and Sergio Macedo, *Voyage intemporel* (Grenoble, France: Glénat, 1983). There exists an English translation, *Timeless Voyage* (Papeete, Tahiti: Transtar Pacific, 1987).

[28] This is not merely a comic strip, because it carries the message of a French UFO group which really exists.

[29] "The current planetary situation is irreversibly escaping all human control . . . All creative and positive forces are strangled . . . we refuse to participate in the assassination of our carrier the Earth, we leave this world where our voices can no longer be heard" ("Transit to the Future"). "Once the time of the Great gathering will have come and the Sons of the One will withdraw, . . . the North and South Poles, deprived of their magnetic balance which had until now been kept by the conscious carriers, will give birth to cataclysms and final destruction. This is the Third secret of Our Lady of Fatima, which is revealed here" (from a document dated 28 April 1994 found on a computer in Salvan, Switzerland).

[30] From interrogation of former OTS member by Swiss police, 18 January 1996. See note 2.

[31] Ibid., 22 January 1996.

[32] Ibid.

[33] John R. Hall and Philip Schuyler, "The Mystical Apocalypse of the Solar Temple," in *Millenium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, eds. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (London: Routledge, 1997), 300.

[34] "The Polestar," a series of five OTS messages found at Salvan, Switzerland, December 1993–January 1994. See note 2.

[35] "Last Voyage," document found at Salvan, Switzerland, 1993. See note 2.

[36] Message dated 28 January 1994.

[37] See René Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie occultiste et templière aux XVIII^e^ et XIX^e^ siècles*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Paris: La Table d'Emeraude, 1987).

[38] "Epistle/Archives ZZA-4," OTS teaching material sent to members, n.d. See note 2.

[39] OTS invitation to meeting, 24 September 1994. See note 2.

[40] This wiretapping was conducted over several weeks spanning February and March 1993.

[41] Letter from Di Mambro's lawyer in Montreal, 25 August 1994. See note 2.

[42] It should, however, be mentioned that the French embassy in Washington, D.C. sent a request to law enforcement agencies in Canada in early 1994 requesting information concerning possible involvement of Joseph Di Mambro in money laundering. It is not known if active investigations were undertaken following this request.

[43] Letter sent by Di Mambro to French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua in October 1994. See note 2.

[44] Untitled document found on computer at Salvan, Switzerland. See note 2.

[45] Letter sent by Di Mambro to French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua in October 1994. See note 2.

[46] In a recent article, two American scholars have very pointedly observed that the "critical issue seems to concern whether the group's principals can legitimate to their followers the claim of persecution by apostates and other external opponents as the basis of their troubles." See John R. Hall and Philip Schuyler, "Apostasy, Apocalypse, and Religious Violence: An Exploratory Comparison of Peoples Temple, the Branch Davidians, and the Solar Temple," in *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements*, ed. David G. Bromley (London: Praeger, 1998), 168.

[47] In a few cases, dissidents were threatening to go public with their criticisms in an attempt to recoup financial contributions.

[48] Transcript of tape, Spring 1994. See note 2.

[49] For unknown reasons, the letters were never completed or mailed.

[50] From a document entitled "Exit toward the light," end of 1993. See note 2.

[51] The woman was one of Joseph Di Mambro's most convinced followers. In the spring 1994 audiocassette, already cited several times, this woman is shown as one of those most in favor of the idea of a "departure": "Yes, I have asked for that for a long time, I think I will have no regrets. . . . I think I will have no doubts or fears. . . . I am ready to leave."

[52] Di Mambro enjoyed Wagner's music, which was often used in OTS ceremonies.

[53] Excerpt from two videocassettes called "Testament of the Rosy Cross." See note 1.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Excerpt from third videocassette sent with "Testament of the Rosy Cross." See note 1.

[56] Sometimes used by OTS members, this phrase is actually borrowed from the famous occultist and adventurer, Cagliostro, whose real name was Giuseppe Balsamo (1743–1795). Di Mambro considered himself a reincarnation of Cagliostro. The author wishes to thank Massimo Introvigne for bringing the original author of this phrase to his attention.

[57] Internal documents show that the leadership was considering the possibility (and hoping) that other people would follow at a later stage. The manifesto "To those who can still hear the voice of wisdom" concludes with the following sentence: "From where we will be, we will always hold our arms toward those who will be worthy of joining us." It is difficult to establish accurately how far the media harassment and the wild theories spread about the group contributed to the resolve of surviving OTS members to "leave" in December 1995 and March 1997. The conclusions of the French investigation have not yet been made public at the time of the last revisions to this article (November 1998).

[58] Letter sent 21 March 1997 to leading newspapers in Québec including *La Presse*, *Le Devoir*, and *Le Soleil*.

[59] For an overview of the various interpretative categories, see Massimo Introvigne, *Les Veilleurs de l'Apocalypse: Millénarisme et nouvelles religions au seuil de l'an 2000* (Paris: Claire Vigne, 1996), 223-45.

[60] Ritual entitled "The Return of the Fire," n.d., found at Salvan, Switzerland, with manuscript corrections. See note 2.

Response to Mayer's "Our Terrestrial Journey is Coming to an End"

Jean E. Rosenfeld

Jean-François Mayer was optimally situated for becoming the expert consulted by the Swiss police in October 1994 when the mass murders and suicides by members of the Ordre du Temple Solaire (OTS) were discovered in the Swiss villages of Cheiry and Granges-sur-Salvan.[1] Mayer was then working in the Swiss defense ministry, but had studied the little-known religious organization and had spoken with Luc Jouret, one of its leaders, years earlier. Because of his expertise, proximity, and insider position, Mayer quickly became involved in interpreting the group's doctrines and literature to the civil authorities and to the public at large.

Intellectual restraint in the face of the shocking strangeness of suicides and arcane doctrines is humanly difficult, but it is an indispensable tool for the disciplined study of new religious movements (NRMs) in an apocalyptic era. Few NRMs make worldwide news by committing or suffering extreme violence, but the Solar Temple's suicides did not cease in 1994, compounding the human need to account for them somehow. Mayer's study of the development and denouement of the OTS is admirably restrained and informed by his examination of OTS texts, tapes, and videos that the police have decided to sequester.[2]

My response to Mayer's important article will be limited to subjects it brings up or implies, but does not explicitly develop. It will address four issues I consider significant in the study of religion and violence among contemporary NRMs:[3] (1) that the OTS fits the typology of "fragile millennial groups" proposed by Catherine Wessinger in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence* (forthcoming, 1999); (2) that Mayer's observations suggest that the OTS reached a critical turning point after which it elaborated a doctrine of violence as a means of salvation; (3) that Colin Campbell's concept of the "cultic milieu" is a more fruitful object of study than is the sociological concept of "cult"; and (4) that for scholars who study religion and violence there remains a serious problem concerning the accessibility of information.

OTS WAS A FRAGILE MILLENNIAL GROUP

Catherine Wessinger speaks of millennialism as "belief in an imminent *transition* to . . . collective salvation (emphasis mine)."[4] Collective salvation is generally interpreted by the millennial group as pertaining only to itself. In the case of Heaven's Gate, an American neo-gnostic community, salvation was achieved via the group's "exit" from Earth to a flying saucer that they believed was following the Hale-Bopp comet. What those outside the Heaven's Gate group called suicide, members viewed as their sole option for achieving their ultimate concern: transition to The Level Above Human on the eve of the destruction of the planet Earth. As in the OTS case, some time after the first group committed suicide other believers attempted or completed acts of suicide.

Ian Reader has suggested that Aum Shinrikyo's failure to recruit members—in numbers comparable to rival NRMs—may have intensified the Japanese group's sense of grievance against mainstream society. Internal stresses leading to a sense of failure may have motivated Aum Shinrikyo members to release toxic gas in a Tokyo subway as a means of saving the world.[5] Manabu Watanabe has divided Aum Shinrikyo's development into four stages marked by increasing external conflicts and a heightening sense of persecution by outside enemies.[6] Like Heaven's Gate and OTS, Aum Shinrikyo became over time a "fragile millennial group."

Wessinger has developed a typology of "assaulted," "revolutionary," and "fragile" millennial groups; "a fragile millennial group initiates violence due to a complex combination of internal weaknesses and cultural opposition that threatens their religious goal. These factors may also threaten the leader's status within the group."[7] The three types are differentiated according to their propensity for defensive or offensive violent action. Typologies are based on historical case studies, and scholars recognize that one type may mutate into another type over time, or that one group may exhibit the formal features of more than one type.[8] Wessinger develops her typology within a larger heuristic framework of analysis that promises to advance our understanding of how and why violence occurs in millennial groups.

Mayer provides evidence of the Solar Temple's fragility by documenting internal weaknesses, cultural opposition, and threatened leadership. A few years before the first suicides, "like so many other movements that see themselves on the cutting edge of cosmic progress . . . the Solar Temple was in fact a tiny (and actually declining) group."[9] From 1984 forward the group tried to reach the English-speaking world, but it never achieved more than "a handful of isolated members in the United States."[10] In addition to declining enrollment, the group began

to experience "financial problems, which were perhaps not entirely unrelated to the events of 1994."[11] In the early 1990s, OTS founder Joseph Di Mambro became "more authoritarian" and, around the same time, internal rivalries and defections marred the group's solidarity.[12] When the first "transits" by suicide occurred in October 1994, some members and an "apostate" family were murdered. The fragility thesis posits that "believers become willing to kill or die, or both, to preserve their *ultimate concern*, the most important thing in the world to them."[13]

From 1991 to 1993, external opposition to the Solar Temple led to negative publicity and the arrest and sentencing of Luc Jouret and two members on a firearms charge in Québec. A French anti-cult group began to gather information on OTS after members in Martinique left for Canada to retreat from their families and society and a defector awakened the media to the Martinique community's strange behavior. Mayer adroitly observes that these issues, "internal and external, are crucial in understanding the OTS's gradual distortion and disintegration."[14]

A CRITICAL TURNING POINT

In the 1980s, Luc Jouret informed audiences at his lectures that the Earth faced destruction by multiple cataclysms. The intensification of apocalyptic doctrine probably accounted for the withdrawal of the Martinique contingent to Canada, which was deemed a safer place. It may also account for the Solar Temple's illegal acquisition of "guns with silencers" in Québec that, in turn, led to charges against Jouret. The Solar Temple may have reached a critical point by 1993,[15] after which it turned from passive rejection of the world to an active, apocalyptic renunciation of life on Earth. Unlike Christian groups who expect an imminent apocalypse, such as the Branch Davidians or the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSA), the core group of the OTS did not anticipate an earthly millennial kingdom, but rather a celestial new beginning on another planet. Thus, like Heaven's Gate, the OTS needed to devise a means of salvation that would transfer members from Earth to an otherworldly "dimension." A critical turn from peaceful withdrawal to destructive acts seems to characterize the rare, but—in Mayer's words—"spectacular" NRMs that employ violence to achieve their ultimate goal. Obviously, it is of high concern to civil authorities to be able to identify the millennial groups that threaten their own or others' existence. The recent Chen Tao case in Houston demonstrates the utility of assessing a putative "doomsday cult" before its predicted date of God's return to Earth arrived.[16] The concern of local police and media that followers of Chen would also commit suicide was alleviated after scholars analyzed his doctrines and compared the group to other cases of messianism.

In an instance that stands between the Chen Tao and the OTS cases in terms of denouement, a 1985 standoff between the federal police and the Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord was defused after only five days when a CSA leader was able to negotiate a settlement with an FBI agent.[17] Kerry Noble, former aide to CSA's founder, James Ellison, documents the commune's critical turning point in *Tabernacle of Hate*. In the 1970s, Ellison's followers built Zarephath, an enclave of Christians who praised God and lived as they imagined Jesus' disciples had lived. After contact with apocalyptic teachings in 1978, they collected weapons and commenced military training. In 1979, Ellison adopted Christian Identity religion and Zarephath metamorphosed into CSA, a "revolutionary millennial group."[18] Ellison took on a more authoritarian role and sheltered members of a terrorist cell called "The Order." These critical changes sparked defections that left a small core of members who were more accepting of violence.[19]

Contrary to conventional wisdom, most religious groups labeled "deviant" are not violent. However, a few of them experience critical changes that mark a decided turn toward the implementation of violence. Although OTS and CSA differed in nearly all other respects, they shared a developmental pattern that was marked by the adoption of apocalyptic perspectives, the acquisition of weapons, elaboration of a doctrine of violence as the only means of salvation, and a shift to a more authoritarian form of leadership. Systematic, comparative studies of fragile and revolutionary millennial groups is likely to yield a reliable heuristic framework for assessing a group's potential for violence. Ian Reader has suggested, for example, that the "pragmatics of failure" may account for the adoption of violence by a number of fragile and revolutionary groups in order to achieve an ultimate goal they cannot achieve by other means.[20]

THE CULTIC MILIEU AS THE OBJECT OF STUDY

Jean-François Mayer applies Colin Campbell's sociological concept of the "cultic milieu" to the Solar Temple phenomenon, noting that "the fact that Jouret was able to draw such large audiences to his lectures is proof that the topics he was dealing with were of interest to at least a part of the cultic milieu of the time."[21] He also alludes to "the seeker's mentality typical of the cultic milieu"[22] and again to "previous backgrounds in the cultic milieu."[23] I think one cannot take the reader's familiarity with the cultic milieu concept for granted.

Campbell's 1972 essay on "Cults, the Cultic Milieu, and Secularization" relied upon studies of intentional communities ("cults" and "sects") and spiritual seekers up to the 1960s.[24] Sociologists had

presented "mysticism" as a "deviant" form of "Judae-Christian religion" [*sic*] and as the seedbed for "cults."[25] Campbell applied prevalent concepts of "seekership" and "mysticism"[26]to the "cultic milieu"—out of which the ephemeral religious movements that proliferated in the 1960s and early 1970s had developed. Campbell recognized that there existed as a proper object of study something he called "the cultural underground of society," which contrasts with mainstream religions and science in its preference for revelatory knowledge, particular technologies of knowledge transmission, and short-lived organizations that tended to reappear in slightly different guises.[27] In refocusing attention from the cult to its milieu, Campbell frees the approach to NRMs from a parochial base[28] and redirects it to historical-comparative and diachronic modes of analysis. In effect, Campbell resurrected the insight that "cults" do not arise *ex nihilo*, but that they are connected to a durable tradition that, in turn, is connected, albeit agonistically, to mainstream religious and scientific traditions.

Ordre du Temple Solaire was the penultimate name given to a series of organizations developed by Joseph Di Mambro from the 1950s to the 1990s. Mayer has accurately applied Campbell's "cultic milieu" concept to OTS because Di Mambro's creations attracted religious seekers and arose within Neo-Templar and Rosicrucian mystical traditions that grew up alongside mainstream Catholic worship. Mayer emphasizes that members intended to leave a "legend" behind by setting up a new Temple group on the eve of their "departure." Such seemingly paradoxical behavior implies that they acknowledged a tradition that would remain in their wake after they had departed for another dimension.

Campbell's concept has been employed by Jeffrey Kaplan in his *Radical Religion in America* [29] and by Michael Barkun in his *Religion and the Racist Right*, a history of Christian Identity.[30] Barkun identifies the cultic milieu as "society's domain of rejected and stigmatized ideas."[31] He contrasts these ideas with ideas that are intellectually devised in mainstream social institutions—an embellishment that opens the study of the cultic milieu to nondeviant, nonstigmatized (but anti-intellectual) traditions of revealed knowledge, such as the American Fundamentalist movement.[32] Barkun's emphasis on rejection and stigmatization replaces Campbell's emphasis on deviance and mystical religion as the defining characteristics of the "cultic milieu."

More often than not, esoteric ideas and practices are interpreted by law enforcement officials, the media, and the public at large as *prima facie* proof of fake religion. The strangeness of what appears, be it a Chinese messiah in Texas or revealed messages from "Masters" in Zurich, leads to stigmatization, which stimulates suspicion, which may beget surveillance, negative media coverage, and legal forms of persecution.[33] Kaplan has argued that such heightened attention and intervention—

even though it may enhance group paranoia—may assist radical groups in their recruitment of new members. Conversely, he notes that a strategy of "dynamic silence" has dampened the appeal of anti-Semites in America.[34]

"Dynamic silence" would have had little effect on the cumulative excesses of Aum Shinrikyo, Heaven's Gate, and the Solar Temple. Mayer, Wessinger, and Reader agree that in some cases violence is embraced largely because of developments within groups. In such cases the informed and timely evaluation of a group's propensity for suicide and/or homicide may lead to new approaches that will prevent some deaths. A critical understanding of the "cultic milieu" and the timely observation of any significant turn toward doctrines that sanction violence as a means of salvation may prove more beneficial than dynamic silence or tactical confrontation.

Mayer employed a French phrase for "cultic milieu"—*religiosité parallèle*—that I believe is preferable to Campbell's term.[35] It suggests that NRMs may be located within an alternative tradition of religiosity that has existed for some time side by side with mainstream religious and intellectual institutions. It does not limit the concept to stigmatized or deviant groups. Whether people identify themselves as followers of The Name, Gaia, Satan, Odin, Wicca, or The Lamb—they act religiously. The ideas and doctrines of strange groups like the OTS appeal to intelligent people because they promise to reveal mysterious truths that conventional religious and intellectual traditions do not convey. The fervor, commitment,and ultimacy of members of the OTS differ little in intensity from that of radical Muslims or proud Marines who are willing to live by and die for their faiths. Religion may be deemed "good" or "bad" in terms of outcomes or in the eyes of beholders, but, for purposes of analysis, "good" and "bad" religions share the same defining features.

The comparative study of NRMs favors the hypothesis that there is not one milieu, but many distinct traditions that may converge or cross over. These milieus may be receptive to any new revelation, regardless of its source, that appeals to the felt needs of a group at any given time. Thus, the Protestant pessimism of Ellison's Christian flock was replaced by the racialist apocalyptic of Christian Identity religion. The proto-fascist movement in the United States has, in some cases, adopted a leaderless mode of organization from Cold War communists. Frustrated Common Law adherents in Texas try to circumvent legal obstacles to their activities by seeking legitimization from "rabbinic" courts. In each of these cases, a NRM adopted ideas or practices from an *incompatible* tradition. Millennial movements seem almost nonchalantly protean. Thus, a cultic milieu is a chimera that changes its metaphorical DNA as it assimilates new elements through chance encounters with other traditions. "New" religious movements may also incorporate antique

materials, but members weave them into new creations as need dictates and the opportunity presents. Heaven's Gate in America and the Solar Temple in Europe may be strikingly similar in type, motifs, and development, but they are historically associated with two separate cultic milieus that developed independently in the American Bible Belt and among European mystical Catholics, respectively.

THE PROBLEM OF ACCESS TO DATA

Serendipity presented Jean-François Mayer with a wealth of primary information about the Solar Temple. He was at the makeshift morgue in a Swiss village when a puzzled police officer asked him if he could interpret some Solar Temple documents he held in his hands. After Mayer demonstrated his ability to "translate" the worldview[36] of these odd "cultists," the police entrusted him with the role of explaining the group's acts to the shocked and confused media.[37] The group's videos, tapes, and texts provided Mayer with rare access to the doctrines and practices of the dead members.

Unfortunately, serendipity is, by definition, exceptional. Twenty years after the Guyana suicides and homicides, scholars are still petitioning Congress for the release of records about Jonestown from the Central Intelligence Agency and the declassification of large portions of the government report.[38] Law enforcement agencies may impose a "need to know" restriction on data even as they ask consultants to advise them about parties in a standoff. While there is no guarantee that the assessment of any data by religious studies scholars will preclude a violent outcome in a critical incident, utilization of their analyses by law enforcement agencies has been helpful in the few cases where it has supplemented the knowledge of inside experts.[39] The sequestration of documents reduces scholars' ability to construct the best possible understanding of problematic phenomena and, at the same time, encourages the proliferation of inauthentic or incomplete understandings of these phenomena. If a disciplined understanding of NRMs is not available, less satisfactory and reliable explanations are liable to take its place.

It is difficult to access data about the "cultic milieu" unless one engages in field study, but there are hundreds of groups. Mayer happened to have attended Solar Temple meetings as early as 1987. Robert Balch studied Heaven's Gate decades before members elected to commit suicide. Neither Mayer nor Balch could have known that these particular millennial groups would figure prominently in the study of religion and violence. NRM scholars scan ephemeral and peripatetic sources, such as the websites, journals, pamphlets, books, "expos," gun

shows, meetings, lectures, and seminars of the milieu they are examining. One is not likely to encounter the writings of Joseph Di Mambro or Marshall Applewhite on <amazon.com>. Some counter-movement watchdog groups collect and summarize material, but do not routinely (or freely) grant scholars access to their sources. Last year, Sara Diamond generously donated her private library on radical Right groups to the University of California at Berkeley but, with notable exceptions,[40] most NRM data is not housed in public or academic libraries. A few scholars do publish newsletters and maintain websites[41] that publish up-to-date information about millennial groups. There also exist a few invitation-only listserves where researchers can discuss their findings and inform one another. Some of these unusual sources of data are less credible than others, and many are as ephemeral as the groups themselves.

Experts working for government agencies produce an alternative database of specialized knowledge that is not readily accessible to those outside their institutions. While the publications of inside experts are theoretically open to outsiders, they are not easy to obtain.[42] Law enforcement and military institutions have developed their own profiles, theories, models, and regulations for the evaluation of parties in critical incidents. Such theoretical and procedural studies have relied heavily on behavioral science disciplines that are unfamiliar with religious phenomena.

Conversely, religious studies scholars are unfamiliar with the specialized knowledge, including negotiation theory and practice, developed and utilized by law enforcement institutions. Scholars may be hindered from developing testable hypotheses and reliable models of potentially violent groups because they are not allowed access to sequestered documents. They do not routinely sit down with law enforcement experts after a critical incident to share their findings. Moreover, government institutions may dismiss compelling information when it conflicts with their established views or exposes their mistakes. After scholars were invited by the Justice Department to evaluate the Branch Davidian incident, for example, the conclusions of Harvard professor Alan Stone were not included in the published collection of their reports.[43]

There may be very defensible reasons why primary data in the hands of government agencies is not released to the public or to scholars at large, but "need to know" regulations presume that the agencies that control this data know what it is that scholars need to know![44] Some system of sharing information needs to be devised whereby (1) findings may be interpreted by those familiar with the symbolic expression that characterizes religions; (2) ideas may be critically evaluated without fear of ostracism because one's logic does not conform to another's political concerns; and (3) where people with different types of expertise can

work as a team in a timely and unrestricted manner to untie the Gordian knot of religion and violence when it suddenly appears on the world stage. Without access to specific religious data, the expert has little useful advice to offer about any new religious movement.

Thus, Jean-François Mayer's experience in the case of the Solar Temple was both fortuitous and exceptional. It is fortunate for those who study millennial phenomena that, in the OTS case, an informed and able scholar has published important material that advances the collegial and interdisciplinary understanding of this perplexing and tragic event.

ENDNOTES

[1] I am indebted to Catherine Wessinger and Phillip Lucas for their assistance in and recommendations for the preparation of the final draft of this paper.

[2] The reason given is that persons named in the documents could lose their jobs if knowledge of their OTS affiliation became public knowledge (Jean-François Mayer, personal communication with author, 22 November 1998, Orlando, Florida).

[3] Most of the contemporary NRMs associated with violence are millennial groups.

[4] Catherine Wessinger, "The Interacting Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution, and Violence," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, forthcoming).

[5] Ian Reader, "The Lessons of AUM Shinrikyo," passim; a paper presented at the ISAR/CESNUR symposium on "Violence and the New Religions" in Nashville, Tennessee, 10 March 1996.

[6] Manabu Watanabe, "The Problem of the Other after the Sarin Attack: Aum Shinrikyo and the Anti-Cult Movement in Japan," passim; a paper presented at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California, 6 November 1997.

[7] Wessinger, 19.

[8] For compatible typologies see also Michael Barkun, "Millennial Violence in America," in *Millennialism, Persecution and Violence*, ed. Wessinger; and Jean E. Rosenfeld, "Pai Marire: Peace and Violence in a New Zealand Millenarian Movement," in *Millennialism and Violence,* ed. Michael Barkun (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 96-97.

[9] Jean-François Mayer, "'Our Terrestrial Journey is Coming to an End': The Last Voyage of the Solar Temple," *Nova Religio* 2 (Spring, 1999): 173.

[10] Ibid., 177.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 178.

[13] Wessinger, 19. On defining religion as "ultimate concern," Wessinger cites Robert D. Baird, *Category Formation and the History of Religions* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971). The concept of "ultimate concern" has been expanded from its limited application introduced by Paul Tillich in the 1950s.

[14] Mayer, 180.

[15] In this year, Jouret and other members were prosecuted and sentenced in Canada for possession of illegal firearms and the first known "departure" text appeared, although

talk of "transit" had occurred in the late 1980s. Mayer, 179-81.

[16] Lonnie D. Kliever reported on his accurate assessment of Chen Tao for the Houston police in a panel discussion on "Believers, Law Enforcement Agents, and Religion Scholars: Communicating across Worldviews of Religions and Professional Disciplines" at the American Academy of Religion's annual meeting in Orlando, Florida, 21-24 November 1998.

[17] Kerry Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate* (Prescott, Ontario, Canada: Voyageur Publishing, 1998), 13-24.

[18] According to Wessinger's typology in "The Interacting Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs," a revolutionary millennial group "possesses ideologies or theologies that legitimate violent actions," 1-2; cf. also 27f.

[19] Noble, passim.

[20] Reader cited in Wessinger, 9.

[21] Mayer, 176.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 194, endnote 16.

[24] Colin Campbell, "Cults, the Cultic Milieu, and Secularization," in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, vol. 5 (London: SCM Press, 1972).

[25] Ibid., 125. According to Campbell's sources, "sects" and "cults" are differentiated by their structure and lack of structure, respectively. However, Mayer refers to the OTS as a "Sekte" in one context, while recognizing its embeddedness in a "cultic" tradition that combined neo-Templar ideas and practices with Rosicrucianism, among other influences. The cult/sect dichotomy seems to break down when one examines the entire milieu of new religious movements.

[26] Ibid., 122–24, 127.

[27] Ibid., 122.

[28] Campbell's sources reflected European Protestant history, which delegitimizes sects and cults in relation to "church religion" and also delegitimizes mysticism as a mode of religious expression.

[29] Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), xvi, 173f.

[30] Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 243, 247–49.

[31] Ibid., 243.

[32] Fundamentalism's origins may be traced to the distribution of a series of essays called "The Fundamentals" between 1910 and 1915. See Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 83.

[33] States have enacted new laws and revived archaic laws against specific acts by NRMs that could not otherwise or ordinarily be prosecuted. Multiple charges for the same offense, repeat prosecutions, and harsher sentencing seem to be applied to members of stigmatized groups.

[34] Kaplan, 144-45.

[35] Unfortunately, any word resembling "cult" implies only one approach to the current interdisciplinary study of NRMs, that taken by anti-cult theorists. This approach does not take into account the recent advances in religious studies scholars' analyses of NRMs.

[36] Negotiations expert Jayne S. Docherty has suggested that scholars be used as "worldview translators" between the parties involved in a critical incident. See "Bridging the Gap between Scholars of Religion and Law Enforcement Negotiators," a paper presented in a panel entitled, "Believers, Law Enforcement Agents, and Religion Scholars: Communicating across Worldviews of Religions and Professional Disciplines" at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Orlando, Florida, 21-24

November 1998. An earlier articulation of this concept is found in Phillip Lucas, "How Future Wacos Might Be Avoided: Two Proposals," in *From the Ashes: Making Sense of Waco*, ed. James R. Lewis (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), 209–12.

[37] Mayer, personal communication with author, 22 November 1998, Orlando, Florida.

[38] Gordon Melton, email communication with author, 12 November 1998. My thanks to Catherine Wessinger for her information regarding this important initiative.

[39] Scholars who gave input in the Justus Freemen crisis and the Chen Tao incident were thanked by the agencies who requested their help. Most of the time law enforcement agencies rely on inside experts, i.e., those they employ or with whom they routinely contract for consulting services.

[40] One such is the Gordon Melton collection at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

[41] Ted Daniels publishes a report on millennial groups, and Stephen O'Leary and Richard Landes maintain a millennialism website.

[42] I am referring to glossaries, theoretical models, and commissioned papers that are circulated among law enforcement agencies by inside experts, as well as to law-enforcement-sponsored studies, journal articles, and texts.

[43] The government published Alan Stone's finding separately as *Report and Recommendations concerning the Handling of Incidents Such as the Branch Davidian Standoff in Waco, Texas* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Justice Department, 1993).

[44] My experience as part of a team of scholars consulted by the FBI during the Justus Freemen standoff in Jordan, Montana, confirmed that "need to know" instructions may hinder one's analysis of ongoing critical events.

"Verfassungsfeindlich": Church, State, And New Religions In Germany

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe

ABSTRACT: This paper examines the ideology of the German anti-cult movement. It also discusses the unique problems facing the German government resulting from right-wing extremism and the role of German cult experts in defining new religions as *verfassungsfeindlich*, hostile to the constitution.

INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1970s, new religious movements have regularly made news headlines with stories about brainwashing and mass suicides. Consequently, government officials such as Congressmen in America, British Members of Parliament, and German Senators often support initiatives to investigate "dangerous cults" and to restrict their activities.

The growth of the anti-cult movement, which emerged in the mid-1970s in North America, is well documented by David Bromley and Anson Shupe in their various books.[1] More recently, they have drawn attention to cross-cultural aspects of the anti-cult movement.[2] There is also a growing body of academic literature that exposes the shoddy methods used by most anti-cult writers and their failure to meet scientific standards.[3]

British and North American anti-cult movements such as the British Family Action, Intervention, and Rescue (FAIR) group and the American Family Foundation are private organizations. They unite concerned individuals and raise funds through voluntary donations,

the sale of literature, and professional services. Two issues are basic to British and North American anti-cult propaganda. First, it is said that individuals are at risk because new religions use brainwashing techniques to effect sham conversions. Second, the image of Jonestown and related incidents are invoked to prove that new religions represent a threat to society.

A very different approach is taken in Germany, where the German anti-cult movement is part of the social establishment supported by mainline Protestant churches and government-raised taxes.[4] James Beckford[5] and James T. Richardson and Barend van Driel[6] discuss these differences in attitudes between Britain, the United States, and Germany, focusing on the societal background of each country. They provide an excellent overview of the situation, but do not discuss ideological issues or the German fear of new religions in its historical dimension. Here we build on these studies by providing additional insights into the complexity of the German situation.

The primary argument used by the German anti-cult movement is that new religions are *verfassungsfeindlich*—an identifiable threat to constitutional democracy. Consequently, new religions are scrutinized by German courts, which have the power to authorize state-sponsored actions to investigate and restrict the activities of these religions.

EXITING NEW RELIGIONS AMERICAN STYLE

In America, where the constitution clearly protects individual rights and freedoms and just as clearly separates church from state, the overarching ideology that guides how Americans view and judge new religions is that of brainwashing. It is important to note that the brainwashing ideology addresses individuals insofar as someone did something to an individual and someone has to undo that which has been done to that individual.

Given the American separation of church and state, the anti-cult groups are not governmental in nature and rarely succeed in involving the government unless, of course, a specific crime is committed. Usually, as Bromley points out, there are private sector anti-cult groups that may help a whistle-blower, although such help has no legal or political sanctioning power. Consequently, public dramas and whistle-blower careers involving media appearances and other publicity have a short life.[7]

What is significant for this paper is that exit from new religions is not subject to governmental regulation in the U.S. While Americans have formed various powerful "family-based" associations that together constitute a "national anti-cult movement," these are *voluntary* and

unable to use governmental policing powers to target religious groups.[8] Consequently, even when the anti-cult movement manages to catch a member of a new religion in order to "deprogram" or "counsel" them, deprogrammers can be taken to court for violating individual rights. At best, dramatic testimonies of counseled apostates can be used in "lobbying campaigns, media reports, [and] investigatory hearings."[9] Anti-cult organizations may also give apostates new careers as public speakers, exit counselors, and/or therapists. They do not, however, involve the American public polity and people. As we shall now see, the German situation is quite different.

THE GERMAN SITUATION

The German anti-cult movement has an organizational structure very different from those in Britain and North America. The former enjoys a special relationship with official government agencies as a result of the burden of German history and of Germany's emphasis on group as opposed to individual rights.[10]

In Germany, several interlinked organizations, supported by the mainline Protestant (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* or EKD) and Roman Catholic churches, are actively involved in counter-cult activities. Although not technically state churches, these mainline denominations enjoy special relationships with the state and receive funds from government-levied church taxes plus other monies "regulated by" historic "concordats and agreements."[11]

The main watchdog groups supported by Protestant churches are the *Archiv für Religions und Weltanschauungsfragen* (Archive for Religious and Worldview Questions), headed by Thomas Gandow, and the *Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen* (Protestant Central Agency for Worldview Questions), led by Michael Nüchtern. There are also several smaller Roman Catholic cult information centers, which tend to concentrate on theological issues.[12] All of these groups receive some state support, even if indirectly.

Apart from the major religious watchdog organizations mentioned above, there are approximately 190 so-called *Sektenbeauftragte*, or cult investigators,[13] employed throughout Germany by churches. Cult investigators are people with theological training who investigate the activities of potential spiritual rivals.

These church-supported individuals and organizations work closely with government bodies at the federal, state, and local levels. Contacts between church and state employees are through government departments dealing with family, health and welfare, and youth. Finally, at both the federal and state levels the *Ministerium des Innern* (Interior

Ministry) takes a close interest in new religions through the office of the *Verfassungsschutz* (Security Police). Thus, although government agencies do not involve themselves directly with theological issues, they do so indirectly.

For example, German government offices do not hesitate to produce booklets and other information packages warning citizens against the potential dangers of new religions. These booklets are written and produced by state employees working at various levels of government and are printed and distributed free at the state's expense.[14] The bibliographies of these booklets depend almost exclusively on the writings of cult investigators.[15] Further, these writings inevitably provide readers with a list of cult investigators and information on how to contact them.[16]

In 1996, the German federal government agreed to a Commission of Inquiry into the activities of cults and therapy groups. The full title of the commission was *Die Enquete-Kommission "Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen"* (the Commission of Inquiry into Sects, Cults, and Psychotherapy Movements), popularly referred to as the *Enquete-Kommission.* This inquiry embraced what English-speaking people know as cults, sects, new religions, and self-help and motivational-type groups. It examined charismatic Christian groups and various forms of Christian fundamentalism. There was even a suggestion that perhaps, eventually, evangelical Christian groups would be included.[17]

After two years work the *Enquete-Kommission* delivered its findings. The majority report said that new religions were not a threat to society, but that they might be harmful to individuals. Therefore, it recommended further research and the establishment of various social-work agencies to help people leave cults. A minority report dissented suggesting instead that, in general, new religions are not a danger to either individuals or the state.[18]

Public reaction to the *Enquete-Kommission* was mixed. Before the final report was released, *Der Spiegel* published a highly critical article complaining that this was the most expensive commission of inquiry in German history.[19] Press reaction was more muted once the report was published. Most headlines suggested that new religions were not a great danger to the state.[20] Nevertheless, there was a general feeling that even if the state was not endangered, many individuals might need protection from cults.[21] Anti-cult activists proclaimed the report a vindication of their views.[22] Other observers expressed their fear that, although the report would be shelved because of the upcoming general election, it would be revived in the future as part of a campaign against new religions.[23] The German Protestant Church responded with a cautious press release affirming religious freedom while cautioning that some religions remain problematic.[24] Consequently, the long-term impact of the commission remains unclear, while the general tone is worrisome.

A basic problem, indirectly highlighted by the commission, is that all levels of the German government employ people whose work involves minority religions, thus creating a large government-funded bureaucracy. This bureaucracy's only justification is the assumption that new religions are dangerous. Therefore, to ensure its continued existence, problems must be uncovered and exposed. Most government officials employed in this area appear to take their cue from the clergy, who report problems for further investigation. The clergy in turn gain status and continued financial support from their respective churches because their work is used by the state.

Consequently, government, church, and private publications criticizing new religions tend to cite each other. When compared, the publications of these agencies essentially base their cases on two criteria. First, thinly disguised theological and ideological counter-cult arguments are used to define religion in terms acceptable to the church establishment. Second, personal testimonies of disgruntled ex-members and cult atrocity stories are cited as proof that new religions create social and psychological problems. Empirical research, which questions theological bias and the value of relying almost exclusively on the testimony of ex-members or media-created atrocity stories, is conspicuously absent.

SCIENTOLOGY AND THE GERMANS

At the center of the storm about cults in Germany is the Church of Scientology. It claims that the German State has waged a relentless war against religious freedom based on a deep-rooted fascist ideology. This argument, which directly links numerous German politicians, including former Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his Labor Minister Norbert Blüm, with Nazi-like behavior, is made in numerous booklets and articles published by the church.[25]

The strongest evidence produced by Scientology involves graphic comparisons between anti-Jewish cartoons from the Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer* published during the 1930s and 1940s and anti-Scientology cartoons from contemporary German newspapers. These shocking cartoons, Scientologists argue, prove that Nazi propaganda techniques are in use today. In a cleverly produced booklet, the Church of Scientology makes a strong case against the German press for using some very questionable propaganda images.[26]

Nevertheless, most ordinary Germans, the German media, and members of the German government are outraged by the Church of Scientology's charges that it is persecuted. In self-defense, they point to the guarantees of religious freedom found in the German

constitution.[27] They also argue that Scientology is not a genuine religion.[28] Rather, they claim, it is a business posing as a religion to avoid taxes, with political goals that threaten to subvert democracy.

There is no doubt that the tasteless attacks on respectable German politicians by members of Scientology and their supporters are counterproductive in Germany. Men like Kohl, Blüm, and the average member of any major political party, such as the *Christlich Demokratische Union* (Christian Democratic Union or CDU) or *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (Social Democrats or SPD), are not Nazis nor do they act like Nazis in any meaningful way.

Germans rightly feel that such accusations are a low blow against people who have proved their democratic credentials. Further, Germans generally are very sensitive to the slur "Nazi." After fifty years of democracy, they have a right to argue that it is time for the world to recognize German achievements and to stop thinking in such negative ways.

Even members of other minority religions in Germany react with alarm to charges by Scientology that prominent figures such as former Chancellor Kohl act like Nazis.[29] Consequently, many potential allies in the struggle for greater religious freedom have felt alienated from the Church of Scientology.

THE TREATMENT OF NEW RELIGIONS BY THE GERMAN STATE

Where critiques by Scientologists tend to fail is in their inability to appreciate the complexity of the German constitutional and legal process, the subtleties of German society as a whole, and the burden of German history.[30] This lack of layered understanding is compounded by the fact that a few German politicians, such as Berlin SPD deputy and *Enquete-Kommission* member Renate Rennebach, have taken a lead in attacking new religions. Other politicians have attempted to gain public favor by silencing what they see as pro-cult arguments. For example, when the popular academic journal *Spirita* published critical articles on Scientology that accepted Scientology as a genuine religion, some politicians attempted to close the journal.[31]

Most German politicians, however, appear to be reacting to popular pressures created by the media and numerous recent publications whose stories expose the dangers of new religions. Since 1991, there has been an explosion of literature attacking *Sekten*, or new religions, in Germany. Most of this criticism originates with church cult investigators. Recently, these clergymen's works have been supplemented by the "confessions" of individuals who claim that they were exploited by particular religious groups.[32] Further, one also finds a growing number of booklets that

discuss the dangers of fundamentalism worldwide.[33] These latter works provide details about what is seen as a global problem. In the wake of these publications, the German press has accepted many rumors and complaints against new religions at face value, helping to create new social problems.[34]

NEW RELIGIONS AND POLITICAL EXTREMISM IN GERMANY

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, various religious trends in Germany led to the development of spiritual movements that rejected democracy. At first, these trends were limited to a few isolated intellectuals. By the 1880s, however, a number of social movements began to crystallize and attract an increasing number of followers.[35]

Following Germany's defeat in World War I, the importance of spiritual movements as precursors of the Nazi dictatorship increased.[36] Not all of these movements supported the Nazis. Some indeed opposed them and were persecuted. All of them, however, furthered Nazi aims by attacking the Weimar Republic and undermining democracy. For want of a better term, these religions will be called proto-Nazi religions.[37]

Most important among these movements were the back-to-nature *Wandervogel* (Wandering Birds) and *Bünde* (Bond or Confederation),[38] the *Ludendorff-Bewegung* (Ludendorff movement),[39] the *Bewegung der Freireligiösen* (Free Believers),[40] the *Deutsche Christen* (German Christians),[41] and the *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung* (German Faith Movement).[42] Estimates of the strengths of these groups vary, but there is no doubt that they attracted a wide cross section of the population. Further, they functioned as both audience and client cults through rallies and the widespread distribution of their literature.[43]

Actual membership figures varied from around 600 for the largest Faith Movement groups to over 600,000 for the German Christians.[44] Numbers alone do not tell the entire story, however. Although small, the Faith Movement had disproportionate support from academics and clearly exercised far more influence than its size suggests. In the 1930s, almost all German professors of what we now call "religious studies" were members.[45]

Given the role of these movements in undermining democracy during the 1920s and early 1930s it is no wonder postwar German governments have been very wary of new religions. The Nazi era is all too real to most Germans who have to come to terms with its horrific crimes.

Following the end of the Second World War, many proto-Nazi religions disappeared, only to slowly reemerge in the 1950s. Today a number of individual authors and spiritual groups promote proto-Nazi

new religions. Most of these are associated with fascism and holocaust revisionism.[46]

The movements themselves, many of their leaders, and particular individuals who promote them have direct links to the Nazi and pre-Nazi era. Therefore, associating these groups with the Nazis is not propaganda. It is simply stating the facts. Further, upon examination the ideologies promoted by them are essentially the same as those they promoted prior to World War II.[47]

LUDENDORFF'S RELIGION

The once influential teachings of Mathilde Ludendorff (1877-1966) will suffice to show why many educated Germans react with horror when confronted by new religions. Mathilde Ludendorff was the third daughter of a Lutheran minister, Bernhard Spieß of Wiesbaden. She became a schoolteacher before graduating in medicine and marrying the zoologist Gustav Adolf von Kemnitz in 1904.[48] In 1906, she officially withdrew from the Lutheran Church, and in 1913 received her doctorate in neurology. Her criticisms of the occult and Christianity date from this period.[49] After World War I, when occult movements bloomed, she republished these criticisms and became a champion of gender equality.

She lost her first husband in 1916, and, after a second failed marriage, wed General Erich Ludendorff (1865-1937), the Commander-in-Chief of German forces at the end of World War I, in 1925. Von Kemnitz met Ludendorff in 1923, when he was still deeply affected by the German defeat. Unlike Ludendorff, von Kemnitz brimmed with confidence. According to the chief Nazi ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg, she had already offered herself to Hitler as *Führerin*.[50] The book that made her famous was *Triumph of the Will to Immortality* (1921).[51] This book, numerous other publications, endorsement by General Ludendorff, and the organizations they created to disseminate their political and philosophico-religious ideas made Mathilde Ludendorff's science-based religion, *Gotterkenntnis* (God-consciousness), immensely popular. Shortly before her husband's death, the couple founded the *Verein für Deutsche Gotterkenntnis* (Society for German God-consciousness) with Hitler's blessing.

The propaganda of the Ludendorffs associated Jews and Freemasonry with an opportunistic liberalism and democracy which, they argued, was scornful of moral principles and keen to exploit a bogus rationalism for financial gain. According to them, Jews, Freemasons, and liberals alike were isolated individuals who lacked national traditions and a sense of cultural history. Instead, they dreamed the dreams of humanity in the abstract, thus promoting an impersonal internationalism that nourished their alienation.[52]

Between 1945 and 1951, Mathilde Ludendorff assumed a low profile and her movement was dormant, only to be reactivated under the new name of *Bund für Gotterkenntnis* (League for God-consciousness). At its height after the war, this group had 3,948 members. Worried by its growing influence, the Bavarian Administrative Court prohibited the league on 28 January 1965. It was declared hostile to the constitution, *verfassungsfeindlich.* Her publishing house, *Verlag Hohe Warte* (Watchtower Press) was also banned as was the political wing of the Ludendorff Movement.

THE CONCEPT OF *VERFASSUNGSFEINDLICH*[53]

From the example of the Ludendorff movement, we can see why Germans implicitly or explicitly interpret all new religions in terms of their *verfassungsfeindliche-Ideologie* (ideology of constitutional danger). This ideology evaluates all new religions in terms of their relationship to the constitution and is buttressed by social structures that are capable of mobilizing the German government, courts, church, and media. Today, Germans use the religious-political concept of totalitarianism to warn against dangerous movements. The process of warning is premised on the historical experiences of Communist dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic and National Socialistic dictatorship in the Third Reich and implies that the movements in question constitute an attack on democracy. Therefore, if a new religion, specifically Scientology, can be shown to be totalitarian, it is judged to be *verfassungsfeindlich,* hostile to the basic law or constitution.[54]

Being *verfassungsfeindlich* contravenes all four sections of Article 20 of the basic law, which states decisively that the Federal Republic of Germany shall be a democratic and social federal state. Here, section four of article twenty is the key. It grants all Germans the "right to resist anybody attempting to do away with this constitutional order."[55] This article enables members of the anti-cult movement to provide information about Scientology and other new religions to government agencies, the courts, and the media to legitimately create a public climate of popular resistance.

SCIENTOLOGY: A *VERFASSUNGSFEINDLICHE* ORGANIZATION?

To comprehend how the concept of *verfassungsfeindlich* plays itself out in specific instances we will briefly examine the case against Scientology made by the Federal Ministry of the Interior. In *Texte zur Inneren Sicherheit* (Texts on State Security),[56] Scientology is identified as

a potentially dangerous organization. To understand this claim, it is necessary to cite various quotations from the publications of L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology's founder, which are examined by the anti-cult authors of this book. The following statements by Hubbard provide the central thrust of the German argument:

> And there is *Political Dianetics*, which embraces the field of group activity and organization to establish the optimum conditions and processes of leadership and intergroup relations.[57]

According to the booklet, the implications of this statement are that Scientology is a self-proclaimed political organization that aims at "Creating a New Civilization."[58] Consequently, when Hubbard writes,

> An ideal society would be a society of unaberrated persons, clears, conducting their lives within an unaberrate culture. . . . It is not enough that an individual be himself unaberrated, for he discovers himself within the confines of a society which itself has compounded its culture with many unreasonable prejudices and customs.[59]

the writers of the booklet question the meaning of "aberrated" and "unaberrated" people. They then cite as a goal of Scientology Hubbard's further statement that

> Perhaps at some distant date only the unaberrated person will be granted civil rights before the law. Perhaps the goal will be reached at some future time when only the unaberrated person can attain to and benefit from citizenship. These are desirable goals and would produce a marked increase in the survival ability and happiness of man.[60]

This and similar comments, the writers argue, show that Hubbard intended Scientologists to discriminate against particular individuals and groups in an elitist manner that is incompatible with democracy. Consequently, they argue, Scientology represents a totalitarian system that potentially threatens the democratic nature of the German constitution.[61] Thus, Scientology is judged in terms of its own publications to be *verfassungsfeindlich*.

When challenged to defend this type of argument, German cult investigators point to other of Hubbard's statements including the following:

> It is not necessary to produce a world of clears in order to have a reasonable and worthwhile social order; it is only necessary to delete those individuals who range from 2.0 down either by processing them enough to get their tone level above the 2.0 line . . . or simply quarantining them from the society.[62]

Hubbard, they continue, explained his meaning with this story:

> A Venezuelan dictator once decided to stop leprosy. He saw that most lepers in his country were also beggars. By the simple expedient of collecting and destroying all the beggars in Venezuela an end was put to leprosy in that country.[63]

The explanation that Hubbard's intention was to raise the intelligence of people and that statements like this must be taken in the context of his entire work are dismissed by German critics. They argue that the writings of any movement must be taken at face value and not interpreted.

To make matters worse, the critics point out that in Germany various extreme Right organizations have supported Scientology in their publications.[64] The possibility that the extreme Right might be using the Scientology issue to weaken the powers of the Internal Security police is overlooked. Also overlooked is the logical fallacy of arguing that because an extreme Right group expresses support for Scientology, Scientology necessarily supports the extreme Right.[65]

GERMANS, FASCISM, AND SCIENTOLOGY

Recognizing the role proto-Nazi religious movements played in destroying German democracy in the 1920s and 1930s helps us understand the stance of the present German state toward Scientology. The German state argues that Scientology is simply a more durable and popular version of the type of new religion that caused havoc in the past. According to German critics, Scientology aims at creating the same kind of human being and mentality as earlier new religions.

Similarly, the Protestant Central Agency for Worldview Questions, in an article published on its web site, claims that Scientology pursues the "idea of an absolute heroic *Übermensch* (superman)" and is ready to shed the cumbersome shackles of liberalism and democracy on its path to "world supremacy."[66] This implies that Scientology represents a political threat to the German state analogous to that of the Nazis.

To some Germans, therefore, Scientology is American in its emphasis on methods and economic success as the measure of all things. It is totalitarian (1) in its creation of "the New Being" who becomes free by tapping all unused intellectual potential and capabilities; (2) in its extinction of all painful experiences; (3) and in its synthesis of self-help methods and esoteric teachings. Thus, German anti-cult figures such as Thomas Gandow and Tilmann Hausherr[67] appear to be motivated by a deep sense of social concern and a strong desire to preserve democracy.

Although phrased somewhat differently, the rhetoric used by the German anti-cult movement to discredit Scientology mirrors the rhetoric used by National Socialists to attack Jews. Today, Scientologists are said to threaten civil order by opposing liberalism and democracy. In the 1930s, Jews were accused of threatening the German state in the name of liberalism and democracy. Common to this rhetoric is the theme that the state is in danger from organizations with international rather than national goals. The similarity in rhetoric between attacks on new religions today and attacks on the Jews in the 1920s and 1930s is clear and worrisome.

In presenting their arguments, German anti-cult critics conveniently overlook major differences between Hubbard's ideas and those of proto-Nazi religions of the past and present. Proto-Nazi religions trace their origins to the racist theories of Paul de Lagarde and Houston Steward Chamberlain. Scientology, on the other hand, has its roots in the American tradition of self-help individualism. On the matter of race, Hubbard is quite explicit in his affirmation of the unity of humankind and his rejection of racism. His "dynamic four" urges the "individual toward ultimate survival for all mankind."[68] Further, Hubbard takes a strong line against war, arguing that

> Wars never solve the need of wars. Fight to save the world for democracy or save it from Confucianism and the fight is inevitably lost by all. . . . A society which advances into a war as a solution of its problems cannot but depress its own survival potential.[69]

Such an attitude is a far step from the glorification of war and the ideal of Heroic Man found in the Hitler movement.[70] Nor do we find the same millenarian doctrines and expectations in Scientology as are found in hard-core Nazi occultism.[71] Instead, in Hubbard's works we have American-style self-improvement in the tradition of positive thinking.[72]

CULT INVESTIGATORS AND ACADEMICS

However much one deplores actions by the German state against Scientology and other new religions, it has to be admitted that the intention is a noble one. Nobody wants to see a revival of Nazism or a Nazi clone masquerading under another name.

Unfortunately, some members of the German anti-cult movement threaten the noble cause of preserving democracy. These folk marry the notion of totalitarianism with concepts of heresy. Here the role of church cult investigators, who gather information about and dispense knowledge of new religions, comes into play. The data gathered by cult investigators is used by the church, government ministers, and, there is

good reason to believe, the courts to address the question of whether new religions such as Scientology are indeed "real religions"?[73]

The structural effect of this is that the already weak state-church separation in Germany is lost altogether. We can see this by looking at the publications of groups such as the Evangelical Central Agency for Wordview Questions and the Archive for Religious and Worldview Questions. Their comments on Scientology focus on the question of whether or not Scientology is a genuine religion. However, instead of discussing definitions of religion in terms of *Religionsgeschichte* or *Religionswissenschaft* (the history or science of religion), they use supposed evidence of totalitarian tendencies, argue that Scientology is a business, and cite court rulings.[74] The problem is that sociological and theological judgments are blurred. Thus, certain cult investigators argue that a particular group is not a religion. The courts, or at least some people connected with them, appear to accept the expertise of the cult investigators on these issues and rule accordingly. Later, court judgments become part of theological arguments to prove that Scientology and other new religions are not real religions. Thus, church employees feed the courts information that theologians use to formulate their own opinions, and the whole process becomes self-reinforcing.[75]

Given this situation and the intense interest in new religions in Germany, one expects to find a deluge of empirical studies by anthropologists, sociologists, and other academics investigating what is clearly considered as a growing social and political problem. However, many German academics are very reluctant to undertake empirical research that involves life-history interviews or participant observation in the area of new religions.

At best, most German scholars restrict themselves to survey research or the analysis of a new religion's literature and theology. Two recent sociological surveys on religion in Germany by Karl-Fritz Daiber and Harmut Zinzer supplement older studies—which concentrated on Protestant-Catholic relations—by including information about new religions.[76] Although very valuable, neither of these works contains the wealth of empirical detail available to North American researchers in the research of scholars such as Rodney Stark or Reginald Bibby. Apart from these works, which present survey evidence, there are, as far as we are aware, only six major anthropological or sociological studies using participant-observation and life-history interviews.[77]

If they are weak in empirical studies, German scholars excel in literary and philosophical analysis, particularly where ancient or foreign languages are involved. Indeed, in this area they are generally far better than their British or North American counterparts. Some excellent academic monographs (based on literary research) that do not support the prevailing orthodoxy exist. These include Christoph Bochinger's massive study of the New Age movement and Thomas Schweer's work

on the phenomena of new religions in Germany.[78] These works are rarely cited, however, in the publications of either the German anti-cult movement or the government. There are also a few rare semi-popular works that try to correct common misunderstandings[79] and a number of very useful general surveys, similar to J. Gordon Melton's encyclopedias.[80]

The newly created *diagonal-Verlag* (Diagonal Press) has played an important role in the German theological community by publishing books informed by religious studies and encouraging empirical research. This press produces the academic journal *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* (*Journal for the Science of Religion*) and a more popular journal devoted to the discussion of new religions, *Spirita*.[81] *Diagonal-Verlag's* Thomas Schweer and Steffen Rink recently founded the Scientific Study of Religion Media and Information Service (REMID)[82] to provide reliable information on religious issues to the media and other interested parties.[83] However, these activities are still in their infancy and have yet to prove that they are capable of engaging the academic establishment or even church-based cult investigators.

There are some younger scholars engaged in the study of new religions, but as yet few have received their doctorates or habilitated.[84] Nevertheless, Professors Hans-Jürgen Greschat and Reiner Flasche in Marburg and Hubert Seiwert in Leipzig deserve mention for encouraging empirical research into new religions. Despite these positive developments, theological faculties still dominate discussions about religion in Germany. Consequently, some German academics, including established professors and graduate students in religious studies, admit that they are reluctant to engage in empirical studies involving participant observation for fear of either losing research funding or of not being able to obtain employment in the future.[85] Many of those we spoke to on this issue cited the influence of mainline churches as the main reason for not studying new religions empirically.

Experience shows that such fears are fully justified. In the early 1980s, a German sociologist produced a number of empirical studies that contradicted theological dogma. The result was a campaign of vilification by a certain cult investigator. This resulted in what Wolfgang Kuner calls "a hidden campaign" against the man's work, public attacks on his integrity, the loss of university support (including a major grant), and other sanctions. Eventually, this scholar had to seek legal advice to prevent further slander and defamation. Subsequently, he quit academia and found work in the private sector. Apparently, similar attacks were made on other sociologists, with the result that many academics backed away from empirical research into new religions.[86]

Another disturbing trend among established German academics is their willingness to accept uncritically the work of church-based cult experts. Thus theological judgments are often substituted for empirical

research simply because there is an unwritten agreement that ministers of religion are trustworthy and know what they are talking about in matters of religion.

The fact that most, if not all, of these so-called "experts" are untrained, even uninterested, in the social sciences is of no concern. It is this lack of empirical research coupled with hasty theological judgments based on limited texts that leads many Germans to associate Scientology, Christian charismatic churches, and other new religions with right-wing extremism and Nazism.[87]

Thus, fear of extremism and pressure from the anti-cult establishment is leading many responsible Germans to hold negative views about new religions. Because anti-cult propaganda is often based on false and misleading information, good empirical research conducted by established academics is urgently needed.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, German politicians need to revise their thinking and take steps to prevent the persecution of minority religions. What is needed is a dialogue that encourages Scientology and other new religions to understand the unique problems facing Germany. New religions in Germany must clearly state their support for democracy and make it clear that they do not seek support from neo-Nazi organizations. They must also reject, or at the very least clarify in unambiguous ways, statements made by their founders that Germans interpret as totalitarian rhetoric and propaganda. Until this is done, Germans and other Europeans will continue to resist American lobbying in support of religious freedom as unjustified interference in their internal affairs.

On the other hand Germans, particularly academics, churchmen, and politicians need to reconsider their conclusions about new religions in the light of empirical evidence. German academics have a duty to play a social role by conducting sound empirical research into the role of religion and religious groups in German society.

Finally, for those who wish to understand the differences in approach between British and North American anti-cult movements and German anti-cult movements, nineteenth-century reactions to Roman Catholicism are instructive. In Britain and North America, anti-Catholic agitation was the work of individuals and voluntary organizations such as churches.[88] In Germany, however, Bismark launched his *Kulturkampf* and thus set a historical precedent for government crusades against unpopular religious communities.[89]

ENDNOTES

[1] Cf. Anson Shupe and David Bromley, *The New Vigilantes* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980), and *Strange Gods: The Great American Cult Scare* (Boston: Beacon, 1981).

[2] Anson Shupe and David Bromley, eds., *The Anti-Cult Movement in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Garland, 1994).

[3] Shupe and Bromley, *The New Vigilantes* and *Strange Gods*; Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie*, (Oxford: Blackwells, 1984). Douglas Cowan is also writing a University of Calgary Ph.D. thesis that examines the methods and evidence produced by Christian anti-cult writers.

[4] Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack, *Sekten* (München: Münchener Reihe, 1994), 70-80.

[5] James A. Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to the New Religious Movements* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985). This is an excellent book, which still deserves close attention. Years ago Irving Hexham published a somewhat critical review, which he now concedes was unwarranted.

[6] James T. Richardson and Barend van Driel, "New Religions in Europe: Developments and Reactions," in Shupe and Bromley, *The Anti-Cult Movement*, 129-70.

[7] David Bromley, "Linking Social Structure and the Exit Process in Religious Organizations," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 1, (1998): 145-60.

[8] Ibid., 154-55.

[9] Ibid., 155.

[10] Hannah Vogt, *The Burden of Guilt: A Short History of Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

[11] Cf. Arno Kappler and Adriane Grevel, eds., *Facts About Germany* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Societäts-Verlag, 1995), 382.

[12] E.g. Father Klaus Funke's *Kath. Arbeitskreis*, based in Berlin.

[13] "Cult commissioner" is a more literal translation. We use the term "investigator" because it sums up their work and avoids confusion with members of the *Enquete-Kommission.*

[14] E.g. M. Shipmann, *Informationen über neue religiöse und weltanschauliche Bewegungen und sogenannte Psychogruppen* (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Jugend und Familie, 1994), and Die Ministerpräsidentin des Landes Schleswig-Holstein, *Psychokulte, Sekten, "Jugendreligionen," Extremgruppen* (Kiel: Carius Druck, 1997).

[15] Cf. Shipmann, *Informationen*, 139-43.

[16] Cf. Bundesverwaltungsamt, *Die Scientology-Organisation* (Köln: Gehringer Verlag, 1996), 34-41.

[17] Cf. The German Evangelical Alliance's *Idea Spectrum Newsbriefs* (1997), "Enquete-Kommission nimmt VEF-Freikirchen nicht als 'Sekten' unter die Lupe" 24: 5; "Kein Grund zur 'Sektenhysterie'" 29: 7; "Empörung über Umfrage: Freikirchen fühlen sich in die Sekten-Ecke gestellt" 47: 3; "Sekten als gesellschaftliches Reizthema" 48: 2-3; "Pfingstkirche wehrt sich gegen Eingruppierung bei Sekten und Psychogruppen" 49: 5; "Pfingstkirche in Sorge: Religionsfreiheit in Deutschland in Gefahr" 53: 3, 5; and "Streit um Zahl der Anhänger von Sekten und Psychogruppen" and "Verharmlosung von Sekten kann die Religionsfreiheit gefährden" 77: 4. Deutscher Bundestag, Zwischenbericht der Enquete-Kommission, "Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen" (Bonn: Deutscher Bundestag, 13 Wahlperiode, Drucksache 13/8170). Cf. Kappler and Grevel, *Facts About Germany*, 382.

[18] The report is available from the German Government in Bonn. Deutscher Bundestag, *Endbericht der Enquete-Kommission "Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen"* (Bonn: Drucksache 13/10950, 29 May 1998). An unofficial version is available on the internet at: http://

www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/4497/KA1.html, June 1998. Other relevant documents can be found on the German government web site at: http://www.bundestag.de/blickpkt/sekte.htm, June 1998.

[19] "Kindergarten der Exorzisten," *Der Spiegel*, 8 June 1998, 47-49.

[20] "Sorgen sind verständlich aber Sekten stellen keine Gefahr dar," *Rheinische Post*, 29 May 1998; "Sekten-Kommission sieht keine generelle Gefahr," *Welt*, 30 May 1998; "Durch 'Sekten' keine Gefahr für Gesellschaft," *Kölnische Rundschau*, 30 May 1998; "Suche nach dem Glauben bleibt umstritten," *Die Tageszeitung*, 30 May 1998.

[21] The treatment of the issue by the *Frankfurter Rundschau* ("Gefahr durch Sekten verneint," 30 May 1998) was fairly typical. It clearly stated that the *Enquete-Kommission* found no great danger from new religions, but sandwiched its story between other articles which stressed the danger of cults. These were "Kinder von Sekten Schützen" and "Gericht erzwingt Offenlegung der Geheimschriften von Scientology."

[22] This position was clearly stated by Tilman Hausherr on the internet discussion group Nurel-l (1996-98). Nurel-l can be contacted at nurel-l@ucalgary.ca.

[23] These points were made by Steffen Rink, Thomas Schweer, and Peter Kratz on Nurel-l, (June-July 1997).

[24] http://www.ekd.de/presse/pmenquete.html, 24 June 1998.

[25] E.g. *Freedom, Special Report, Echoes of the Past* (Los Angeles: Church of Scientology, n.d.).

[26] *Hate and Propaganda: Sanctioned and Promoted by the German Media and Government* (Los Angeles: Church of Scientology, 1993).

[27] cf. *The Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany* (Bonn: Press and Information Office, 1994).

[28] Cf. Jens Mecklenburg, *Handbuch Deutscher Rechtsextremismus* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1996), 392.

[29] Interviews by authors with German charismatic Christians, members of *Universelles Leben* (Universal Life), *Christliche Wissenschaft* (Christian Science), and *Anthroposophen* (Anthroposophists), July 1997.

[30] Cf. Vogt, *The Burden of Guilt.*

[31] Private communication with publishers of *Spirita.* Cf. *Spirita,* "Schwerpunkt: Scientology," 7 (1993): 5-48; "'Sekten' verbieten? Diskussion zielt auf Scientology" 8 (1994): 52-55.

[32] When we began research in Germany in 1991 it was hard to find a single book in a normal bookstore dealing with new religions. By 1997 many bookstores had two or three shelves full of books exposing the cults. E.g. Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack and Thomas Gandow, *Sekten* (München: Münchener Reihe, 1994); Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack, *Europas neue Religion: Sekten-Gurus-Satanskult* (1991; reprint, Freiburg: Herder, 1993); Tom Voltz, *Scientology: Ein Insider packt aus: Hintergründe-Fakten-Dokumente* (Freiburg: Herder, 1997); and Kurt-Helmuth Eimuth, *Die Sekten-Kinder* (Freiburg: Herder, 1996).

[33] Lothar Engel, Erhard Kamphausen, and Johanna Linz, eds., *Fundamentalismus in Afrika und America* (Hamburg: Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland, 1993).

[34] Cf. Axel Kintzinger, "Die Sekten-Falle," *Focus*, 25 April 1994; "Sekten: V-Leute gegen den Psycho-Konzern," *Der Spiegel*, 3 February 1997; Michael Schwelien, "Credo der Freiheit: Amerika duldet die bizarrsten Sekten," *Die Zeit*, 7 February 1997; "Gurus, yogische Flieger, Scientologen und okkultische Ufo-Fans," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 14 July 1997; and Christian Krug, "Die teuflische Macht der Sekten," *Stern*, 4 May 1995, 3, 32-42.

[35] George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of the German Ideology* (New York: Schoken Books, 1981) and *The Nationalization of the Masses* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); Walter Z. Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).

[36] Cf. Nicholas Goodrich-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism* (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

[37] We use the term "Nazi" rather than "fascist" because many fascists (e.g., Mussolini) rejected Nazi race theories.

[38] Cf. Laqueur, *Young Germany.*

[39] Cf. Gent Borst, *"Die Ludendorff-Bewegung, 1919-1961"* (Ph.D. diss., University of München, 1969); "Antisemitismus: Mathilde Ludendorff," *Der Spiegel*, February 1960, 22-32.

[40] Friedrich Heyer and Volker Pitzer, *Religion ohne Kirche: Bewegung der Freireligiösen* (Stuttgart: Quell Verlag, 1977).

[41] Cf. Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[42] Ulrich Nanko, *Die Deutsche Glaubensbewegung: Eine historische und soziologische Untersuchung* (Marburg, Diagonal-Verlag, 1993).

[43] Cf. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 26-30.

[44] Cf. Nanko, *Die Deutsche Glaubensbewegung*, 35-52; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 7.

[45] Cf. Margarete Dierks, *Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, 1881-1962* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1986); Nanko, *Die Deutsche Glaubensbewegung*, 332-43; Mecklenburg, *Handbuch Deutscher Rechtsextremismus*, 440-547.

[46] Cf. Sigrid Hunke, *Europas Eigene Religion* (Tübingen, Grabert, 1997); and the Zundel web site for links to spiritual groups promoting revisionism and neo-fascism, http://www.webcom.com/ezundel/english/englishtoc.html, June 1998. Ernst Zundel is the notorious Canadian Holocaust denier who runs various web sites and publishes numerous booklets and newsletters denying the Holocaust. The Canadian government has taken him to court several times. Cf. Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Plume Books, 1994), 157-63; Mecklenburg, *Handbuch Deutscher Rechtsextremismus*, 547.

[47] Ibid., 440-547, 550-94, 692-732.

[48] Haack, *Europas neue Religion*, 133.

[49] It is significant that her criticisms of the occult, especially of mediums, were published in 1913 by J. F. Lehmann's Verlag, München. Lehmann was one of the völkische publishers that made up the publishing infrastructure of the conservative revolution. Lehmann produced a series on South Africa to which Afrikaner nationalists like Rompel, Kestell, Viljoen, and President Paul Krüger contributed.

[50] "Antisemitismus," *Der Spiegel*, 17 February 1960, 30.

[51] Mathilde von Kemnitz, *Triumph des Unsterblichkeitwillens* (Stuttgart: Verlag Hohe Warte, 1921).

[52] Mathilde Ludendorff, *"Induciertes" Irresein durch Occultlehren* (München: Ludendorffs Volkswarte Verlag, 1933).

[53] In this section we acknowledge our debt to Wolfgang Ullmann's paper "Politische und theologische Häresie im Pluralismus der Religionen," *Berliner Dialog* 3, no. 2 (1997): 28-35. This can be found at: http://www.thur.de/religio/dialog/297/297s28.html.

[54] Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, Bonn, *Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany*, official translation, rev. June 1994 (Schwerin: Obotriendruck, 1994).

[55] Ibid., 22.

[56] Bundesministerium des Innern, *Texte zur Inneren Sicherheit* (*Texts on Internal Security*) (Bonn: Druck-Verlag Kettler, 1997).

[57] Ibid., 185. Here and in the following quotes we use the English original from L. Ron Hubbard, *Dianetics* (Los Angeles: Bridge Publications, 1985), 168.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Bundesminsterium, *Texte zur Inneren Sicherheit*, 184; Hubbard, *Dianetics*, 429.

[60] Bundesminsterium, *Texte zur Inneren Sicherheit*, 193; Hubbard, *Dianetics*, 430.

[61] Bundesminsterium, *Texte zur Inneren Sicherheit*, 193-94.

[62] L. Ron Hubbard, *Science of Survival* (Los Angeles: The American Saint Hill Organization, 1951), 155.

[63] Ibid., 157.

[64] "Thule Netz," http://thulenet.com, 4 May 1998.

[65] Mecklenburg, *Handbuch Deutscher Rechtsextremismus*, 392.

[66] "Scientology," http://www.ekd.de/ezw/ftexte/sceint.html, 18 May 1998.

[67] Hausherr runs an anti-Scientology web site at: http://wpxx02.toxi.uniwuerzburg.de/~krasel/CoS/germany/faq.html, 18 May 1998.

[68] Hubbard, *Dianetics*, 40.

[69] Ibid., 152.

[70] Cf. Peter F. Drucker, *The End of Economic Man* (New York: John Day Company, 1939), 191-95.

[71] James M. Rhodes, *The Hitler Movement* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980).

[72] Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

[73] For example, *Die Scientology-Organisation—Gefahren, Ziele und Praktiken* (Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jungend von Bundesverwaltungsampt, 1996), 42-46, treats the work of the clergyman Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack as though he was an established scholar and not a minister of religion lacking academic qualifications in the area in which he is writing. This is like an American government report citing the evangelical writer Walter Martin as though he were an academic expert. Similarly, Monika Schipmann, *Informationen über neue religiöse und weltanschauliche Bewegungen und sogenannte Psychogruppen* (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Jungen und Familie, 1994), 68, relies heavily on theological commentators for its view of Scientology and other new religions. We had conversations with several German lawyers who told us that they believed some theologians were given undue respect by the courts and cited specific cases to illustrate their point. However, they are unwilling to speak out openly on this issue.

[74] "Scientology," http://www.ekd.de/ezw/ftexte/scient.html, 18 May 1998.

[75] It is perhaps worth noting that when we met with Thomas Gandow in March 1995 he boasted of the fact that he was "advising" the Russian government about the way to treat cults. Then he added that once the Russians passed legislation against such groups, he hoped that the European Parliament would sit up and take notice. Finally, he expressed the opinion that if Europe took a strong stand against cults, the American government might eventually follow suit.

[76] Karl-Fritz Daiber, *Religion unter den Bedingungen der Moderne* (Marburg: diagonal-Verlag, 1995); Harmut Zinzer's *Der Markt der Religionen* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1997).

[77] These are: Wolfgang Kuner, *Soziogenese der Mitgliedschaft in drei neuen religiösen Bewegungen* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Lang, 1983); Gerhard Schmidtchen, *Sekten und Psychokultur: Reichweite und Attraktivität von Jugendreligionen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Freiburg: Herder, 1987); Joachim Süss, *Zur Erleuchtung unterwegs: Neo-Sannyasin in Deutschland und ihre Religion* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1994); Yvonne Karow, *Bhagwan-Bewegung und Vereinigungskirche : Religions- und Selbstverständnis der Sannyasins und der Munies* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1990); Frank Usarski, *Die Stigmatisierung Neuer Spiritueller Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublic Deutschland* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1988); Franz Wiesberger, *Bausteine zu einer soziologischen Theorie der Konversion* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1990); and Martin Baumann, *Deutsche Buddhisten* (Marburg: diagonal-Verlag, 1995).

[78] Christoph Bochinger, *New Age und moderne Religion* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994).

[79] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Sind Evangelikale Fundamentalisten?* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1995).

[80] The oldest of these is Kurt Hutten's *Seher-Grübler Enthusiasten* (Stuttgart: Evang. Gesellschaft Verlag, 1953); other examples of this genre include Oswald Eggenberger, *Die Kirchen, Sondergruppen und religiösen Vereinigungen* (1969; reprint, Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1994); Hans Gasper, Joachim Müller, and Friederike Valentin, *Lexikon der Sekten, Sondergruppen und Weltanschauungen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1990); Michael Klöker and Udo Tworuschka's *Religionen in Deutchland* (München: Olzog Verlag, 1994); P. Klaus Funke, *Sekten Okkultismus Esoterik Neue Religiosität* (Leipzig: Benno Verlag, 1994).

[81] diagonal-Verlag, Alte Kasseler Str. 43, D-35039, Marburg, Germany.

[82] *Religionswissenschaftlicher Medien- und Informationsdienst e.v.*, (the *Scientific Study of Religion Media and Information Service*).

[83] In cooperation with the Center for the Study of New Religions (CESNUR), they organized a conference on new religions in Marburg, March 1998

[84] In Germany habilitation, which requires a second major doctoral thesis, is a prerequisite for an academic appointment. Therefore, unlike in Britain or North America, it is habilitation, not a Ph.D., that really counts when attempting to influence German academic culture.

[85] Talks with various German academics 1987 and 1995.

[86] Wolfgang Kuner, letter to author, 3 September 1998. Kuner wrote *Das Entstehen einer neuen Religion: das Beispiel der Vereinigungskirche* (München: Kösel, 1981); and "New Religious Movements and Mental Health," in *Of Gods and Men*, ed. Eileen Barker (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983): 255-63. On the other hand, it remains unclear whether a group like Scientology, unlike the Unification Church, would allow itself to be freely studied.

[87] Cf. Steve Selthoffer, "German Charismatic Churches Face Persecution, Threats of Violence," *Charisma* (November 1995): 18-19.

[88] Herbert Richardson, ed., *New Religions and Mental Health* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1980), xxvi-xxviii.

[89] Gordon A. Craig, *Germany 1966–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 69-78.

Nationalism in New Japanese Religions

Catherine Cornille

"We will not rest until the teaching reaches every corner of the world, deserts of Africa, Latin America, lands of atheism, everywhere."[1]
Ryuho Okawa, Founder of Kofuku-no-Kagaku

INTRODUCTION

One of the characteristics that seems to distinguish the new Japanese religions from traditional ones is their universalistic orientation and their international missionary zeal. While both Shinto and Japanese Buddhism were focused on the protection and salvation of Japan, the new religions speak of establishing world peace and saving all people.[2] This is already evident in Tenrikyo, one of the oldest new religions, which conceives of salvation as "sweeping dust from human hearts *throughout the world*,"[3] and it continues down to the most recent of the new Japanese religions, including Kofuku-no-Kagaku. After the Second World War, Hito-no-michi changed its name to Perfect Liberty Kyodan because, according to its patriarch, Tokuchika Miki, "The teachings of PL are universal and should not remain the exclusive religion of a limited number of Japanese. It is my solemn duty and responsibility to propagate the PL doctrine throughout the globe. So words from a language (English) that I consider most universal are used to signify my conviction that what I teach is for the benefit of mankind."[4] Even those new religions descending from the tradition of Nichiren (such as Soka Gakkai, Reiyukai, and Rissho-Kosei-Kai) reinterpreted the ethnocentric teachings of their progenitor in more universalistic terms.

This universalistic orientation of the new Japanese religions has expressed itself in a worldwide mission. Many of the new religions have established mission centers, temples, or churches in various countries of Asia, North and South America, Europe, Africa, and Australia. Sacred

texts have been translated, international headquarters established, and members trained to cater to the needs of foreigners.

While the movements themselves may attribute this universalistic turn to supernatural causes such as developments in the spiritual world[5] or to more practical reasons such as the need to unify the world,[6] it may also be understood as the religious expression of the tendency toward internationalization and globalization which became part of a more general Japanese ideology beginning at the end of the nineteenth century. From a purely doctrinal point of view, the universalism may be regarded as the logical consequence of a tendency toward monotheism and toward attributing a unique messianic role to the founder of the new religion.[7] Many of the new Japanese religions view themselves as the fulfillment of all other religions and thus regard it as their responsibility to bring the teachings to all corners of the world. While the traditional religions of Japan often present salvation as a distant and demanding goal to pursue, the new religions are focused on this-worldly and universally desirable goals such as health, wealth, harmony, and world peace. And although for the traditional religions of Japan salvation was predominantly mediated through ordained priests and shamans, for many of the new Japanese religions salvation is mediated through all members. The universalism of the new Japanese religions might thus be understood as the logical outcome of certain doctrinal and practical developments that are congruent with the social and political changes of the past century.

While the new Japanese religions seem to be consciously universalistic in their teaching and scope, many of them have also developed explicitly nationalistic and ethnocentric teachings, regarding Japan as the origin of creation and the cradle of salvation, the Japanese as the chosen people, and Japanese language and culture as a unique vehicle of salvation. The new religions preserve and perpetuate such traditional Japanese values as sincerity and submission and such traditional Japanese ritual practices as the veneration of ancestors. While this nationalism may be understood as a vestige of traditional Japanese religiosity, it acquires a different meaning and requires a different interpretation within the context of the modern world.

In this article, I shall give an overview of expressions of nationalism in the new Japanese religions, focusing particularly on Tenrikyo, Mahikari, and Kofuku-no-Kagaku. Each of these religions emerged in a different historical context and might be regarded as representative of the "old," the "new," and the "new new" religions respectively.[8] Tenrikyo is one of the oldest of the new Japanese religions, having been founded prior to the Meiji era and the modern period of Japanese history. Mahikari, on the other hand, was founded after the second World War as a direct or indirect offshoot of Omoto, another "old" new religion. Kofuku-no-Kagaku, finally, traces its foundation to 1986,

when the movement turned from a spiritual study group to a full-fledged religion. Since nationalism, whether secular or religious, always develops in response to particular social and political circumstances, I wish to examine not only the nationalistic themes that may be found in the new Japanese religions, but also the shifting social and political contexts within which these themes have emerged.

Tenrikyo and Mahikari are often classified as Shinto new religions, while Kofuku-no-Kagaku is regarded as a Buddhist new religion. However, each of the new Japanese religions is ultimately a syncretism of Shinto, Buddhist, Confucian, Christian, and Shamanistic elements.[9]

Out of the hundreds of new religions which have emerged in Japan over the past century, Tenrikyo, Mahikari, and Kofuku-no-Kagaku may be considered among the more successful, each counting between five hundred thousand and four million followers in both Japan and the rest of the world.[10] Much of the literature of these movements has been translated into English.[11]

JAPAN AS THE ORIGIN OF CREATION

While the new Japanese religions of Buddhist origin typically attach little importance to the notion of creation, new religions in which Shinto beliefs and practices predominate have developed rather elaborate accounts of the origins of the world and humanity. These religions borrow in various ways and different degrees from the original Shinto creation myth.

According to this myth, the origin of the world coincided with the creation of the islands of Japan. The first land, we are told, was created from brine dripping from the sword of the God Izanagi after he dipped it into the cosmic ocean. This was the island Ono-goro-jima, or "Spontaneously-congealed-island," which today is identified with a small island near Awaji.[12] All of the other islands of Japan, as well as the *kami* (spirits)of the forces of nature, were then created from the union between the world-parents Izanagi and Izanami. The most eminent of these *kami* was the sun-Goddess Amaterasu, who is represented as the divine ancestor of the first emperor of Japan, thereby establishing the divine status and the absolute legitimacy of the imperial house of Japan.

This myth already played an important role in the early nationalistic Kokutai movement, or "movement for national learning," which was based on three principles: "loyalty to the Throne, the sense of mission, and belief in the possession of superlative inborn qualities."[13] To varying degrees, these themes also reappear in many of the new Japanese religions, which emphasize one or another aspect of the original Shinto creation myth. In the Tenrikyo creation myth, for example, great importance is attached to the creation of the world in Japan and to the

figures of Izanami and Izanagi as the progenitors of the world, while no attention is paid to the divine origins of the Japanese emperor.[14] Miki Nakayama (1798-1887), the foundress of the movement, is said to have discovered the exact location of the original creation when during a morning walk she suddenly stopped and declared, "There at the Jiba did I begin to create all the human beings of the world. The Jiba is the native place of all people. This shall be our eternal home."[15] Marking the exact place of origin is the *kanrodai*, the central place of pilgrimage and worship within the movement. According to the Tenrikyo creation myth, human beings were created at this place 900,099,999 years before October 26, 1838, the date of the beginning of Tenrikyo. The myth, however, speaks only of the creation of the people of Japan: "After conceiving them [the first human beings] in three days and three nights, Izanami-no-Mikoto stayed there for three years and three months, and gave birth in seventy-five days to those children in the following order: first in an area of seven *ri* square between what later became Nara and Hase; second in the rest of what later became Yamato Province; and third in what later became Provinces of Yamashiro, Iga, Kawachi; and in the rest of what later became Japan."[16] While this limitation of the creation of humanity to the creation of the Japanese people may be regarded as a form of ethnocentrism, it can also be attributed to the simple worldview of the foundress, for whom the world probably coincided with her own valley.

Within Omoto, another new Japanese religion which emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, it is believed that the creation of Japan served as a model for the creation of the rest of the world. According to Onisaburo Deguchi (1871-1948), co-founder of Omoto, Europe and Russia were created after the model of Honshu, Australia after Shikoku, North America after Hokkaido, Africa after Kyushu, and South America after Taiwan—which at that time was occupied by Japan.[17] Just before the Second World War, Onisaburo was accused of lese majesty, and his religion was severely persecuted. However, Mahikari, an offshoot of Omoto which emerged after the Second World War, adopted a much more loyal attitude toward the imperial house and focused again on the Shinto creation myth as a legitimization of the divine origins of the Japanese emperor.[18] This may be understood as a reaction against the various forms of humiliation suffered by Japan after the war. In defiant opposition to the declaration of the emperor's humanity, Mahikari reemphasized the emperor's divine origins in the Sun-Goddess Amaterasu, called Su-God.

While Mahikari assigns to Amaterasu a central role in its soteriology, its account of creation owes more to the tales of the lost continent of Lemuria or Mu circulating among the Rosicrucians, Theosophists, and the writings of Colonel James Churchward.[19] The first lines of Churchward's *The Lost Continent of Mu* read, "The Garden of Eden was

not in Asia but on a now sunken continent in the Pacific Ocean. The biblical story of creation—the epic of the seven days and seven nights—came first not from the peoples of the Nile or the Euphrates Valley but from this now submerged continent, Mu—the Motherland of Man."[20] While Churchward locates the sunken continent in the middle of the Pacific ocean in an area encompassing Hawaii, Fiji, Ladrones, Tahiti, and the Easter islands, Okada Yoshikazu (1901-1974), the founder of Mahikari, locates the center of the original paradise, or the civilization of Mu, in Japan—more precisely in the Province of Hida.[21] From Hida, sixteen princes were sent throughout the world to form the "five colored races."[22] This is symbolized in the emblem of Mahikari, which consists of a star with sixteen lines emanating from its center. Thus, all languages, cultures, religions, and civilizations are believed to have originated in Japan. This belief in the importance of Japan in the history of creation is also expressed in the book *Mahikari, Thank God for the Answers at Last,* written by a prominent non-Japanese member:

> According to the revelations he [Okada] received from Almighty God the land that is now called Japan is the cradle of *all* major religions. The Taka Amahara ("High plain of Heaven") referred to in Shintoism is the country today called Japan, and is where Gods descended on earth and manifested in physical form. In other words, world history began in Japan. The first humans on earth were created in Japan, in Hidama (now called Hida) in the area of the city of Takayama. Japan was the "garden of Eden in the east" that is mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 2:8) . . . The spiritual name of Japan is *Hi no Motosu Kuni* which means "Country of the Origin of the Spirit." Aeons of time later after civilizations had spread throughout the world, the continent in the Pacific Ocean (of which Japan was a part) became known as the Mu continent.[23]

While Ryuho Okawa, the founder of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, also mentions the Mu civilization, he does not regard it as the oldest or the original civilization and does not identify it with Japan, but Indonesia. According to Okawa, the oldest civilization is that of Gonda-Ana, dating back 750,000 years. Next came the civilization of Muytram, followed by that of Lemuria, and after that the civilization of Mu. After Mu sank into the ocean, the civilization of Atlantis followed, and after its destruction came our modern civilization.[24]

JAPAN AS THE CRADLE OF SALVATION

Such theories of Japan as the origin of creation are closely linked to the belief that Japan plays a unique role in the history of salvation. Salvation, as Mircea Eliade has demonstrated, is often conceived of as a return to the original wholeness and purpose of creation.[25] This is clearly

illustrated in Tenrikyo, where every month the creation story is reenacted around the *kanrodai* (focal point for worship marking the place where God the Parent resides in the center of the Inner Sanctuary of a Tenrikyo shrine) by prominent leaders of Tenrikyo during the ritual called the *kagura tsutome.* Members are encouraged to participate in this ritual and are greeted with the words "*okaeri nasai,*" or "welcome back," upon their arrival in what has become the city of Tenri. Participation in the monthly reenactment of the creation story is believed to be "the extension of God's work of creation" and "the way to universal and perfect salvation in every respect."[26]

The soteriological function of the story of creation is also expressed in the *Ofudesaki* with the following revelation of the foundress: "If only I can teach the origin of human beings throughout the world, then I will work whatever kind of salvation. Indeed, with a single word I will save you from every and any matter."[27] According to Tenrikyo, salvation thus emanates from the *jiba,* the place where human beings were first conceived during human creation. While the *jiba* may be understood as no more than an axis mundi, it may also be used to generate Japanese nationalism, particularly when associated with certain teachings which seem to juxtapose Japan (*Nihon*) with "other" countries (*Kara*):

> Until now, those of *Kara* have done as they pleased with *Nihon.* What can be done about the regret of God? Hereafter, *Nihon* will do as it pleases with those of *Kara.* Be aware of it, all of you. Root and branches of the same tree: branches will break, yet the root will prosper. Until now, those of *Kara* were said to be great, but from now on they will only be broken. Look at *Nihon*! It is thought to be tiny, but when the root appears, you will be overwhelmed with amazement.[28]

While the terms *Nihon* and *Kara* are currently interpreted in spiritual terms as referring to, respectively, "the place settled by those whose use of mind and way of living are near the intention of God the Parent, who is one in truth with the *Jiba,*" versus "the places inhabited by those whose use of mind and way of living are still distant from God's intention,"[29] they may also be—and indeed have been—understood in nationalistic terms. For Miki Nakayama, they were probably little more than an expression of the ambiguous attitude which existed toward the opening of Japan to the West in the second half of the nineteenth century. But Robert Ellwood shows how such verses may be understood in a more militaristic sense, as when members of Tenrikyo were swept away in the nationalistic ideology of the 1930s and 1940s and generally supported the imperial cause with fundraising and prayers.[30] The dancers of the *Kagura* service use a fan imprinted with the Japanese flag.

For Onisaburo Deguchi, the belief that the world was created after the model of Japan implies that the Japanese are the chosen people and that Japan must set the example for the purification and transformation of the world. This conception of the Japanese as the chosen people, which we find not only in Omoto, but also later in Mahikari, is based on the theory—popular in the first decades of the twentieth century—that the Japanese are the descendants of the "lost tribes of Israel."[31] This theory was based on various linguistic, cultural, and psychological resemblances between the two groups and on the alleged discovery of Jewish relics in Japan. Many Japanese became supporters of the Zionist cause after the First World War, and thereafter Judaism has been a continual source of inspiration for some Japanese writers.[32] While some have emphasized the similarities and collaboration between the Jews and the Japanese, others have developed the idea that the Japanese were the true Israelites. Ben-Ami Shillony, for example, mentions the figure of Sakai Shogun, who believed that "the Japanese, being the descendants of Israel, were the true Jews and that the Japanese emperor was therefore the Messiah. The goal of Zionism, the ingathering of the Jews in Palestine, was to serve as a prelude to Japan ruling the world."[33]

In Mahikari, it is not only the idea of the Japanese as the chosen people but also that of the providential role of Israel which is featured in its history of salvation. This explains why the present leader of Mahikari undertook a pilgrimage to Israel in 1995. However, for Mahikari, Judaism, like Christianity and Islam, belongs to the era of the "water-Gods" which must be overcome by the "God of fire," who has manifested himself first in Mahikari. According to Mahikari, the biblical texts announcing that "the light comes from the East" (Gen. 3:24, Job 38:24, Isaiah 41:2) in fact anticipate and refer to Mahikari itself.[34] To reinforce the idea of the importance of Japan in the history of salvation, Mahikari adapted the traditional account of the life of Jesus and claimed that he had received all his spiritual knowledge and wisdom from Shinto priests. According to Mahikari, Jesus traveled to Japan and spent considerable time with Shinto sages prior to his public life. And rather than having suffered and died on the cross, Jesus returned to Japan, married a Japanese woman, and died there at an old age.[35] Mahikari has located the grave of Jesus in Japan and encourages its members to visit it. Not only Jesus, but also the Buddha, Lao-Tzu, Confucius, and Mohammed are said to have visited Japan and gained their insights from Shinto sages. While Tenrikyo sees the *kanrodai* as the center of the universe and the source of salvation, for Mahikari it is the *Suza* or the world shrine of the movement located in Takayama, which is the dwelling place of God on earth and the site from which all salvation emanates. Members are encouraged to participate in the great

ceremonies of the spring and the fall at the *Suza*. In addition, the advanced course of Mahikari, which contains many of its more nationalistic teachings, is organized at the world shrine. Within Mahikari soteriology, the figure of the Japanese emperor continues to play an important role. While the emperor renounced his divine status at the end of the Second World War, Mahikari continues to regard him as a direct descendant of Su-god and a mediator between God and the world.[36] Salvation is understood as the unification of all races under the emperor of Japan and the founder of Mahikari, who is called *Sukuinushisama*, "Lord Savior."

While Tenrikyo and Mahikari view the importance of Japan from the perspective of its primacy in the order of creation, Kofuku-no-Kagaku sees this importance in terms of the culmination of various civilizations in Japan:

> The civilization that emerged in Greece moved westward to the United States and then to Japan. Likewise, the Oriental civilization, which originated in India, moved to China and came through Korea to Japan. Thus, both Eastern and Western civilizations have flowed into Japan. Looking at this stream of history, I am sure it is a historical necessity that a new, great civilization emerges here in Japan. And the civilization originating in Japan in turn flows back to the countries that are their predecessors in history. . . . Therefore, for the period of the next 100 to 150 years, Japan will be the center of a great civilization in the world.[37]

The superiority and special role of Japan in the history of salvation is based, according to Okawa, on its economic successes: "Rather than saying that Japan is the source, it is more accurate to say that Japan is becoming the source for the new spiritual movement. Historical observation suggests that once a country becomes economically powerful, it prepares also to become a cultural leader. Accordingly, now that Japan has become a great economic power, we are in a process of becoming more culturally influential."[38] The rise of Japan is correlated with the expected downfall of Europe and America:

> The new civilization will begin in this land in Asia. It will spread from Japan to Southeast Asia, Indonesia and Oceania. Some of the existing continents (Europe and America) will sink into the ocean, and a new continent of Mu will rise from beneath the Pacific Ocean to offer a stage for a new civilization. . . . These future civilizations will only become possible if we let the sun of God's Truth rise here and now in Japan. When the world sinks in darkness, Japan will rise as the sun.[39]

In the preface to *The Challenge of Religion*, the importance of Japan in our day is compared to that of Israel in the time of Jesus or India in the time of Shakyamuni:

> The wind of miracles originating in this land, Japan, has begun blowing in all directions of the world. And the impact it has on Japanese people is comparable to what happened to the people of Israel who first encountered Jesus Christ's teaching, or to those in India who first heard Shakyamuni's teaching. This is the greatest religious event that has ever taken place in history, and its shock wave is beginning to spread to all other nations in the world.[40]

Many of the Buddhist NRMs in Japan regard themselves as the harbingers of world reconciliation. The international missions of movements such as Reiyukai, Rissho Kosei Kai, and Nipponzan Myohoji are particularly oriented to the establishment of world peace. Rissho Kosei Kai, for example, played a major role in the sponsoring and organization of the first World Conference for Religion and Peace in Kyoto in 1970, and the founder of the movement, Nikkyo Niwano, was the first president of the Asian Conference for Religion and Peace and is honorary president of the World Conference for Religion and Peace. Nipponzan Myohoji attempts to contribute to the establishment of world peace through the building of peace pagodas throughout the world. This movement, however, also believes that peace must emanate from Japan. Its founder, Nichidatsu Fujii (1885-1985), based his notion of peace on a juxtaposition of Western and Eastern civilizations.[41] He believed that while Western civilization has dominated the world over the past hundred years and has brought materialism and unbridled economic expansion to the East, it is necessary for the East to take control if humanity is to survive. While Western civilization is focused on reason and competition, the spiritual civilization of the East deals with the mind and heart and is focused on nonviolence. A spiritual civilization must emerge from Japan because "except in Japan, there is no longer a religion that ascribes to the belief of eliminating Western civilization and leading humanity in the reverse direction."[42] Fujii argues that Japan is the most peaceful nation in the world and that this is largely because of Buddhism. The particular mission of Japan thus consists in spreading Buddhism internationally through the building of *stupas* (Buddhist shrines often containing relics of Buddhist saints), for "He [Shakyamuni] said that stupas will first appear in the skies of Japan and then in the rest of the world."[43]

While Soka Gakkai has developed intense missionary activities and has recruited many members outside of Japan, it has also become deeply involved in Japanese politics through its political party, called Komeito. While the program of the party cannot rightly be called nationalistic, the original claim of Komeito was, as Anson Shupe has observed, "that their grounding in the nationalist zeal of Nichiren would restore Japanese pride and return the nation to its preeminent place in the community of nations."[44]

JAPANESE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE AS VEHICLES OF SALVATION

For many of the new Japanese religions, Japan's language and traditional customs have come to play a constitutive role in the process of salvation. The Japanese language used in mantras, prayers, and spells is believed to possess a special power that does not function in translation. In Mahikari, it is said that the words of the prayers are not Japanese, but *kotodama*, variously understood as "the language of the Gods," "the deeper spiritual meaning of words," or "the spiritual and magical power of words." The term *kotodama* generally refers to a popular form of pseudo-etymology based on the different possible meanings of Japanese syllables.[45] While the meaning of the prayers may be translated into other languages for the prayer books used outside of Japan, all members still must learn and recite the prayers in the original *kotodama* Japanese. The words are believed to carry particular vibrations which would be lost in translation. The Japanese language itself is thus believed to have a salvific function.

Besides the Japanese language, there are other manifestations of Japanese culture believed to have a unique soteriological function. Several of the Japanese new religions attach a great importance to beauty and purity as both a means to and an expression of salvation. This is the case, for example, for Sekai Kyusei Kyo, whose founder, Okada Mokichi (1882-1955), went so far as to equate Japanese identity with the creation of beauty: "Every race in the world has its own thought and culture. The national characteristic of the Japanese people is to give expression through the medium of beauty and thus to contribute to the development of culture. From this the future course of Japan is self-evident. I believe that eternal peace and prosperity will be brought about if we adhere to the above ideal."[46] Sekai Kyusei Kyo has created art museums and Japanese gardens in Atami and Hakone which are considered to be "earthly paradises" or sacred grounds and regarded as models for the rest of the world.[47] Okada explains, "If a pattern is worked out somewhere in the world, it will in time be imitated on a worldwide scale."[48] The missionary activities of Sekai Kyusei Kyo outside of Japan have focused mainly on the dissemination of Japanese culture and art through the organization of Japanese language classes, courses in flower arrangement, and Japanese art exhibitions. This has occurred under the auspices of the Mokichi Okada Association. Several other new religions, such as Tenrikyo, Reiyukai, and Soka Gakkai, have also organized Japanese art exhibitions and Japanese language courses as part of their mission abroad.

The new Japanese religions that have spread outside of Japan have thus remained closely linked to their country and culture of origin. This also becomes evident in the ritual practices of the new religions,

which undergo little or no change or adaptation when introduced into non-Japanese cultures. A Mahikari *dojo* (school) outside of Japan is an exact copy of the Japanese original. The altar is modeled after traditional Shinto shrines, and most of the sacred objects, such as the *goshintai* (the scroll on which the name Mahikari and the *chuon*, the comma-shaped symbol of God, are inscribed), are imported directly from Japan. The rites of purification are practiced in the same form as they are in Japan, and Western members have even adopted the age-old Japanese practice of the veneration of the ancestors.[49] While some movements, including Soka Gakkai, have attempted to adapt to local cultures through the celebration of their festivals and through the appointment of local leaders, most of the centers of the new religions outside of Japan are run by Japanese leaders. Mahikari initially attempted to appoint local leaders to its foreign branches, but soon realized that Japanese leaders were more loyal and submissive to its theocratic authority and changed its policy. Inculturation, of course, does not happen overnight, as illustrated by the history of Christianity and Buddhism outside of their lands of origin. It often takes centuries to come to an understanding of the universal essence of a particular teaching or practice as opposed to the accidents of its original historical and cultural context. However, while every religion has a particular symbol, belief, or practice which is regarded as essential, irreducible, and unadaptable to the changes of time and culture, within many of the new Japanese religions this essence seems to be inseparable from the particularity of Japanese language and culture.

CONCLUSION

While many of the new Japanese religions have adopted a universalistic and international facade through their establishment of mission centers abroad and their integration of Western aesthetic and ideological elements, most of these religions remain fundamentally and essentially Japanese. Creation stories developed within these movements situate the origin of the universe or of humanity in Japan, and Japan and the Japanese are believed to play a crucial role in the history of salvation. An identification with Japanese language and culture has led several of the new Japanese religions to assume the roles of cultural ambassadors of Japan when moving abroad. While some new religions, such as Perfect Liberty Kyodan and Soka Gakkai, have made considerable steps toward adapting to local cultural habits and celebrations, most of the new Japanese religions have maintained their original ritual, linguistic, and cultural forms outside of Japan. Whereas it may be asked whether a religion can ever fully detach itself from the particularities of its original historical and cultural context, within new

Japanese religions we find a tendency toward the glorification and absolutization of that national and cultural particularity. This defines religious nationalism.

The type of nationalism manifested in the various new Japanese religions differs, however, according to the period in which these religions emerged. The centrality of Japan in the teaching of Tenrikyo, for example, may be understood as a reflection of the simple worldview of its foundress, Miki Nakayama. While the original teachings of the foundress may not be called nationalistic in the strict sense of the term, they have been used for nationalistic purposes over the course of time. The nationalism found in post-World War II new religions such as Mahikari, on the other hand, may be regarded as a reactionary attempt to return to the past glory of Japan in the face of the humiliation of defeat in war. The resurgent nationalistic voices in new Japanese religions toward the end of the twentieth century sound distinctly triumphalistic, linking the religious importance of Japan to the country's economic successes. This form of triumphalistic nationalism is especially evident in Kofuku-no-Kagaku.

In general, the nationalistic traits of the new Japanese religions may be understood as the religious expression of a more general tendency toward what has been called "ethnic nationalism" in twentieth-century Japan. This nationalism has found expression in the *nihonjinron* literature, which focuses on the uniqueness of Japanese character, culture, and society. This literature is characterized by the beliefs that the Japanese form one historically continuous and homogenous racial group, that they differ radically from all other people, and that their culture and tradition should be preserved and protected from external influences and corruptions.[50] Kosaku Yoshino interprets this ethnic nationalism as a reaction against internationalization and the related loss of a distinct identity or as a compensation for the exclusively economic identity which Japan has acquired in the second half of the twentieth century.[51] Peter Dale, on the other hand, understands it as a "severe, defensively combative endeavor to overcome a diffuse sense of inferiority to the West, a West which, in the first place, we must understand as a symbolic entity, as the image of a hostile diversity . . . ."[52]

A reaction against what is called the "Great Western Transformation" or "Westoxication" is also generally regarded to be a major reason for the emergence of fundamentalisms throughout the world.[53] In his article for the Fundamentalism Project, Winston Davis points precisely to the nationalism of new Japanese religions as the expression of fundamentalism in Japan.[54] Considering, however, the different meanings and forms of nationalism which we have detected in the various movements—which in turn depend upon the social and economic context in which they emerged—one may wonder whether

the term fundamentalism should be applied to the expressions of nationalism in all of these movements. Each of the new Japanese religions manifests a certain ambiguity toward the West. While most of the new Japanese religions have eagerly integrated Western science, technology, and even fragments of Western aesthetics and religion, this does not come without a certain resentment and reaction. But whereas in Tenrikyo this takes the form of a mild cultural and national pride, it evolves into a full-blown triumphalism and aggression in Kofuku-no-Kagaku. This development is related to the increasing influence of the West on Japan in the course of the twentieth century, combined with a growing sense of self-confidence and superiority as Japan became regarded as an economic powerhouse. While Tenrikyo focuses mainly on the past and on creation as the basis for the unique role of Japan in salvation history, Kofuku-no-Kagaku considers salvation history to culminate in Japan as its summit and goal. While the unique role of the foundress in salvation history is already advanced in Tenrikyo, in Kofuku-no-Kagaku the superiority of the founder is established over against the founders of other religious traditions. Mahikari marks a transition in the Japanese attitude toward the West from the beginning to the end of the twentieth century. While it bases itself on the myth of creation to substantiate its own special role in the history of salvation and it views itself as the fulfillment of all other religions, it continues to search in the West for legitimization of its superiority, regarding itself as the lost tribe of Israel and Jesus as having foretold the coming of their own founder.

Just as the nationalism manifested in the new religions of Japan differs in kind and purpose from movement to movement, the term fundamentalism cannot be applied in the same sense to all new Japanese religions. Indeed, in the case of Tenrikyo, I would argue that the term fundamentalism cannot be used at all, since there is very little reaction against the West in any of its teachings or practices. The nationalism manifested in Mahikari, on the other hand, displays clear signs of fundamentalism and is probably a reaction against the humiliation of Japan by the West after the Second World War. The most distinct example of a fundamentalist form of nationalism, however, is manifested in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, which considers it the vocation of Japan to dominate the world, not only economically, but also culturally, politically and religiously.

ENDNOTES

[1] Ryuho Okawa, *The Age of Choice in Religion* (Tokyo: IRH Press, 1995), 29-30.

[2] While many of the traditional Japanese religions have come to establish churches and centers in the West during the past century, this has most often been in service of expatriate Japanese who continued to practice their faith abroad, rather than the expression of a conscious missionary impulse. A. Peel, a European Shin Buddhist priest, even states that "Caucasian converts were not too warmly welcomed in the Buddhist temples, which functioned not so much as places of religion but more often as guardians of the Japanese cultural identity." See "Acculturation of Shin Buddhism in Europe," *The Pure Land* 2 (1985): 99. Whereas the Zen tradition has developed a more active missionary attitude in the West, the initiative for this has come mostly from Western converts or from single individuals such as D. T. Suzuki.

[3] The Sacred Scripture of Tenrikyo, the *Ofudesaki*, 6th ed. (Tenri, Japan: Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, 1993), 17:11. Emphasis added.

[4] Quoted in Marcus Bach, *The Power of Perfect Liberty* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), 142. Okada Mokichi also changed the name of his movement from Nippon Kannon Kyodai ("Greater Japan Society of Kannon") to Sekai Kyusei Kyo ("Church of World Messianity").

[5] This is the case in Omotokyo, Sekai Kyusei Kyo, and Mahikari, but also in Shinnyo-en, a Buddhist new religion. In Shinnyo-en, the decisive figure in this regard was the wife of the founder, Shojuin-sama, who through her death in 1967 laid the spiritual foundation for universal salvation.

[6] This is the case for Kofuku-no-Kagaku and its founder, Ryuho Okawa, who believes himself to have founded a religion which will unify the world: "In the present age the world is about to become one, and we should think that God's will might be that a religion that could unify the world is desirable" (Ryuho Okawa, *The Challenge of Religion* [Tokyo: IRH Press, 1993], 161-63).

[7] Both of these tendencies may be attributed to Christian influences in the syncretistic mix which often constitutes the doctrine of the new Japanese religions.

[8] While the terms "old," "new," and "new new" religions are often used in the study of new Japanese religions with reference to a particular historical era or event—regarding the pre-World War II religions as "old," the post-World War II religions as "new," and the religions which have emerged since the 1970s or 1980s as "new new"—I use a more sociological criterion or point of demarcation, regarding new religions as religions with no more than three generations of followers, new new religions as religions with only one generation of followers, and "old" new religions as religions of relatively recent origin which may be regarded as the antecedents of the new religions. At this point, however, the historical and the sociological ways of demarcation more or less coincide.

[9] Shinto is Japan's indigenous religious tradition, as opposed to imports such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity.

[10] Determining the exact number of members of these religions is made extremely difficult by the variety of ways in which membership is counted, the different degrees of commitment of members, and the high turnover within these movements. Tenrikyo claims about 1.2 million followers, Mahikari about 700,000, and Kofuku-no-Kagaku about 4 million.

[11] The research for this paper is directed mainly toward the European branches of these

new Japanese religions and is based mostly on English language materials. It should be pointed out that the nationalistic expressions might be even stronger in the Japanese sources. A comparison of the English and Japanese sources of these movements is, however, food for further research and for another article.

[12] W. G. Aston, trans., *The Nihongi* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956), 21.

[13] Richard Storry, *The Double Patriots: A Study of Japanese Patriotism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), 5.

[14] This turn away from the unique status and role of the emperor is one of the main reasons why Tenrikyo was persecuted prior to the Second World War, when its scriptures were censured and its rituals banned in their original form.

[15] *Ofudesaki*, 17:7-8. The *Ofudesaki*, the primary sacred scripture of Tenrikyo, is believed to contain the words "God the Parent" spoken through the foundress.

[16] Tadasama Fukaya, *The Truth of Origin* (Tenri, Nara, Japan: Tenrikyo Overseas Mission Department, 1983), 85.

[17] Mr. Yamazaki, Director of International Affairs, interview with author, Kameoka, Japan, 25 July 1996.

[18] This religion was founded by Okada Yoshikazu or Okada Kotama (1901-1974), also called Sukuinushisama (Lord Savior) within the movement. After his death, a split occurred within the movement between Mahikai Bunmei Kyodan, led by his disciple Sakae Sekiguchi, and Sukyo Mahikari, led by the founder's step-daughter Okada Sachiko. We shall focus here on the latter movement, which became the largest faction and took control over all of the Mahikari centers which had been established outside of Japan.

[19] James Churchward, *The Lost Continent of Mu* (London: Neville Spearman, 1959). Other sources of Okada were Kiku Yamane's *Authentic History of the World* (Yamane, Japan: n.p., 1964), and Masahilo Nakazono's *Ancient World History* (Nakazono, Japan: n.p., 1977).

[20] Churchward, *The Lost Continent of Mu*, 1.

[21] Winston Davis points out how this myth of the sunken continent of Mu has been used to feed the ethnocentrism of various groups and individuals. See Winston Davis, *Dojo, Magic and Exorcism in Contemporary Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 81 n.

[22] Elaborate but rather esoteric evidence for this is provided during the advanced course of Mahikari. As opposed to lower level courses, this advanced course is taught only in Japan, and the course notes are only for participants. It seems that not even the advanced members of Mahikari are unanimous in their belief in these teachings. Leaders explain this by the fact that they are "very difficult to understand," requiring "a high level of spiritual purity and insight." Doshi Mino, interview with author, Takayama, Japan, 20 July 1996. The expression "difficult to understand" is used in many new religions as an excuse for embarrassing or seemingly nonsensical teachings or practices.

[23] Andris K. Tebecis, *Mahikari: Thank God for the Answers at Last* (Tokyo: Yoko Shuppan, 1982), 389-90.

[24] Ryuho Okawa, *The Laws of the Sun* (Tokyo: IRH Press, 1990), 147-79.

[25] Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History* (New York: Harper, 1959).

[26] *The Teachings and History of Tenrikyo* (Tenri, Nara, Japan: Tenrikyo Overseas Mission Department, 1986), 51.

[27] *Ofudesaki* 12:129-30.

[28] *Ofudesaki* 3:86-90.

[29] *Ofudesaki, The Tip of the Writing Brush* (Tenri, Nara, Japan: Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, 1993), 267.

[30] Robert Ellwood, *Tenrikyo: A Pilgrimage Faith* (Tenri, Nara, Japan: Tenri University Press, 1982), 52-66. It must be taken into consideration that the different movements were also under severe pressure to conform with the imperialistic ideology of the times.

[31] In 1879, Norman McLeod, a Scottish businessman, published a book called *Japan and the Lost Tribes of Israel.* In the beginning of the twentieth century, Saeki Yoshiro, a Japanese Christian professor, developed the theory of the common ancestry of the Japanese and the Jews, arguing that the Hata clan which arrived in Japan from Korea in the third century was a Jewish-Nestorian tribe. As late as 1980, the Israeli Joseph Eidelberg published a book entitled *The Japanese and the Lost Tribes of Israel.* For a general discussion, see Ben-Ami Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1991).

[32] See Ben-Dasan (Yamamoto Shichihei), *Nihonjin to Yudayajin* (The Japanese and the Jews) (Tokyo: Yamamoto Shoten, 1970).

[33] Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese*, 168-69. Sakai published more than sixteen books on the Jews between 1924 and 1940.

[34] The notion of "light" plays an important salvific role in Mahikari ("true light") as the ultimate source and means of purification and healing. Other texts cited by Mahikari as proof that it is the fulfillment of biblical prophecies are John 16:7-8 and 12-14, which concern the sending of the Paraclete, the spirit of truth.

[35] This account is part of the advanced course of Mahikari, but it may also be found in *Mahikari: Thank God for the Answers at Last*, 354-60. The Mahikari version of the life of Jesus is based on the "Takenouchi Documents." While the Takenouchi, a family of Shinto priests, claims that Jesus is buried in a mound at Herai, others refer to the stump of an old tree on the nearby Mayagatai plateau. On this, see also my article "Jesus in Japan: Christian Syncretism in Mahikari" in *Japanese New Religions in the West*, eds. Peter B. Clarke and Jeffrey Sommers (Kent: Japan Library/Curzon Press, 1994), 88-102.

[36] The reverence of Mahikari for the Japanese emperor became evident at the enthronement ceremonies for the new emperor in 1990, when members lined the streets in an organized way to greet him.

[37] Ryuho Okawa, *Buddha Speaks* (Tokyo: IRH Press, 1995), 54-55.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ryuho Okawa, *The Laws of the Sun* (Tokyo: IRH Press, 1990), 178-79.

[40] Ryuho Okawa, *The Challenge of Religion* (Tokyo: IRH Press, 1993), preface.

[41] According to him, there is mention in the Lotus Sutra of different vibrations of the world, leading to different forms of dominance: *sayuu-toomotsu*, when the West is elevated and the East sunk down, and *tooyuu-saimotsu*, when the East is dominant.

[42] Nichidatsu Fujii, *Buddhism for World Peace* (Tokyo: Japan-Bharat Sarvodaya Mitra, 1980), 25-28.

[43] Nichidatsu Fujii, *Itten Shikai Myoho* (Tokyo: Japan-Bharat Mitrata Sangha, 1984), 66.

[44] "Soka Gakkai and the Slippery Slope from Militancy to Accommodation," in *Religion and Society in Modern Japan*, eds. Mark R. Mullins, Shimazono Susumu, and Paul L. Swanson (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1993), 234.

[45] This has made the translation of the sacred scripture of Mahikari, the *Goseigenshu*, which abounds with *kotodama*, an almost impossible task. While this text has been translated into various languages, none has fully satisfied the Japanese leaders.

[46] Okada Mokichi, *Handbook of the Hakone Art Museum and the Atami Art Museum* (Atami, Japan: MOA Productions, 1986), 3.

[47] The idea of "art as salvation" was already prominent in Omotokyo, of which Sekai Kyusei Kyo is an offshoot.

[48] Sekai Kyuseikyo, *Sekai Kyuseikyo, World Messianity and What it Means* (Atami, Japan: SKK Headquarters, 1957), 30.

[49] See my article, "The Phoenix Flies West: The Dynamics of Inculturation of Mahikari in Europe," *Japanese Journal for Religious Studies* 18 (1991): 265-85.

[50] See Peter Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness* (London: Routledge and Nissan Institute for Japanese Studies, 1986), 1-2.

[51] Kosaku Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan* (London: Routledge, 1992), 163-81.

[52] Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, 176.

[53] See, for example, Bruce Lawrence, *Defenders of God: Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989).

[54] "Fundamentalism in Japan: Religious and Political," in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, eds. Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 782-813. He also points out that the absence of moral rigorism in these religions as well as their compromising attitude toward the wider society preclude a wholesale designation of these movements as fundamentalist.

Elohim City: A Participant–Observer Study of a Christian Identity Community

Somer Shook
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ABSTRACT: This paper describes a participant-observer study of Elohim City, a notorious Christian Identity community in eastern Oklahoma that has been linked to right-wing terrorist activities. Our study focuses on the community's beliefs, values, and social organization as these were revealed in our observations of everyday life. The paper includes an assessment of the danger posed by Elohim City and concludes with our personal reactions to the community.

Located in the Ozark Mountains of eastern Oklahoma, Elohim City is a Christian Identity community whose opposition to the federal government has embroiled it in controversy. Like other Identity groups, its members believe the true Israelites settled in northern Europe and the British Isles after the Diaspora. In this paper we provide an ethnographic description of Elohim City based on a brief participant-observation study we conducted in 1997.[1]

Although the Identity movement has been growing since the 1930s, it did not receive much attention from the media until recently.[2] Several events brought the movement to national attention. The first was the death of Gordon Kahl, an Identity believer who was killed in a shoot-out with the FBI in 1983.[3] Believing that the government was controlled by a satanic cabal of Jewish bankers, Kahl quit paying taxes in 1967 and soon emerged as a leader in the Posse Comitatus movement, which recognized no legal authority higher than the county sheriff. Kahl went

into hiding after killing two federal marshals who tried to arrest him, and, after his own death five months later, he became the Identity movement's first martyr in its battle with the federal government.

In the following year, Robert Mathews, a white supremacist with ties to Aryan Nations, was killed in a gun battle with federal agents. In 1983, Mathews had organized a terrorist group known as The Order, which saw itself as the vanguard of the "second American revolution." Mathews hoped to trigger an apocalyptic race war that would usher in a God-centered, all-white nation. His plan included murder, bank robbery, counterfeiting, and armored car hold-ups, but by 1986 most of his followers were behind bars. Although Mathews was primarily an Odinist,[4] many of his followers were Identity believers.[5]

The third and perhaps most important event was the Randy Weaver stand-off in 1992.[6] Although Weaver believed in Identity's "Israel message" and had attended events at the Aryan Nations compound near his home in northern Idaho, he was more a survivalist than an activist. After failing to appear in court on an illegal weapons charge, federal agents laid siege to his house, killing his wife and son before he surrendered. Anti-government sentiment had been simmering in right-wing circles for many years, but the Weaver incident precipitated an outburst of public indignation. Suddenly the "racist right" was thrust into the national spotlight as "citizen militias" began forming across the country to oppose gun control and federal tyranny. Identity leaders such as Pete Peters and Louis Beam played major roles in the formation of the militia movement.[7]

Except for a few regional news stories, Elohim City kept a low profile throughout these developments. Few had heard of the community before the federal building in Oklahoma City was bombed in 1995. Almost immediately, evidence surfaced that Timothy McVeigh, the government's prime suspect, had called Elohim City just days before the bombing, apparently trying to reach an acquaintance named Andy Strassmeier who had allegedly conducted weapons training there.[8] Subsequent investigations revealed other incriminating information: Four bank robbers from the Aryan Republican Army had spent time at Elohim City; the community's founder, Rev. Robert Millar, had close ties to Richard Snell, an Identity minister who was executed for murdering a black state trooper and Jewish store owner; and James Ellison, former head of the militant Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord, had married one of Millar's granddaughters and was now living at Elohim City. Suddenly this once obscure community was making national news. In 1997, a *Dateline* story called it "The Holiday Inn of Hate" because so many right-wing terrorists had visited there.[9]

Our description of Elohim City differs sharply from the picture painted by the media. Although the allegations about terrorist connections may be true, we did not investigate them. Instead our

purpose was to understand members' everyday lives. We wanted to find out what people at Elohim City believe, where they fit in the Identity movement, and how their community is organized.

STUDYING ELOHIM CITY

Our study was prompted by the media attention Elohim City received after the Oklahoma City bombing. Early in 1997, Balch wrote to Millar asking permission to visit with several students from his collective behavior class. After discussing this request with his congregation, Millar cordially agreed. During spring break, we drove to Oklahoma where we spent the better part of six days living at Elohim City.[10] Although we were encouraged to take part in many activities, we were more observers than participants. However, Shook and Delano returned in June for an additional three-week stay, during which they became fully immersed in community life.

On our first visit we had the good fortune to arrive during the week of the spring equinox, when Elohim City celebrates its new year.[11] In addition to going to "meeting" (church) every day, we ate lunch and dinner in members' homes, played volleyball with the teenagers, and participated in costume parties for the adults and children. Ironically, considering Elohim City's reputation as a hate group, the adult party had a 1960s theme, complete with peace signs, love beads, tie-dyed clothes, karaoke, and Beatles tunes played by the community's band. The festivities helped reduce the anxiety that both we and the members felt about our visit. As we soon discovered, many members were just as nervous about being scrutinized by liberal college students and a university professor as we were about visiting an armed white separatist community.

Because of our unique status as guests and students, we were allowed to take pictures, record church services, and conduct interviews.[12] One member graciously moved out of her mobile home so we would have a place to stay. Others allowed us considerable latitude by not enforcing the 10:00 P.M. curfew that applied to unwed adults. However, we realized that we were not getting a complete picture of everyday life. Members were reluctant to talk about certain topics. Millar, for example, preferred not to discuss the community's polygamous relationships, and it was not until mid-week that a teenage girl let it slip that he had two wives. Race also was a sensitive topic. The adults typically spoke respectfully about blacks and Indians, but from the children we heard racist jokes and occasional comments about "niggers."

The return visit proved far more revealing. Delano and Shook lived in separate households and, outside of church, saw each other only occasionally. Their daily routines were identical to those of other young

adults. Shook tended children, cooked, cleaned, and weeded the garden with other women, while Delano worked in the sawmill and spent evenings discussing race, politics, and religion with his boss. For fun they watched videos with their host families or went bridge jumping at the river and shooting with the teens and young adults. Both were placed in positions of trust—for example, by being asked to chaperone the teenagers at a rodeo in nearby Fort Smith. Since the population of Elohim City is only about ninety, including about forty children, members' lives are an open book to each other. On this second visit, polygamy was discussed freely, and members' racial views quickly became known.[13]

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Elohim City nestles on 400 wooded acres in a remote, mountainous area of Oklahoma about thirty miles from Sallisaw (population 7,122), the nearest town. The last six miles of the road to Elohim City are rough dirt. From the road the most conspicuous building is an exotic three-story house constructed of wood, stone, and bright orange polyurethane. Further up the road a silver, dome-shaped structure, also built of stone and polyurethane, serves as the community's church and all-purpose meeting hall. Nearly all the houses are mobile homes, some with rock facades and numerous rooms added on. They vary greatly in size, upkeep, cleanliness, and furnishings. Such differences provided the first indication of the high degree of individuality present within the community. Here and there one sees broken glass and scraps of paper littering the grounds, and behind some houses we observed old tires, discarded equipment, and junked appliances. Members dress like ordinary people, and except for special events, most wear casual clothes at church services.

Elohim means God in Hebrew, but at first glance there is little about Elohim City to suggest it is a spiritual community. The church has no cross inside or out, and the homes are virtually devoid of religious pictures or books. Nor are there any indications that Elohim City is a white separatist community—no racist literature, uniforms, swastikas, or guard dogs are visible, although two men usually brought weapons to church (a Mini-14 semi-automatic rifle and a .45 caliber pistol). The only hint of racism is a Confederate flag hanging in the window of one of the houses.[14] Despite the relative scarcity of visible signs or markers, Elohim City is both deeply religious and dedicated to racial separation.

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY: BLENDING RACE AND RELIGION

Although Identity is a diverse nondenominational movement, its adherents are united in the fundamental belief that northern Europeans are descended from the lost tribes of Israel.[15] The evidence they use to buttress this claim includes similarities between Hebrew words and northern European place names. For example, they link the tribe of Dan to the Danube River, which the Israelites supposedly crossed in their migration over the Caucasus Mountains, and to Denmark ("Danmark"), one of the places where they settled. Millar claims additional evidence comes from such sources as archaeology, heraldry, biblical descriptions, and prophecies.

Most Identity believers regard the Jews as impostors posing as God's chosen people. In more radical Identity groups, such as Aryan Nations, Jews are believed to be direct descendants of Satan, who seduced Eve in the Garden of Eden.[16] The result of this union was Cain, who fathered children with women from nonwhite races created before Adam. On the other hand, true Israelites descend from Adam and therefore God. According to this "two seed-line" doctrine, the Flood was a localized event intended to purify the Adamic seed-line, so Cain's descendants, the ancestors of the Jews, were spared. Less extreme Identity believers, including Millar, discount a direct biological link between the Jews and Satan. Rather, they trace contemporary Judaism to historical events such as Esau's marriages to nonwhite Hittite women and the conversion of the Asiatic Khazars to Judaism.[17]

A principle tenet of the Identity movement is that a secret Zionist conspiracy controls the world financial system and is working covertly to destroy the white race. The United States government is commonly referred to as ZOG, standing for "Zionist Occupied Government." Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans are seen as pre-Adamic races who are pawns in the Jews' attempt to rule the world.

Although Identity believers acknowledge the divinity of Jesus, they claim Jesus was not a Jew. In their literature they focus much more on the Old Testament than conventional Christians do, and talk far more about Yahweh than Jesus. Members typically follow ancient Hebrew dietary laws and, in keeping with Old Testament practices, sometimes approve of polygamy. In contrast to mainstream Christianity, they tend to be militant when confronting what they perceive as evil, often to the point of taking up arms. Identity believers are heavily represented in the current militia movement.[18]

Like fundamentalist Christianity, Identity has a strong pre-millennialist flavor. Believers are convinced that the world is corrupt and must be cleansed of evil and apostasy before the Second Coming

can occur. Catherine Wessinger calls this belief "catastrophic millennialism."[19] However, Identity's view of the final days differs sharply from that of evangelical Christians. Whereas fundamentalists usually anticipate an apocalyptic nuclear war, [20] Identity believers are more likely to envision a time of economic collapse, social chaos, and racial strife during which Jews and nonwhites will be vanquished. Adherents reject the fundamentalist belief in the Rapture, the spiriting away of born-again Christians from the earth at the beginning of theTribulation period. Arguing that there is no scriptural basis for this doctrine, they claim that Christian Israelites must be prepared to endure the coming conflict. This is why so many Identity believers are survivalists.[21]

ELOHIM CITY AS AN IDENTITY COMMUNITY

Elohim City was founded in 1973 by Robert Millar, a former Mennonite from Kitchener, Ontario, who was born in 1925. While studying to become a Mennonite preacher, Millar experienced a devastating loss of self-confidence while giving a sermon. After the congregation had left and he was alone in the church, he prayed for guidance and suddenly began speaking in tongues. Later he had apocalyptic visions, in which he claims God showed him the coming war for independence in India, the social chaos that soon spread throughout Africa, and the advent of nuclear war with missiles rising from the sea off the coast of Cape Canaveral. As he delved deeper into the Christian scriptures, he developed beliefs similar to those of the Identity movement without realizing that others had already come to similar conclusions.[22]

Eventually a vision led Millar to Oklahoma where he founded Elohim City. By then he had learned about Identity's Israel message and had embraced it. Yet, as we quickly discovered, Elohim City has a unique character that sets it apart from better known Identity groups such as Aryan Nations, Pete Peters' LaPorte Church of Christ, and Dave Barley's America's Promise Ministries.[23] Unlike Aryan Nations, Elohim City is not blatantly racist, and members do not revere Hitler or decorate their church with German flags and swastikas. We also heard little militant anti-government rhetoric. In contrast to all three groups, where members live in widely scattered households and are united mainly by a common ideology, Elohim City is a geographically-based community where all members live on the same piece of land.

During our first visit to Elohim City, we pressed Millar to explain his version of Identity theology. Instead of expounding on his beliefs, however, he encouraged us to read a book by a Christian writer, Roger Rusk, whom he said was not Identity but "on the right track." [24] Although

Rusk traces Judaism to the corruption of Judah during the Babylonian exile and the subsequent conversion of the Khazars, he does not demonize the Jews like most Identity writers, and nowhere does he suggest they might descend from Satan. Rusk argues that the United States was founded by the descendants of Israel, and while Millar agrees, he is careful to note that not all Caucasians are Israelites—only those who descend from Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel.

Our primary reason for visiting Elohim City, however, was not to study Identity beliefs, but to learn about everyday life. Five themes emerged in our observations: (1) worship, (2) family and heritage, (3) community, (4) racialism, and (5) separatism. These constitute core values which give the community its distinctive character.

Worship

At the center of community life is the unshakable belief that God is an ever-present reality. Unlike other Identity believers, members refer to God as Yahuah rather than Yahweh. The name dates from a prayer meeting where a woman began using the name Yahuah while speaking in tongues.

Most members go to meeting every day to sing praises and offer thanks to Yahuah. Participation is voluntary, and a few members rarely attend, but most take part unless they have other responsibilities. Services begin at 11:30 A.M. and often last several hours. The meetings have a strong Pentecostal flavor, perhaps reflecting the fact that most members come from conservative Southern Christian backgrounds. They are informal, spontaneous, and participatory, beginning with singing and dancing in unison.

The songs are catchy, upbeat tunes written by community members, and everyone knows them by heart. Millar claims they have at least 150 of their own songs. Though written by a nonmember, one of the favorites is "Step Into the Water":

Step into the water.
Wade out a little bit deeper.
Wet your feet in the water
Of His love.

Oh, oh, step into the water.
Wade out a little bit deeper.
Angels join our singing
Praises to the Lamb of Yah.

It's time that we the people
Stand up for what is right.

It's time we squared our shoulders back
And raised our swords to fight.

Our war is in the spirit.
The Word of Yah we bring.
His praises we are singing
Are banners to the King of Kings.

While singing, members pantomime the words. In "Step Into the Water," they step forward and back, raise their arms in praise, square their shoulders, and hold up imaginary swords. Members obviously enjoy themselves in meetings, and we found the singing both fun to participate in and to watch.

Sometimes Millar preaches, but often he simply sits on the sidelines while others who feel "anointed" speak. Our favorite speaker was "Brother Leon," a newcomer to the community in his seventies, whose daily "slice of bread," as his impromptu sermons are called, was always impassioned, funny, and uplifting. Unlike sermons common in fundamentalist churches, we never heard anyone talk about sin or God's wrath. And in contrast to sermons at the Aryan Nations' churches, racial issues were never mentioned except during the spring break field trip when Millar briefly explained Identity beliefs for our benefit. Instead, the main theme was that Yahuah is a God of love.

Spontaneous testimonies and prayers for healing are common in meetings. On our first day at Elohim City, for example, each family stood before the congregation and talked about what Yahuah had done for them in the previous year. Any family member could speak. One thanked Yahuah for being able to live in a loving community separate from the world. Another praised Yahuah for giving him a son after seven girls, who were lined up in a row from the tallest to the smallest. Millar made a point of involving us by having us stand and tell what we were thankful for. After the testimonies, a woman prayed over a baby with jaundice, and Millar's wife Elsie, who had suffered several strokes, was put in the "Secret Place." Members gathered around her, laying on hands and speaking in tongues, while one prayed aloud for Yahuah's blessings. Although the impromptu ceremony was totally public, its name implies a deeply personal connection between Yahuah and the person being prayed for.

Unlike many Identity groups, Elohim City is more experiential than ideological. The community has virtually no literature, and we found it hard to get a clear description of members' beliefs, even when talking with Millar. When we asked Millar to send us information about Elohim City prior to our first visit, we received photocopies of two hand-outs totaling ten pages and a copy of Roger Rusk's book. Books and magazines from other Identity groups are conspicuously absent in

members' homes, and politics is rarely discussed in meetings, except when it impinges on Elohim City. In sharp contrast to other Identity groups, talks in church typically focus on Yahuah's blessings rather than on scriptural or historical justifications for racial separation or the belief that northern Europeans are the true Israelites.

Family and Heritage

These themes are too intertwined to separate. Both are constantly celebrated in daily meetings. Families sit, pray, and sing together, and they often give testimonies about how Yahuah has strengthened the bonds between husbands and wives, parents and children, or how Yahuah has blessed them as a family. With few exceptions, parent-child bonds are strong, and in every case, the elderly are cared for at home. Following the Old Testament model, polygamy is accepted and three men, including Millar, have two wives. Large families are the norm. A man who wanted to marry an elder's daughter was given permission, but only if he tried to get his vasectomy reversed.

During our first day at Elohim City, one of the most common questions we were asked was, "What's your heritage?" Each family has its own flag, symbolizing its northern European lineage or biblical roots. For the 1996 New Year's party, each member researched an ancestor and devised a costume resembling clothes the person might have worn. At celebrations, members of Scottish descent, including Millar, sometimes wear kilts, and later in the summer of 1997 members planned to drive their bus to Ontario for a Scottish folk festival. *Riverdance*, a video featuring Irish line dancing, was popular among both adults and teenagers.

Community

Although members live in financially independent households and do not own property communally, they support Elohim City by tithing and place great value on the spirit of community. The beliefs uniting them are constantly reinforced in daily meetings, which are social as well as spiritual events. Members work and play together and have few contacts outside the community. All but two men work in the community, and recreation—including parties, picnics, canoe trips, vacations, and evening socializing—is an in-group affair. Children and teenagers are integrated into adult activities in a way that most people in the world would find unusual. Members talk about "the land," their mountain

home, with a sense of place that is uncommon even in small towns with long histories. When we asked people why they chose to live at Elohim City, their answers stressed the interconnection of community, family, and security: It is a good place to raise a family; their friends and family live there; they do not have to worry about drug dealers and homosexuals corrupting their children.

A constant round of celebrations reinforces the sense of community. In addition to New Year's week, they include five Old Testament holidays: Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Trumpets, the Feast of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.[25] Each celebration is unique. For example, during the Feast of Trumpets, a group of members, young and old alike, go through the community blowing horns and banging on pots and pans to wake everyone up. The men then cook and serve the women and children breakfast. One woman told Shook that the women usually end up helping, but that the role reversal is still fun. During the Feast of Atonement, members draw names by age groups and make gifts for each other or give IOUs for baby-sitting, massages, housework, and other chores. When the gifts are presented, the givers are expected to say something positive and meaningful about the recipient.

The intimacy of the community was revealed during our first visit when members wrote New Year's resolutions and put them in a bowl. A woman pulled each one out and read it aloud, after which members tried to guess who had written it. In almost every case, they were right on the first guess. Despite the highly personal nature of some resolutions, no one seemed embarrassed, and with each new resolution members laughed and shouted encouragement.

Racialism

By mainstream definitions, Elohim City is racist, but compared to the Ku Klux Klan or Aryan Nations, its racism is mild. Members reject the white supremacist label, preferring to call themselves "racialists." The term reflects the belief that the Bible, Genesis in particular, teaches that God made the races distinct for reasons of his own, and that race mixing is an abomination. Although Millar rejects the theory of evolution, his theory of human origins departs significantly from traditional Christian teachings. Based on the fact that the Hebrew Bible uses different words for "man," Millar claims that God created different races of people at different times. Adam and Eve, his final creation, established the white race and are the ancestors of all true Israelites.

During our first visit to Elohim City, Millar cited the Eskimos to illustrate the destructiveness of race mixing. Their customs, he said, were perfectly adapted to their environment, but the introduction of

white culture upset their social equilibrium, resulting in alcoholism, violence, and the obliteration of their way of life.

Members claim they are not white supremacists, and we found some evidence of that. For example, an elder told Delano that he believes the Japanese are intellectually superior to whites. However, the line between separatism and supremacy proved to be a blurry one. The same elder went on to explain that whites still are Yahuah's chosen people, and that the Bible was written exclusively for them. Millar also told us that the original U.S. Constitution, which he believes was divinely inspired, supported racial separation by limiting citizenship to land-owning, white males. Like other Identity believers, members believe in an international Zionist conspiracy, but they do not talk about it much. A teenager once referred to Jews as the "serpent's seed," but otherwise the supposed satanic lineage of the Jews, which figures so prominently in the beliefs of other Identity groups, was never mentioned.

Although Elohim City's racial beliefs have a theological basis, the racism we observed was the type one might expect to find in ordinary white, working-class families in the rural South. Unlike Aryan Nations, which publishes dozens of books, pamphlets, and flyers proclaiming the superiority of whites, the immorality of blacks, and the diabolical character of the Jews, racism at Elohim City surfaced mainly in informal settings. During the 1960s party, for example, a fringe member referred to Martin Luther King as "Martin Luther Coon," and while watching the *Riverdance* video, the teenagers groaned when the leading male dancer kissed a black singer. One evening in our mobile home, a boy sang us a song about killing Barney, the purple dinosaur on a TV show promoting multiculturalism. When we asked why he wanted to kill Barney, he said that underneath his purple costume, Barney is really a "nigger."

Separatism

A bumper sticker on Millar's car best expresses this theme. It reads, "Stop the Hate, Separate!" Given the community's beliefs, especially about race mixing and worldly corruption, it is not surprising that members choose to live "off the grid." To avoid trouble with the law, members get drivers licenses, register their vehicles, and buy auto insurance. Some, however, do not pay taxes, and most refuse to participate in the Social Security system.

Not only is Elohim City geographically isolated, but it comes close to being institutionally complete, in that most needs can be met within the community.[26] Nearly all the men are employed by three businesses, each owned by an elder—a trucking company, a sawmill, and a construction firm. Only one woman, a part-time K-Mart checker, works

off the land. The rest are stay-at-home housewives who rarely leave the community except for family outings and shopping trips. The community has its own K–12 school, Bethel Christian, where students are expected to learn ancient Hebrew in addition to conventional subjects. While members use conventional medicine when circumstances demand it, they prefer alternative remedies such as herbal teas. Two women have nursing degrees, so members rarely have to seek care from doctors, and twice a month a chiropractor visits the community and performs adjustments in the church. Babies are born at home, and children are not immunized. Most members have friends who live off the land, but they often belong to other rural Identity communities, such as Daniel Wright's Padanaram community in Indiana. In the rare event that someone marries an outsider, the person is likely to come from one of these communities. Members rarely vote and, except for Thanksgiving, Mothers Day, and Fathers Day, they do not celebrate worldly holidays. They use the ancient Hebrew calendar, and their clock is based on sun-dial time.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

To understand how Elohim City is organized, we have divided our observations into several categories: (1) authority, (2) family ties, (3) sex role, (4) child rearing, (5) teenagers, (6) deviant behavior, and (7) boundary maintenance.

Authority

At the center of the community is Millar, who is revered as a gentle patriarch. He is the community's spokesman and has the final word in all decisions. Yet his operating style is quiet, conciliatory, and geared toward building consensus. Known as "Grampa," he is respected for leading by example. Although he is outspoken about his political views and has confronted law enforcement officials in potentially violent situations, Millar sees himself mainly as a spiritual teacher and counselor. Unlike many Identity leaders, he prefers to stay out of the limelight. His single-wide mobile home is nicely furnished but modest compared to others, and he is doing most of the work himself on the house he is building for his second wife.

Beneath Millar are the elders. The principal elders are John and Bruce Millar (two of Millar's four sons, who all live at Elohim City), Jim Ellison, and Zera Patterson. David Millar, another son, and Brother Leon also are considered elders, although they are less influential. The primary criteria for becoming an elder are commitment to the

community and, like Millar, leading by example. At the conclusion of the 1960s party, John spoke to the teenagers about the social, political, and cultural upheavals of the decade, and Zera described how he went into the Vietnam War as a gung-ho patriot and came out feeling betrayed by his government. Their talks were thoughtful and inspirational, befitting their position.

Decisions affecting the community are made by Millar and the elders, but community members are asked for their opinions during meetings, when anyone can speak. For example, our initial request to visit was discussed at length in church. Our strongest supporters were the teenagers and an elderly man who actually voted for Bill Clinton in the last election. After the field trip, Balch was quoted in a newspaper article about Elohim City entitled, "'Mellow' compound has dark underbelly."[27] Displeased, Millar wrote a letter to Balch barring him from the community, but members urged him not to send it because no one had asked Balch not to talk to the media. Millar did not send the letter, and when Balch returned for a brief visit in June, Millar greeted him warmly.[28]

Family Ties

Elohim City resembles a clan because members are so intertwined by blood and marriage. Over half the members are Millar's children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren. Of the five major families, four are headed by Millar's sons, and only the Patterson household is largely unrelated to the Millars. There is just one case of marriage between cousins, but the pool of eligible partners who are not biologically related is small. During our study, two young people were dating members of other communities.

Polygamy is acceptable, but only three men have two wives. Plural marriage is a matter of choice for men, but less so for women. An unmarried woman can choose not to enter into a polygamous relationship, but a married woman is expected to submit if her husband wants to take a second wife. Although we observed few conflicts in these relationships, there may have been much that we did not see. One woman described how she broke up her husband's second relationship by threatening to leave, and, in another case, the first wife suffered from depression and severe weight loss when her husband decided to marry again. However, at least one polygamous relationship appears to work well. The wives live in separate homes, but tend each other's children and are best friends.

On Father's Day in 1997, we joined the Millar family at Tenkiller Lake, a popular camping spot in eastern Oklahoma. Most members spent the afternoon swimming, boating, and water skiing. Jim Ellison assumed the role of chef, cooking hamburgers and hot dogs (no pork) over a

campfire while the fathers opened presents from their children. What impressed us most was the wholesomeness of the scene. Even the most determined eavesdropper never would have guessed this was a gathering of militant white separatists.

Sex Roles

The roles of men and women are clearly defined at Elohim City. Men are breadwinners, decision makers, mechanics, builders, and defenders of the home, whereas women are homemakers and helpmates who take care of children and teach school. During church meetings and celebrations, women prepare the food and serve the men, and at home they do virtually all the cooking and housework. Members see this arrangement as part of God's blueprint for a perfect world—a divinely inspired division of labor based on mutual respect for different talents and roles. Yet we noticed that when husbands are away, wives often take a holiday by letting the housework lapse, serving snacks instead of cooking meals, and drinking an occasional beer.

Although husbands and wives spend most of their leisure time together, men and women live in somewhat distinct worlds, much as they do in the outside world. Recently the women began holding occasional "ladies' meetings" where they trade massages and discuss family problems, home remedies, and shopping bargains while joking good-naturedly about their husbands. Shook compared the meeting she attended to a slumber party. Men's meetings focus on decisions affecting the community as a whole, and when men want to have fun together, they may go hunting or target shooting. Although some men occasionally drink beer, this usually occurs at family picnics such as the Father's Day outing we attended.

Child Rearing

Children at Elohim City are well behaved, courteous, and socially precocious around adults. During our first visit, children sought us out and were the first to make friends with us. Yet there is great variation in child-rearing practices. Most parents are strict and do not hesitate to use corporal punishment. We observed two fathers using switches to discipline their babies when they cried in church, although we did not consider these incidents abusive. On the other hand, at least one parent is extremely permissive, rarely using any form of discipline. Parents also differ greatly in what they let their children watch on television. Some parents screen videos and forbid certain TV shows, while others pay little attention. Boys and girls learn early in life what is expected of

them. During birthday celebrations, for example, each boy escorts a girl to the child whose birthday it is and Millar instructs them how to behave as gentlemen and ladies. The boy bows to the girl, and the girl curtsies in return, then both salute the celebrant. We found it interesting that nowhere in the community are children allowed to have toy guns. War, we were told, is not a game.

Teenagers

Like the children, the teenagers at Elohim City are extremely social and comfortable around visitors. Although they are more integrated into the adult world than most teens in mainstream life, they constitute a tight group of friends. Some are more popular than others, but we observed little of the clique formation that goes on in typical high schools. Dating poses a problem because there are so few members of the opposite sex who are not closely related. This is the principal reason some members look for partners in other communities.

Compared to the high schools we are familiar with, the education the teenagers receive at Elohim City would be considered inadequate. The textbooks are old, science classes lack proper laboratory equipment, and the curriculum varies depending on who is teaching and what their interests and skills are. During the 1997 high school graduation ceremony, when the graduates were asked to read essays about what they had learned, Shook and Delano were shocked at how poorly prepared they were. They compared their performance to that of eighth and ninth graders in the schools they had attended. Few graduates go on for higher education. One elder told us that he encourages teenagers to experience the world after graduating, but of the three who graduated in 1997, two planned to remain on the land, and the third hoped to attend massage school after marrying a man from another Christian community.

Deviant Behavior

Within the community most rules are informal understandings about what is permissible and what is not. Sanctions range from good-natured jabs to expulsion. For example, a young woman who had two unwed pregnancies was told she either had to get married or leave the community. Sometimes deviant behavior is discussed in church. In one case, when the community was rife with gossip, an elder admonished members not to talk about others behind their backs. However, he did not single out any offenders.

Like many other communal societies, as well as American society in general, Elohim City grants considerable latitude to teenagers.[29] Adults

know teenagers secretly drink beer and smoke cigarettes, but they usually look the other way. At the 1997 graduation party, for example, a few adults knew the teenagers had spiked one of the punch bowls, but they kept it to themselves. Yet by worldly standards, the teens at Elohim City are model citizens. We never observed or heard of a case of theft, drunkenness, vandalism, or drug use, and teenagers behave respectfully toward adults.

Consistent with Elohim City's nonideological stance, we found considerable tolerance for dissenting opinions. Despite the general sentiment against Jews, for example, an elder told Delano that he thought the biggest mistake the "reactionary right" (his term) has made is blaming everything on the Jews. Most Jews, he said, are ordinary people who have no idea what the big picture is. The same man also disagreed with the "revisionist" view, popular in Identity circles, that the Holocaust never happened. Another member told Delano that he felt uncomfortable with the way members used the term "nigger" so freely. He added that many blacks he had met were friendlier than whites. During Delano and Shook's visit, an elderly couple moved onto the land to retire. Although Christian, they were not Identity believers, and the husband had spent much of his career as an agricultural scientist helping black African nations improve their crop yields.

Boundary Maintenance

Every society has marginal members who define the limits of acceptable behavior. At Elohim City the most conspicuous fringe members were three neo-Nazi skinheads living in a cabin off the land about a mile down the road. During our visits, they attended church occasionally, and two worked at the sawmill. One told us he was disappointed when he came to Elohim City because he expected to find an armed compound of militant racists ready to do battle with ZOG. Despite feeling let down, he said he had come to appreciate the community's peaceful lifestyle.

The community keeps the skinheads at arm's length for several reasons. Members believe they drink too much and are too volatile. They question the skinheads' commitment to leading a spiritual life, and they feel uncomfortable with their blatant neo-Nazism, which is apparent in their tattoos and the Nazi flags in their house. Members also dislike skinhead music. When we asked Millar how he felt about us visiting the skinheads, he said we were free to do what we liked, but that we should keep our "backs to the wall." His concern grew out of rumors about methamphetamine labs in the area. He worried that the skinheads might be involved and that we might get caught up in a raid by law enforcement officials.

HOW DANGEROUS IS ELOHIM CITY?

Whatever the truth behind the rumors of drug labs, Millar's concern about the possibility of a raid is grounded in past experiences. Twice before he had been involved in armed standoffs with law enforcement officers. The first happened when federal agents wanted to search the grounds for a member of The Order who allegedly was hiding there, and the second occurred as a result of a child custody dispute. In both incidents, Millar and several armed men confronted law enforcement agents on the road, and violence was narrowly averted.

Elohim City's reputation as a paramilitary compound stems in part from these confrontations. Members are heavily armed and prepared to fight, yet we rarely saw guns except during target shooting outings. Although paramilitary training reportedly has occurred in the past, it did not while we were there, and Delano, a gun enthusiast himself, was unimpressed by the teenagers' ability to shoot.

The community's conflicts with the law grow out of members' belief that Yahuah's laws take precedence over worldly laws. A strong antinomian theme runs throughout community life, which is reflected in members' reluctance to register births and, in some cases, to pay income taxes. Shortly before Shook and Delano's second visit, an elder was arrested for trying to shoplift a set of kitchen curtains from a Wal-Mart store, even though he had hundreds of dollars in his pocket. His justification was that Wal-Mart is an unfair corporation that drives local stores out of business. Instead of punishing the offender, Millar and others spoke out in church against the gossip triggered by the incident. The attitude Delano and Shook heard expressed most often was that the offender was justified but foolish because his actions brought the community bad publicity.[30]

Even if Elohim City's alleged connections with right-wing terrorists are true, we find it hard to believe that the community itself poses any threat. We found that despite their radical beliefs, members are mainly interested in living quietly and peacefully apart from the world. But more importantly, the community's demographic structure undermines the claim that the group is dangerous. Out of approximately ninety members, about forty are children, and another twenty are over the age of fifty. Some of them are quite elderly. Half of the remaining thirty members are women or teenage girls, leaving a "fighting force" of about fifteen adult males and teenage boys.

Although we can only speculate, it appears that Elohim City's reputation as a terrorist training center stems from its open-door policy concerning visitors. Anyone who wants to visit is welcome, as long as one abides by the community's rules. Just as we were welcomed into the community with nothing more than a letter and

a phone call, so others have been allowed in without background checks that might have screened out people who later brought negative attention to the community. Moreover, reports of weapons training at Elohim City have lent credibility to the terrorist image. Whatever the truth behind the alleged connections with right-wing terrorists, those charges were beyond the scope of our study.

ELOHIM CITY IN RETROSPECT: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

As outsiders who are neither racist nor Identity believers, we were both repelled and attracted by Elohim City. Two incidents dramatized the contradictions we felt. The first occurred shortly after Delano and Shook arrived on their second visit. During an outing at the river, the skinheads and teenagers refused to use their usual swimming hole because of "niggers and Indians down there drinking and smoking dope." At the next place they tried, two white women pulled up in a car with a mixed-race baby which the teens referred to as a "niglet." Then two effeminate men arrived and took pictures of each other on the bridge, causing them to be labeled "fags." Some of the teenagers openly made fun of them, and one skinhead approached them menacingly, while the other said, "This looks like it could be a hate crime in the making." No violence erupted, but the men were told to leave, which they did. Shook and Delano felt ashamed because, as guests, all they could do was watch from the sidelines as the scene unfolded.

The second incident occurred the day Delano and Shook left Elohim City. Shook described that day's meeting in her field notes:

> Each family gave their testimonies and I almost started crying when I began mine. I thanked the community for being so generous. They fed and housed us. Talked to us about their personal beliefs. They even paid us to work. And we were strangers from Montana they didn't know a thing about.
>
> Once all the families gave their testimonies, Grampa asked Wes [Delano] if he'd like to speak. When he was through, they offered to put us in the "Secret Place" to be prayed for. It was like nothing I've ever experienced before. We kneeled down next to each other, and all the little children put their hands on us. Then all the adults and older kids stood in a circle around us. Grampa began to pray and other voices joined in. So many of them were speaking in tongues. I was crying by the end. There was such love in that room, and it was for us, for me. I really felt like I was part of something spiritual. When I stood up, I received a succession of hugs and invitations to come back. . . . It was like magic.

ENDNOTES

[1] Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 1997 annual meeting of the Communal Studies Association in Tacoma, Washington, and the 1998 annual meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association in San Francisco. This version has benefited greatly from the valuable suggestions provided by *Nova Religio*'s anonymous reviewers.

[2] Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 47-71.

[3] James Corcoran, *Bitter Harvest: The Birth of Paramilitary Terrorism in the Heartland* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1995).

[4] Odinism is a pagan religion that views the Nordic race as the chosen race of nature. The religion worships the Norse gods, is opposed to Christianity, and hold religious festivals called "blots."

[5] Kevin Flynn and Gary Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood: Inside America's Racist Underground* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 84, 96, 120; Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America: Millenarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 61-69.

[6] Jess Walter, *Every Knee Shall Bow* (New York: Regan Books, 1996).

[7] Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 255-90; Morris Dees and James Corcoran, *Gathering Storm: America's Militia Threat* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 30-67.

[8] Mark S. Hamm, *Apocalypse in Oklahoma: Waco and Ruby Ridge Revenged* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 198.

[9] Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America*, 57-59. "Elohim City," *Dateline* NBC report, 30 May 1997.

[10] We wish to thank James Flightner, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, for funding this field trip. We also thank university attorney David Aronofsky and president George Dennison for supporting the trip in the face of stiff opposition from the university system's tort claims attorney.

[11] According to Millar, Elohim City uses the original Hebrew calendar, which he claims was supplanted during the Babylonian captivity.

[12] We conducted three formal, tape-recorded interviews—two with Millar and one with Jim Ellison. We also recorded a question-and-answer session about family life with several teenagers and two parents, but the rest of our information was gathered through informal conversations with members and our own observations. We did not use a consent form because members had collectively agreed to let us visit. Although a few members avoided us during our initial visit, neither Balch nor any of his students encountered any hostility.

[13] Of course, even small communities can conceal information from outsiders. As Erving Goffman points out in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1979), 47-65, group members frequently engage in "teamwork" to prevent the "leakage" of potentially embarrassing information.

[14] In his comments on the first draft of this paper, Millar stated that "the Confederate flag really predated any racial emphasis and is based on St. Andrew's cross, predating Columbus. To equate the flying of the Confederate flag [with racism] is either a liberal racist bias or a lack of knowledge of history of this ancient emblem." Undated

letter to Rob Balch, received 7 October 1997.

[15] Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, viii, ix, 4-5, 92, 129, 137, 186.

[16] James A. Aho, *The Politics of Righteousness: Idaho Christian Patriotism* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1990), 55-61; Flynn and Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood*, 45-71.

[17] Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 121-47.

[18] Dees and Corcoran, *Gathering Storm*, 22-23, 88-89, 103-04; Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 255-90.

[19] Catherine Wessinger, "Millennialism With and Without the Mayhem," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem*, eds. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 47-59.

[20] Cf. Hal Lindsey, *There's a New World Coming* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House, 1973).

[21] Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 104-12.

[22] This information comes from two interviews with Millar, one conducted by Balch on 20 March 1997, and the other by Stephan Langdon, a former student who drove up from New Orleans to take part in the spring break field trip, on 22 March 1997. Both interviews were conducted at Elohim City.

[23] Our data on these groups come from Balch's observations between 1991 and 1998. In addition to attending many Aryan Nations gatherings, Balch has participated in summer Bible camps sponsored by America's Promise and Peters' Church of Christ.

America's Promise is located in Sandpoint, Idaho. Dave Barley is the son-in-law of the late Sheldon Emry, a well-known Identity preacher who founded the Lord's Covenant Church in Phoenix, Arizona. America's Promise gained national attention in 1996 when three white supremacists with ties to Barley's church were arrested for a series of bank robberies and bombings in Spokane, Washington ("Three Suspected Phineas Priests Charged in Spokane Bombings," *Klanwatch Intelligence Report*, November 1996).

The Church of Christ, located in LaPorte, Colorado, is one of the largest and most influential Identity churches. Its multimedia ministry, Scriptures for America, includes radio and TV broadcasts, a web site, a mail order catalog, and a newsletter. Peters is best known for organizing the 1992 Estes Park Patriot meeting, which played a key role in the formation of the militia movement (Dees and Corcoran, *Gathering Storm*, 49-67).

[24] Roger Rusk, *The Other End of the World: An Alternative Theory Linking Prophecy and History* (Plano, TX: Le Book Company, 1988).

[25] Elohim City distinguishes between Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, citing Leviticus 23:5-6 where Moses is commanded to tell the people to celebrate these holidays on different days.

[26] Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 83-84.

[27] Tony Reinhart, "'Mellow' Compound Has Dark Underbelly," *The Record*, Kitchener, Ontario, 9 May 1997, 1A-3A.

[28] Millar had strong feelings about this incident: "That Balch would use information garnered as a result of him being granted open guest status in his proposed scholarly dissertation on 'Communities' WAS EXPECTED. That he would exploit his relationship to reveal to mass media intricate and potentially threatening personal arrangements was, and is, considered a breach of trust and extremely bad manners. The fact that Millar greets a man warmly reveals that he had no personal ill will toward those whose conduct he deems inappropriate." Undated letter to Rob Balch, received 7 October 1997.

[29] Cf. Gertrude Enders Huntington, "Children of the Hutterites," *Natural History* 90 (1981): 34-46.

[30] Upon reading this paragraph, Millar added that he did "not feel the man was justified," and he claimed he "strongly opposes theft of any kind. . . . Store managers need to show a profit. Manufacturers need to pay employees; further, the something-for-nothing philosophy destroys character and grates on my sense of fairness." Undated letter to Rob Balch, received 7 October 1997.

The Net of Tantra On-line

Ronald L. Massanari

The vision of TANTRA.COM is to facilitate access to these wonderful tools of peace, power, and transformation for as many people as are ready to use them. It is our firm belief that the development of advanced love skills is one of the most appropriate areas for human exploration as we move into the uncertainties of the next millenium (sic). . . . Tantra lights the way.[1]

Both scholarly and popular literature on new religions in America often identifies Tantra as one of the many sources for and a specific example of these "new" religions. Internet searches for "New Religions in America" or for "New Age religions" generally include Tantra within their domains. Although traditional Tantra and Tantra in the West have received considerable attention, the new form of Tantra on-line is largely unexamined. Its very existence on the internet, however, raises some intriguing questions. What is the relation of the net of Tantra to traditional Tantra? To what extent is Tantra on-line associated with "new" religious phenomena in America? Does the on-line format affect what is presented as Tantra? In order to address these questions, I will first describe the nature and scope of the net of Tantra in terms of representative sites, with particular focus on one site, the Church of Tantra. Next, I will examine whether Tantra on-line falls within accepted scholarly characterizations of new religions and New Age religions. Finally, I will explore the possibility that Tantra on the internet is illustrative of a new form of alternative religious phenomenon. My contention is that, while some characteristics of Tantra in the West link it to "new" religious phenomena, its on-line presentation formally and substantively alters the nature and identity of traditional Tantra. At the very least, a previously esoteric tradition has been made public. In addition, the nature of on-line encounters, much like other text-based modes of communication, exaggerates the significance of the isolated individual, thereby compromising the assumption of interdependence, a primary claim of traditional Tantra. These differences, among others, raise serious questions about the association of the net of Tantra with traditional Tantra and with other new religious phenomena.

In part stimulated by the search for alternative forms of spirituality and by the availability of teachers from non-Western religious traditions, Tantric-oriented groups sprang up in the West, and in the United States in particular, at least a century ago. Given the esoteric and syncretistic character of Tantra, determining its scope and influence in the West is difficult. However, references in J. Gordon Melton's *Encyclopedia of American Religions* provide at least some indication of the spread of Tantra in America.[2] Melton identifies eighteen Tantric oriented groups which are variously related to Hinduism,[3] Tibetan Buddhism,[4] Japanese Buddhism,[5] and Western syncretistic traditions.[6] Most of these groups were founded during the 1960s and 1970s. However, the Tantrik Order in America (now defunct) was organized by Pierre Bernard around the turn of the century and was "possibly the first created by a Western student of the Eastern teachings."[7] Another quite different Tantric-oriented group, the Shingon Mission, was brought to Hawaii in 1902 and officially reorganized in 1914. Approximately half of these groups were located in California; most still exist in some form. Current addresses are listed for thirteen. Membership figures range from a handful to several thousand. Most are listed as having a hundred adherents or less. More than half of these groups claim additional international membership. A different teacher or guru initially founded and directed each group.[8] Almost all of these gurus used eclectic and esoteric modes of teaching that integrated both Eastern and Western strains of thought and practice. Crises of leadership and identity characterize the several groups that have lost their gurus. Because of their syncretistic character, these groups are quite distinct. Similarities, however, are present in their use of Tantric teaching and practice, usually of the "right-handed" variety (practiced within the imagination via visualization disciplines), although several claim to use "left-handed" disciplines (literally or actually practiced). There is no evidence that these groups are part of a larger common movement, either organizationally or in terms of common texts. While a number claim a lineage that links them with traditional Tantric disciplines, these groups are independent communities of devotees which are focused around a particular teacher and engaged in alternative spiritual practices. Although most of these groups sought converts and held to a vision of a broader awakening within society, there is little evidence that they were aggressively evangelical or spent much time marketing themselves, with the possible exception of the Osho Commune.

In *The Tantric Tradition*, Agehananda Bharati claims that "[w]hat distinguishes Tantric from other Hindu and Buddhist teaching is its systematic emphasis on the identity of the absolute (*paramartha*) and the phenomenal (*vyavahara*) world when filtered through the experience of *sadhana* [spiritual exercises]."[9] While other schools declare that the reconciliation of opposites is possible, the Tantric claims to

actually experience it. Accordingly, Tantra presents a universe model that suggests "reality is one, but it is to be grasped through a process of conceptual and intuitive polarization. The poles are activity and passivity, and the universe 'works' through their interaction. The universe ceases to 'work'—i.e. its state of absolute oneness and quiescence is realized—when these two poles merge."[10] In addition, the methodology of "psycho-experimental interpretation" is common in Tantric traditions.[11] Thus, the realization of the oneness of reality by way of experiential spiritual exercises is a defining characteristic of traditional Tantra.

DESCRIPTION OF TANTRA ON-LINE[12]

Tantra on-line is presented in a variety of forms which convey multiple messages about Tantra. Many, but not all, of these presentations conform to or approximate the defining characteristic of traditional Tantra noted above. Four general categories describe most of what I found by searching the internet for "Tantra" and "Tantra in America": resources, texts and commentaries, interpretations of Tantra, and workshops and seminars.[13] Rather than attempting to provide a complete listing of sites found, I have selected representative and/or illustrative examples.

Resources

Constituting one of the larger collections of sites, resource sites such as "Tantra.Com"[14] are locations for books, videos, audio tapes, and links to other resources. "Tantraworks"[15] claims to be an "interactive resource for loving seekers of spiritual liberation" that will "empower your spiritual evolution." "Tantra: Resources On WWW"[16] and "Tantra Hot Web Links"[17] also provide connections to additional sites expanding and extending the Tantra net in many directions. Although many of these resource sites present Tantra as a kind of New Age eroticism and sexual therapy, one can find some that reflect more traditional forms of Tantra.

Texts and Commentaries

Another group of sites, considerably smaller in number, links the searcher to various traditional textual sources. These sites include "Kama Sutra,"[18] "Yoni Tantra,"[19] "Practice Of Kalachakra,"[20] and "The Brahamnanda Tantra."[21] With some movement deeper into the net, other texts become available. "Tantrick Home Page,"[22] for example,

supplies a number of access sites for Tantric texts. Although not representative of the vast textual repository of historical Tantra, these sites at least alert a person scanning the internet to Tantra's complex textual tradition.

Interpretations of Tantra

In addition to advertising scholarly treatments of Tantra, there are some interpretive sites. For example, "Tantric Buddhism—Sexual Pantheism"[23] uses a text-based approach to claim that Tantra differs from other forms of Buddhism by advocating a philosophy of world acceptance in which nirvana is realized in the midst of sense phenomena. Along similar lines, "Tibetan Buddhism" maintains that "Tantric systems transform the basic human passions of desire and aversion for the purpose of spiritual development."[24] Emphasizing the practice of meditation, the author maintains that "one needs some skill in both self-control and acceptance if one is to be successful with Tantric work." Various steps on the Tantric path are presented in outline form.

In a rather extensive interview with Tantric Master Prem Pranama, recorded as "What Is Tantra? Riding The Wisdom Tiger," Tantra is offered as "the hot blood of spiritual practice." Claiming that the discipline of Tantra "requires a strong, well integrated sense of self prepared through careful preliminary practice," the Master admits that "on the Tantric path, it is perhaps easier to become the ultimate form of egohood and delusion than it is to become free." Arguing that Tantric spiritual practice is of vital importance for our culture, Pranama asserts that "[f]or one who is awake, the relationship to the world, to the elements, is completely different than for anybody else." Criticizing non-Tantric schools because they are "unable to enjoy the game" and because "there is no space for non-dual dualism in their nondualism," he maintains that the gift of Tantra "is that we can encompass the whole of our lives, from the ordinary to the most wondrous, in a single path."[25]

Such interpretive sites, while comparatively few, present elements of historic and traditional Tantra, albeit often in idiosyncratic terms. The Tantric ideals of personal development, self awakening, and spiritual discipline are especially evident in these sites.

Workshops and Seminars[26]

In terms of numbers, sites advertising workshops and seminars to introduce and train seekers in the Tantric disciplines ranked close to those providing resources. Many of these sites, although not all, were oriented to New Age spirituality and body-sex therapy. For example,

"Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy"[27] reports on and advertises various workshops that will help a person to "discover deeper states of love and ecstasy within yourself . . . greatly extend your sensual and sexual pleasure, [and] deepen your intimate connections using the ancient spiritual art of Tantra." "Tantra Universe" lists workshops that offer a "play ground of brain blowing opportunities."[28] "Transformational Tantra" presents programs that "synergize psychology body oriented therapy and Tantric sex and spirituality . . . [providing] tools to make love, sex and intimacy a path to wholeness."[29] "Quantum Tantra" reports on workshops of "physics-assisted deep union with nature" that use a "new style of scientific inquiry based on the strengths of both tantra and physics."[30] "Abhidhyan Yoga Institute" offers "authentic teachings on tantra yoga meditation," and "No-nonsense assistance on your unique spiritual journey."[31]

THE CHURCH OF TANTRA

The Church of Tantra is one of the larger (in terms of its menu) and more clearly articulated sites found within the net of Tantra. Exploring this site in some detail provides additional insight into the character of Tantra on-line. For example, the site includes not only teachings about Tantra but an organizational structure, both real and virtual. The homepage links twenty-five sites that will be examined to identify the structure and organization of the on-line Church of Tantra and to delineate major themes in the various teachings presented.

Structure and Organization

While the use of the designator "church" indicates a reference to some kind of organizational structure, the Church of Tantra site does not provide a rationale for the use of this designation. Clearly the word "church" does not conform to the language of traditional Tantra. It seems likely, however, that the use of this designation simply reflects an effort to describe a community (virtual or real) of practitioners that is understandable within the conventional Western context. Moreover, the use of "church" illustrates that Tantra on-line is an adapted form of Tantra and that the very effort to plant Tantra in a foreign soil alters what is being planted.

All sites are signified by the large "letterhead" of the Church of Tantra, but how or why they received this imprimatur is not indicated. The homepage, however, includes an introduction to Tantra that offers the religious perspective and selection criteria for these sites: "Most westerners use the word 'Tantra' to cover sacred and enhanced sexuality.

Tantra, as practiced in the West, referred to as 'neo-Tantra,' borrows from many traditions. . . . Real 'Tantra' is a rigorous spiritual discipline and vast field of study—the sexual aspect is a small but important part of it." In basic conformity with the previously noted defining characteristic of traditional Tantra, the homepage site identifies Tantra as "the experience of transcending space and time, of surpassing the phenomenal duality of spirit and matter, of recovering the primeval unity, [and] the realization of the identity . . . of the manifested and unmanifested aspects of the All" through the practice of "esoterically significant means of realizing the unity of flesh and spirit, of the human and the divine." What is apparent is that, while these sites pay considerable homage to traditional Tantra, many are aligned with eclectic Western "neo-Tantra" movements.[32]

Structurally, the Church of Tantra on-line appears as a virtual reality "church" organized around a website and an e-mail address.[33] One clue that this "church" may be more than a "net" church is a statement on the "Join And Contribute"[34] page that a Temple of Tantra is to be built in Northern California; the specific location was not given. Joining the Church of Tantra via e-mail provides access to a "members only" website "which contains much more sexually explicit material" as well as an e-mail newsletter reporting on Tantric activities. Of particular interest is the note that, because there is an age requirement for the "members only" website, the Church of Tantra has "an outreach program for teenagers," presumably on-line. The "Gift Shop" claims "shelves of over 24,000 books, videos and periodicals," as well as "sex enhancing drugs, nutrients, and aphrodisiacs," which can be ordered by e-mail. Highly recommended items are "marked with the erect lingam symbol."[35] "Tantra Events"[36] posts workshops and seminars. "Tantra: Resources On The World Wide Web"[37] opens the Church of Tantra's site to the net of Tantra.

Although no specific spiritual director for the Church of Tantra is mentioned and no address is provided, what these sites suggest is that enough of a structure and organization exists to create and maintain websites, produce e-mail newsletters, handle correspondence and contributions, facilitate book and paraphernalia orders, organize workshops, and build a temple. However, given the elusive details of its structure and organization, one gets the impression that the Church of Tantra is essentially woven around the net site and an e-mail address. Even though most of the other sites emphasize the spiritual nature of the church, these organizational pages are more oriented to the erotic. While this focus may be a marketing or attention-grabbing device, it presents mixed, even conflicted, messages about The Church of Tantra. The lack of explicit information about the structure of the church creates a virtual reality with an aura of mystery, in some ways accessible, yet in many ways inaccessible.

Major Themes of the Teachers

In addition to excerpts from the love teachings of the *Kama Sutra*,[38] most of the Church of Tantra menu consists of sites containing the writings of various teachers about whom little or no information is provided.[39] They are:

1. Kenneth Ray Stubbs, PhD

"Sacred Orgasms" consists of free verse, not necessarily poetic, about transformative, meditative, spiritual sex.[40] While only indirectly linked to Tantra, these selections explore ritualized sex as a path to enlightenment.

2. Swami Nostradamus Virato

"Tantric Sex: A Spiritual Path of Ecstasy" presents a general history of Tantra centered on spiritualized sex as "a way to reverse the negative energy on the planet, and a way to release yourself and reach transcendence." Swami Virato maintains that Tantra is a profound spiritual understanding of life based on living in harmony with reality. As "the art of spiritualizing your sexuality," Tantra "is essentially a merging with oneness, using the physical plane as the launch pad." "[T]he very essence of Tantra assumes you already have all the knowledge to become enlightened immediately."[41]

3. catherine yronwode

"The Biological Basis of Tantric Sex" uses John C. Lilly's research to explore the biological basis of Tantric practice, which yronwode claims is "somewhat akin to the practice of biofeedback training." Advocating "a form of sexual ritual in which slow, non-orgasmic intercourse is seen as a path to an experience of the divine," yronwode concludes that "human beings seem to be naturally equipped to experience the metaphysical world."[42] In "Tibetan Bhuddism (*sic*) and Tantra Yoga," yronwode asserts that Tibetan Buddhists practice "a Buddhist veneer over their native nature-sex religion, [and] have come up with ways of allowing the Buddhist search for 'nothingness' and the 'absence of desire' to meld with their earlier sex-worship religion."[43] "Karezza and Alice Bunker Stockham" offers an intriguing introduction to Stockham, a nineteenth-century physician who traveled to India "to learn the 'secrets' of Tantra." According to yronwode, Stockham advocated

Karezza (Italian for "caress") techniques, also known as the "Oneida method" of "Male Continence," as a form of birth control that promoted social and political equality for women and also marital pleasure and fidelity.[44] While paying homage to Tantra, yronwode appears to use Stockham and John Humphrey Noyes as legitimating historical sources for the "neo-Tantra" movement in the West.

4. Dinu Roman

"Tantrism: An Overview" interprets Tantra as a system that has "only One Ultimate Principle" but which has "two aspects, one Transcendent, and the other Immanent." Unlike world-denying paths, Tantra recognizes the Absolute manifest in all things. As an "Ideal Monism," it deals with the different aspects of "Supreme Consciousness and practical ways to experience them." According to Roman, Tantra is a path in which "[p]leasure is not an end, but a way to reach Divine Consciousness." Similar to yronwode, Roman waxes eloquent concerning "retention—the untold secret."[45]

5. Rose Dawn Scott (attribution to D. Yogini Padma Ushas Suryananda)

"Breath Control" relies on a collection of traditional texts to elaborate breath techniques for "beginning prana practices" in preparation for the experience of "tantric union."[46] In "Tantra Fantasy," the creative imagination is identified with Tantric "inner vision" in such a way that the practice of fantasy becomes visualization "raised to such a level that it becomes truth." Linking this practice to the "primordial form of emptiness" and to the realization "that the body is microcosm of the universe," the "erotic aspects of visualization" become vehicles for "attaining the transcendental."[47] In "Tantra: Will," Scott, using Aleister Crowley and Jungian archetypes, maintains that the "Tantric Will assumes that each individual is responsible for his/her own actions, and that those who refuse to shoulder this responsibility will ultimately be barred from any real Tantric evolution or progress." Arguing that emotions can be transformed into transcendental ecstasy, the author maintains that the "Tantric Will teaches the unification of body, mind, intellect, intuition, and spirit."[48] "The Tantric Path: A Few Thoughts" claims that the purpose of all Tantric ritual "goes beyond simple sex magick or better orgasms." Its purpose is "union, merger, oneness."[49] "Tantra: Psychic Protection" identifies Tantric sexual love as "a potent form of magic as well as a path toward enlightenment." Asserting that protection is needed in all forms of magical ritual, in Tantra "[t]his form of protection is designed . . . to prevent sexual energy from

escaping from the body . . . and to prevent any outside forces to intrude . . . which would pollute the act."[50]

6. Jeffery Tye

Reading more like self-help sex therapy, "Yoni Massage"[51] and "Lingam Massage"[52] present quite explicit massage techniques. These selections make no explicit links to traditional Tantric spirituality. In "The Polarity Process," Tye claims that "Tantrikas use their sexual energy with awareness, love, and respect, for themselves and their partner." The author provides a procedure, based on a traditional understanding of the *chakras*, "to bring the body into a balanced state before engaging in sexual activity."[53] "Sex Magic Process" asserts that "[r]eligion has done much to suppress our divine sexual nature and has kept the masses ignorant of the potential uses of sexual energy." Instead, Tye proposes Sex Magic as "the art of utilizing sexual orgasm to create a reality and/or expand consciousness."[54] Only cursory details about this process are presented.

7. Austin Osman Spare

An "Introduction to Spare" presents, in cursory fashion, a visualization process, called the "formula of atavistic resurgence," developed by Spare.[55] The remaining three Spare sites reproduce substantial selections from his works. After examining how different religions understand pleasure, freedom, and power, "The Book of Pleasure (Self-love): The Psychology of Ecstasy"[56] develops the idea that sex and sexuality are vehicles for realizing the transcendental or real Self. The text ranges from rambling nonsense to insightful, albeit eclectic and esoteric, musings on Self-Love. Similar in content to "The Book of Pleasure," "The Focus of Life: The Mutterings of Aaos"[57] and "Anathema of Zos: The Sermon to the Hypocrite"[58] are collections of esoteric aphorisms, in a Nietzschean spirit, which oscillate between ranting and fascinating insight. Little mention, however, is made of Tantra.

THE NET OF TANTRA—WHAT IS IT?

As is evident from this survey of sites, a veritable collage of messages is presented by and about Tantra on-line. Some of these messages are traditional, while others are reflective, idiosyncratic, superficial, or commercial. The realization of the oneness of reality through

experiential spiritual exercise, a defining characteristic of traditional Tantra, is frequently, but not always, evident. This characteristic does provide at least an implied, if not explicit, criterion for using the attribution of Tantra in many of these sites. Spiritual exercises are referenced, but the focus of many of these sites is more on sexual therapy, techniques, and the libido than on the full range of spiritual disciplines available in traditional Tantra. Other sites emphasize self-transformation and spiritual enlightenment realized through a variety of disciplines, including spiritual sexuality. While there is much talk about an experiential realization of one's interdependence with all of reality, only infrequent examination or exploration of the nature and character of this realization is evident. Often the Tantra sites refer to an alternative worldview, one that is nondual or monistic rather than dualistic, and to an alternative ethic, one that is this-worldly, bodily, and sexual rather than world-denying. Reveling in sensuality is often contrasted with "Puritan" and "Victorian" asceticism, which is usually identified with traditional Western religions and conventional culture. Historic and traditional Tantra are referenced, but one gets the impression that these references are used as a way of authorizing and legitimating the claims presented. The apparent purposes for these sites range from advertising, in order to sell such services as workshops or such products as books and paraphernalia, to propagating an idiosyncratic hodgepodge of spiritual teachings, often about sex.

Tantra in the Context of Eastern Religions in the West

Jacob Needleman's exploration of the spiritual move Eastward is helpful in setting a context for the appeal of Eastern religions in general and of Tantra in particular.[59] Needleman claims that "there are three ways in which Western, and particularly American, religions are vulnerable to correction by the religions of the East: exclusion of the mind [because Western religions, at least in their popular forms, have focused on emotions, disobedience, and immorality rather than on ignorance], the absence of religious techniques and methods [because they have forgotten the instrumental nature of religious forms and physical-psychological disciplines], and the underestimation of human possibility [because they no longer consider humans able to affect significant change in their lives without dependence on a supernatural agency]."[60] In general, Tantra on-line addresses these putative vulnerabilities in Western religions, especially in the more spiritually oriented sites. Much of Tantra on-line's worldview is based on an anthropology that assumes, unlike conventional Western religious understandings, the natural capacity for transformation within each person. A significant function of Eastern religions, then, is to develop

techniques and methods that use this capacity to overcome ignorance with the goal of self-awareness and liberation.

In the specific section on Tantra, Needleman acknowledges that the image of Tantra in the Western mind is of "wild and lurid associations . . . of psychospiritual science fiction and sexual acrobatics that would put to shame even the most imaginative of our contemporary pornographers and quite eclipse the achievements of our hardiest erotic warriors."[61] But, according to Needleman, Tantra seeks and claims a higher realization and understanding: "Vajrayana is said to be the internal path because no function, no manifestation in man is spared exposure to awareness."[62] Although they often stray beyond the developed forms of traditional Tantra, many sites in the net of Tantra claim at least an alternative, if not superior, form of understanding that includes all human experiencs as potential means for the transformation of self. Frequently, however, this claim is simply asserted and left substantively unsupported.

Given the above descriptions suggesting at least some connection between Tantra on-line and traditional Tantra, to what extent does the net of Tantra represent a new religion in America and/or a New Age religion? In order to deal with this question, the net of Tantra needs to be assessed in comparison to the base line characteristics of "new" religious phenomena.[63]

The Net of Tantra in Relation to New Religions

In *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America*, Robert Ellwood and Harry Partin provide a taxonomy of contemporary new religions that consists of fifteen identifying characteristics. The first three markers—"a founder who has had, or at least seems to know the secret of, nontemporal ecstatic experience," "an interpretation of the experience as possession or marvelous travel," and "a band of supernormal helpers"—do not describe Tantra on-line, but other traits specified by Ellwood and Partin prove to be at least somewhat applicable. "A desire to be 'modern' and to use scientific language" is evident by the very fact of using the internet as a medium of information and propagation. In addition, while rejecting materialistic and reductionistic science, many Tantra sites accept, some explicitly, the compatibility between an expanded understanding of science and the spiritual experience of oneness. Some even use "science" to substantiate their claims about such experiences—especially the claim that sexuality is a doorway to the sacred. "A reaction against orthodoxy," especially if orthodoxy means traditional Western religions and conventional morality, characterizes the net of Tantra. One often reads that living within the boundaries of traditional Western religions and conventional

society is constricting, inauthentic, and a barrier to personal and spiritual evolution. Yet at the same time, the claimed link to Tantric traditions is clearly an appeal to a form of orthodoxy, although this orthodoxy might seem novel and unorthodox within Western society. "Eclecticism and syncretism" are apparent in those sites that link the sexuality and spirituality of Tantra with humanistic and transpersonal psychology, esoteric and nontraditional religious traditions, and New Age interests. In the more philosophically oriented sites, especially those of the Church of Tantra, "a monistic and impersonal ontology" appears as an interconnected, interdependent reality that is quite different from conventional Western understandings based on dualism and separation. In their presentation of this alternative ontology, some sites distinguish nondual perspectives from monistic ones; others identify with monism. "Optimism, success orientation, and a tendency to evolutionary views" describe Tantra on-line. The claim that humans are capable of self-initiated growth and development which can lead to an awareness of oneness with reality itself is grounded in an optimistic and evolutionary framework. Because the focus is on the personal and the cosmic, there is little evidence of an evolutionary social-political perspective or even of a social ethic. Assertions about materialistic success are not particularly apparent. "Emphasis on healing" appears as the personal healing of growth and new experiences, but only rarely as an alternative medicine or as cure for disease.[64]

There are references to reality and sex techniques as magic in the Tantra web sites, but the use of "magic techniques—of nonempirical means for empirical ends"—occurs infrequently. Because meditation, visualization, and other experiential techniques are understood within an expanded ontology of interdependence, the conventional distinctions between empirical and nonempirical do not pertain. Typically, the claim is for an enabling power within the natural rather than a manipulative power over it. Because there is little sense of community in Tantra on-line, "a simple but definite process of entry and initiation" is not evident. However, the use of various initiatory sexual techniques and rituals for spiritual enlightenment is advocated. "The establishment of a sacred center" is apparent in centering for meditation, the space created by the sacred sex act or visualization, and the sacramental reality that comes with spiritual and personal realization. The sacred center, however, is not so much communal and social as personal and cosmic. An "emphasis on psychic powers" is evident in Tantra on-line, at least in the appeal to special powers within each individual that can be made manifest by various techniques, especially sexual and meditative. Because of their expanded sense of the natural and normal, so-called paranormal powers are rarely mentioned. Since the very nature of on-line interaction is individualistic rather than communal, the "tendency to attract isolated individuals

rather than family groups" is a descriptive characteristic. The final marker of new religions according to Ellwood and Partin—"increasing emphasis on participation by all members in the ecstatic experience through group chanting, meditation, and so forth"—is not evident as group activity, except in workshop settings. Still, ecstatic techniques are often recommended for those individuals who want to experience and participate in Tantric spirituality.[65]

Given the Ellwood and Partin characterizations, Tantra on-line is only partially located within the universe of new religions they describe. Although not identical with all fifteen characteristics, the net of Tantra is congruent with some of these markers. There is, however, a significant difference between the net of Tantra and other new religions stemming from the former's on-line mode of communication and participation.

Using a different framework, Thomas Robbins and David G. Bromley identify new religions as religious movements that experiment in the areas of gender, economics, persuasion and conversion, and healing and therapy.[66] Given the individualistic character of on-line interaction, experimentation with familial and gender roles in a communal setting is not applicable. Gender experimentation, however, does appear in the forms of female leadership and teachers, androgynous or nongendered conceptions of reality and the sacred, nongendered understandings of human perfection, and critiques of traditional patriarchal values and structures. Economic experimentation in the sense of communal maximization of resources or new economic structures is not apparent. Nevertheless, marketing for therapy sessions and workshops, as well as for various products, suggests the existence of Tantra enterprises. Even so, there is little evidence that these enterprises are established to create alternative means of production or to transform current social and economic organizations and structures. While proselytizing and bonding with other converts characterize most new religions, Tantra on-line addresses individuals without any assumed bonding, with the possible exception of identifying with a "virtual community." If there is an attempt at persuasion, it occurs through the net of Tantra, and because of the privacy of these encounters, there is no necessary public evidence of conversion. The marker of experimenting in healing and therapy, where "sacralization of selfhood, of interior space, leads to healing rituals that focus on self-empowerment, self-actualization, and self-integration," is the one identifier that most closely describes Tantra on-line.

In terms of the Robbins and Bromley characterizations, the net of Tantra is only tangentially related to other new religions. If we were examining a Tantric community, these markers would probably be more appropriate, but they are less applicable for Tantra on-line.

The Net of Tantra in Relation to New Age Religions

According to Catherine Albanese, New Age religions are characterized by "personal transformation and direct spiritual experience" that lead to social transformation. As previously noted, although personal transformation describes the net of Tantra, there is little evidence for social transformation. While New Age mysticism "comes clad in a rhetoric of newness that is expressed as ongoing revelation," revelational language which assumes some external source does not describe Tantra on-line. Internal realization, rather than revelation, is more characteristic. "New Agers stress healing . . . physical health is a sign of blessing, part of the empowerment that comes through close contact with what is sacred."[67] For the net of Tantra, however, the emphasis is more on healing as liberation and the awakening of the whole person than it is on physical health. Just as a kind of ontological positivism predominates with New Agers, a religious materialism is evident in Tantra on-line in the assumption of a transformed material world that is embodied within the sacred. The last characteristic, "new voluntarism . . . expressed in the popular, nonelite, 'do-it-yourself' quality," describes Tantra on-line in part because of its on-line format.[68] In short, the net of Tantra only partially fits Albanese's characterization of New Age religions.

Even assuming significant connections with the "new" religious phenomena identified by Ellwood and Partin, Robbins and Bromley, and Albanese, Tantra on-line's electronic format indicates an emerging form of religion that has no known precedent in the history of religions.

CONCLUSION

The net of Tantra represents a unique hybrid that is emerging from the ferment of late twentieth-century alternative religious activity. Not only has the message presented been adapted to the modern Western context—a common characteristic of "new" religions—but the nature of the medium presenting these messages makes Tantra on-line different. To some extent at least, the medium alters the message—even when presenting Tantra as a traditional and historic religion—simply by making it so easily accessible. What was esoteric is now exoteric. Whereas traditional Tantra is a controlled spiritual path, dependent upon a teacher, secret teachings and techniques, and arduous and lengthy disciplines, in its on-line form it is presented in the most public of forums without the esoteric control of teacher, secrecy, or discipline. The presumption seems to be that the traditional modes of transmission are no longer necessary for understanding and practice. Gone is the specific teacher (guru), gone is the immersion in the tradition, gone is

the supportive community, and gone are those teachings addressed to and for the particular participant. One seems left on one's own, gleaning from various sites and different teachers generalized instructions, teachings, and techniques, presumably for independent and private practice. There is something paradoxical, even conflicted, about a message of the experiential realization of the interdependence of all reality being presented to isolated, separate individuals sitting in front of their computer screens.

The message of Tantra on-line is not altogether clear. It is simply not apparent how a traditionally esoteric teaching is related to its new exoteric form. Secrecy and the unconventional do not mix easily with a democratizing and popularizing media. The message creates the ambiguity of participating in something publicly adapted to the contemporary American context and, at the same time, in something traditional, non-Western, and esoteric. How one receives this message—whether as esoteric or exoteric or both—alters what is being communicated and understood. The ambiguity of the message includes the claim that, while Tantra can be experienced, its public presentation cannot be conventionally understood. Yet it is this very accessible yet inaccessible character of Tantra that is often presented as one of the reasons for encountering, if not practicing, Tantra.

A useful interpretive framework for understanding communication media in general and the net of Tantra in particular is provided by Walter J. Ong's evolutionary theory of culture.[69] Distinguishing the hearing dominance of "primary orality" based on speech forms from sight dominated literacy based on the written or printed text helps identify some aspects of the move from traditional Tantra, which involves both oral components (transmission via the guru and the oral tradition) and literary components (transmission via text), to Tantra on-line, which is almost exclusively a form of text-based literacy. Similar to relying on the book, the net of Tantra is sight dominated, creating a separation of the word from the image, of speech from the text. Unlike primary orality in which physical presence is assumed, the modality of literacy, and its on-line form in particular, lacks the quality of physical presence and thereby simulates space and relationships. The self, within this modality, is presented and understood largely as an artificial construct, defined by a textual interchange. If relationships are established, it is by way of textual rather than embodied personal exchanges. As a form of literacy, the net of Tantra is characterized by a separation of the creative source of communication from its reception or audience, leading to an alienation and privatization of the selves involved. Yet the net of Tantra seems to assume that within this artificial space and between these private, even solitary selves, meaning and realization can be experienced by embodied, personally present readers of these internet sites.

While Tantra on-line could move into the domain of secondary orality—through the use of electronic media to combine sound and sight, word and image—at this point there is little evidence of its having done so. Currently, however, the on-line literacy mode of communication does provide for the possibility of encountering other virtual selves in virtual space via textual constructions with a kind of immediacy not available to the print forms of literacy. Because the reception of the literacy message is located primarily within an individual person's imagination, rather than within the personal interactions between the guru and devotee, the on-line message, like the book, is characterized by a kind of impersonality and disembodiment. Thus, while providing a new forum for its message and using new techniques for communication, the net of Tantra, at this point in time, remains within the domain of literacy. This has the effect of altering the form and compromising the substance of traditional Tantra.

In *Women in New Religions*, Elizabeth Puttick identifies Tantra as a "life-affirmative, body-positive path on which sexual passion is seen not as an obstruction but as our most powerful natural energy, which may be explored and transmuted into the Great Bliss of Liberation."[70] Examining the interrelationship of social issues and spirituality, Puttick acknowledges the potential abuse of power and sexual exploitation, as well as the creative possibilities, of such a guru-dominated path. Traditional Tantra provides a "highly disciplined context in which the rules and aims were understood by both parties—thus permitting the equality essential to success."[71] Such safeguards, however, depend upon the presence of a community, a guru, and a tradition—things not readily available on the internet. How one implements or embodies whatever one has learned on-line is left up to the individual in her or his private space. Such a situation compromises both the safeguards against potential abuse and the possibilities for creative expression in such a religious system.

As evidenced by the description of Tantra on-line, the appropriation of Tantra in the West frequently focuses inordinately on sex, sexuality, and sexual technique, without the larger context of the accepted disciplines found within traditional paths. Although a more holistic and spiritual perspective is sometimes evident, many sites accommodate the modern American predilection for immediacy by reducing Tantra to sexual technique and paraphernalia for direct application. The intensity and rigor of a lifelong discipline assumed in traditional Tantra is often converted to a simple pragmatic formula with claimed demonstrable results. This almost obsessive interest in sexuality can be seen as a response to the darker side of a culture with a Puritan inheritance. Thus, the net of Tantra, along with other such alternative perspectives, provides a critique, often intentional, of conventional American attitudes and culture in which affirming sexuality, especially in a spiritual sense, is problematic.

As a collage of sites, the net of Tantra is a doorway, but a doorway to what? Does one simply enter an internet alternative bookstore with shelves of information bits, or does the doorway lead to spiritual evolution and self-transformation? While such transformations of self are essential within traditional Tantra, the question is whether, in our increasingly cyber-oriented world, the virtual spirituality of the net of Tantra can become a stimulus for experienced liberation and self-realization. Information on-line about Tantra is often mixed with a kind of evangelical propagation of Tantra. However, it is not clear whether an exposure to the information bits about Tantra can produce the presumed desired effect of a new awareness and a more fulfilled life. Information about Tantra is one thing, but what seems assumed in many of these sites is that this information can make an existential difference to the person who encounters it on-line. Some sites even give the impression that mere information about Tantra is salvific.

What the net of Tantra suggests, probably inadvertently, is a transformation of the nature of Tantra itself. Not only has East come West, but traditional esoteric modes of transmission and practice have gone public without a specific guru, lineage, or tradition to teach and control it. The move on-line seems to assume that these teachings are somehow self-evident and self-validating, that the reader of these sites will intuitively and naturally grasp what is being taught, and that what is taught in this manner can or will make an existential difference to the reader. To the extent that this virtual spirituality becomes experienced self-transformation, the net of Tantra is an illustration of a "new" religious or spiritual form. To the extent the net of Tantra does not make an existential difference to the reader, it still conveys some useful information about the experience of certain other people. Maybe, as claimed by the vision statement of "Tantra.com," the consequence of encountering the net of Tantra depends upon how "ready" one is to use and receive it.

By adapting to modern Western, especially American, culture and by using the democratizing on-line medium, many of the individual Tantra sites reduce, simplify, and even trivialize traditional Tantra. However, taken as a whole, the net of Tantra reflects an attempt to reimagine the meaning and significance of ordinary experiences and habitual ways of responding to the world. Given its on-line format, some previously held secret teachings and practices have now been made public. Yet, even in its adapted form, the net of Tantra provides some insight into alternative ways of understanding the purpose of life and experiencing the nature of self and the world. As such, the net of Tantra is illustrative of a cultural critique and religious form that appeals to a wisdom of the past in order to explore, often playfully, the possibilities of a new and different present.

ENDNOTES

(The http:// preface has been omitted since it is not needed for these searches.)

[1] "Tantra.com" (www.tantra.com/mission.html), January 1997.

[2] J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: Gale Research Inc., 1992).

[3] Ibid., 908-909, 912, 927, 930, 932-33, 950, 952-53, 998.

[4] Ibid., 990-92, 994.

[5] Ibid., 974-75.

[6] Ibid., 657-58, 664, 777, 997.

[7] Ibid., 939.

[8] The specific guru-founder for each group is found on the pages cited above.

[9] Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1970), 18.

[10] Ibid., 18-19.

[11] Ibid., 20.

[12] During the first several months of 1997, I used five search engines (Yahoo, Lycos, Magellan, Infoseek, and Excite) and one metacrawler (Highway 61) to access "Tantra" and "Tantra in America" sites. Depending on which search engine was used, the number of "hits" ranged from thirty to several hundred. These numbers, however, are deceptive, because many of the sites were duplicates, even multiples, not only between the different searches but within the same search.

[13] There were some sites, few in number, that do not fit these general categories but should at least should be noted. Several magazines were advertised, including *Tantra* (www.access.ch/tantra), a German magazine about sexuality and spirituality, and *Sunrise Magazine* (www.sunrisemag.com/) a New Age spirituality and self-help magazine featuring articles on "wealth, health and happiness without the hubris." In addition, there were some Tantra chat rooms, for example, "Twelfth House Chat" (www.scpts/chat.html), which advertises discussions on tarot, astrology, Tantra, and metaphysics, and "Tantra On The Web" (www.luckymojo.com/ tkwebsites.html), a usenet group with conversations on sex magic, Tantric yoga, karezza, and the goddess. These searches also yielded some personal ads for everything from Tantric massage to finding a Tantric roommate. There were also book advertisement sites from such publishers as Snow Lion and Shambhala. All the above sites were viewed during January 1997.

[14] "Tantra.com" (www.tantra.com), January 1997, provides an "E-sensuals" catalog of books, tapes, and products.

[15] "Tantraworks" (www.tantraworks.com:80/tantrawk.html), January 1997.

[16] "Tantra: Resources On WWW" (www.aaart.com/tantra/resource.htm), January 1997.

[17] "Tantra Hot Web Links" (www.tantra.com/hotlinks.html), January 1997.

[18] "Kama Sutra" (www.tantra.org/kamasutr.htm), January 1997, provides substantial excerpts of the text.

[19] "Yoni Tantra" (lysator.liu.se/ftp/pub/magick/tantra), January 1997, translated by Lokanath Maharaj, includes commentary.

[20] "Practice of Kalachakra" (www.2.hawkesbury.uws.edu.au/BuddhaNet/kalachak.htm), January 1997, by H. H. the Dalai Lama.

[21] "The Brahamnanda Tantra" (www.hubcom.com/tantra/), January 1997, by Mahesh.

[22] "Tantrick Home Page" (www.hubcom.com/magee/tantra), January 1997.

[23] "Tantric Buddhism—Sexual Pantheism" (members.aol.com/Herakit1/tantra.htm), January 1997, by Paul Harrison.

[24] "Tibetan Buddhism" (www.zip.com.au/%7Ecec-gee/tibet.html), January 1997.

[25] "What is Tantra? Riding the Wisdom Tiger" (www-personal.umich.ed/"dalef/tantra.html), January 1997.

[26] "Teachers and Workshops" (www.tantra.com/e-sensuals/teacher.html), January 1997, claims to present "a very all inclusive list of Tantra teachers and workshop leaders in the U.S." This directory provides a brief biography and description of the work of some thirty teachers, not surprisingly most located in California or Hawaii. Many of these descriptions emphasize some kind of special connection to Tantra and/or Tantric teachers.

[27] "Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy" (www.aubergines.com/tantra/tantra2.htm), January 1997, lists workshops led by True L. Fellows, who is identified as "a gifted healer."

[28] "Tantra Universe" (gate.cruzio.com/"tantra/), January 1997, lists workshops led by Radha Frase, of the Natural Technologies Institute of Psychospiritual Sexuality.

[29] "Transformational Tantra" (www.tantra.com/johanina.html), January 1997, reports on workshops under the training of Johanina Wikoff, who is included in the Tantra Teachers Directory.

[30] "Quantum Tantra" (members.cruzio.com/quanta/qtantra.1.html), January 1997. These workshops are located at the Esalen Institute.

[31] "Abhidhyan Yoga Institute, Inc." (www.abhidyan.org/anatole.htm), January 1997, lists workshops under the spiritual direction of Shri Acharya Abhidhyanananda Avadhuta (Rev. Fr. Anatole Ruslanov). Some fifteen spiritual teachings are also available on-line.

[32] "The Church of Tantra (www.aaart.com/tantra), January 1997. The original site is www.Tantra.org. The menu includes seventeen sites under Tantra; two sites under Sex Magick, one of which contains three sub-sites; and three sites under Resources.

[33] E-mail address for the Church of Tantra is tantra@tantra.org.

[34] "Join And Contribute To The Church Of Tantra" (www.tantra.org/join.htm), January 1997.

[35] "Giftshop" (www. tantra.org/giftshop.htm), January 1997.

[36] "Tantra Events" (www.tantra.org/events.htm), January 1997.

[37] "Tantra: Resources On The World Wide Web" (www.tantra.org/ resource.htm), January 1997.

[38] "The Love Teachings Of The Kama Sutra" (www.tantra.org/kamasutr.htm), January 1997.

[39] Each of the teaching sites includes visuals which were often erotic and as eclectic as the sites themselves. These sites were rather attractively presented in various colors, although there were enough misprints in several sites to raise question about the carefulness of their creation.

[40] "Sacred Orgasms" (www.aaart.com/tantra/sacrogs.htm), January 1997. No information is provided about the author.

[41] "Tantric Sex: A Spiritual Path Of Ecstasy" (www.aaart.com/ tantra/virato.htm), January 1997. Swami Virato is a sannyasin of Osho (Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh). He is listed in the Tantra Teachers Directory. In addition to his address at the Nepal Institute in Arden, N. C., his personal e-mail address is provided.

[42] "The Biological Basis Of Tantric Sex" (www.aaart.com/tantra/basis.htm), January 1997. In addition to her e-mail address, some autobiographical information about the author's experience with "Tantric sex" is provided.

[43] "Tibetan Bhuddism (*Sic*) And Tantra Yoga" (www.tantra.org/tibet.htm), January 1997.

[44] "Karezza And Alice Bunker Stockham" (www.tantra.org/karezza.htm), January 1997.

[45] "Tantrism: An Overview" (www.aaart.com/tantra/overview.htm), January 1997. No information, other than a personal e-mail address is provided about the author. Dinu Roman is listed in the Tantra Teachers Directory.

[46] "Tantra: Pranayama Breathing" (www.aaart.com/tantra/pranayam.htm), January 1997.

[47] "Tantra Fantasy" (www.tantra.org/fantasy.htm), January 1997.

[48] "Tantra: Will" (www.tantra.org/will.htm), January 1997.

[49] "The Tantric Path: A Few Thoughts" (www.tantra.org/path.htm), January 1997.

[50] "Tantra: Psychic Protection" (www.tantra.org/protect.htm), January 1997.

[51] "Yoni Massage" (www.tantra.org/yoni.htm), January 1997. No information, other than an e-mail address, is given about the author.

[52] "Lingam Massage" (www.tantra.org/lingam.htm), January 1997.

[53] "The Polarity Process" (www.tantra.org/polarity.htm), January 1997.

[54] "Sex Magic Process" (www.tantra.org/sexmagic.htm), January 1997.

[55] "Austin Osman Spare (Introduction)" (www.tantra.org/spare.htm), January 1997. One biographical note was included: "Spare died in 1956, in a basement flat in Brixton England, in poverty and obscurity." Four of Spare's visualization pictures are included in these sites.

[56] "The Book Of Pleasure (Self-Love), The Psychology Of Ecstasy" (www.tantra.org/pleasure.htm), January 1997.

[57] "The Focus Of Life, The Mutterings Of Aaos" (www.tantra.org/focus.htm), January 1997.

[58] "Anathema Of Zos: The Sermon To The Hypocrite" (www.tantra.org/anathema.htm), January 1997.

[59] Jacob Needleman, *The New Religions: The Meaning of the Spiritual Revolution and the Teachings of the East* (New York: Doubleday, 1972).

[60] Ibid., 20.

[61] Ibid., 174.

[62] Ibid., 178.

[63] Even though there is considerable scholarship on "new" religious phenomena, it should be noted that questions have been raised about the meaning and legitimacy of these terms and designations. On the one hand for example, Thomas Robbins and David G. Bromley, in "What Have We Learned About New Religions?: New Religious Movements as Experiments," *Religious Studies Review* 19, no. 3 (July 1993): 209, have raised questions about the "New Religious Movements" designation, asking what is "new" about these movements, what is the religiousness of these movements, and in what sense are "New Religious Movements" actually social and religious movements. On the other hand, James R. Lewis, in "Approaches to the Study of the New Age Movement," *Perspectives on the New Age*, eds. James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Albany, New York: State University of New York, 1992), 1-2, notes that serious questions have been raised about the designation of "New Age" religions in part because that label has acquired such negative connotations for the general public and in part because many who formerly referred to themselves as "New Age" no longer do so. In spite of these questions, it is important to note that whether these specific designations are themselves appropriate or accurate, they do indicate and point to aspects of nontraditional religious phenomena in America.

[64] Robert E. Ellwood and Harry B. Partin, *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N J: Prentice Hall, 1988), 14-16.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Robbins and Bromley, "What Have We Learned about New Religions?" 209-16.

[67] Catherine L. Albanese, "Religion and the American Experience: A Century After," *Church History* 57 (1988): 337-51.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1982). An insightful exposition and application of Ong's framework can be found in Stephen D. O'Leary, "Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 781-808.

[70] Elizabeth Puttick, *Women in New Religions: In Search of Community, Sexuality, and Spiritual Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 56.

[71] Ibid., 58.

Exporting Nature Religions: Problems in Praxis Down Under

Lynne Hume

In spite of the fact that the cultures in which it has taken root often exist in vastly different natural environments, Christianity, with its emphasis on the Word, has managed to adapt to cultural differences without significant alteration of its basic message. Nature religions, on the other hand, which depend to a great extent on their natural environment, do not adapt quite so easily, particularly when they travel from the northern hemisphere to south of the equator. The Word, it seems, is more pliant than the environment. Australia's vastness and its extremes of geography, climate, flora, and fauna pose problems for those wishing to practice nature religions based on a northern hemisphere cycle of seasons and northern hemisphere mythologies. This paper will explore some of these difficulties and discuss how Australia's modern pagans are attempting to resolve them.

The data collected for this paper is part of an ongoing research project which commenced in Canada in 1991 and continued in Australia in 1992. It is based on six years of research using participant observation, informal interviews, library searches, and a study of various Australian pagan newsletters. During the course of this time, I visited pagans in various Australian states and participated in private rituals performed by different groups and in public pagan festivals and other activities. The purpose of the research was to explore pagan beliefs and practices and to interpret what they mean to participants. Employing Peter Berger's useful concept of plausibility structures, I briefly describe basic elements of paganism and finish by considering the manner in which Australian pagans are addressing problems of ritual practice that arise in their unique natural environment.

PLAUSIBILITY STRUCTURES

Sociologist Peter Berger describes plausibility structures as social structures which are "taken for granted and within which successive generations of individuals are socialized in such a way that this world will be real to them." "The firmer the plausibility structure is," he continues, "the firmer will be the world that is 'based' upon it."[1] All religions, according to Berger, require specific communities for their continuing plausibility. When a plausibility structure loses its coherence or continuity, the world that is based on it begins to totter and its reality ceases to impose itself as self-evident truth. When this happens, it loses its legitimacy. Further, since every religious worldview is founded on a plausibility structure that is itself the product of human activity, every religious worldview is inherently precarious; conversion to another religion is always possible in principle. The possibility of transferring one's allegiance from one religious worldview to another increases with the degree of instability or discontinuity of the plausibility structure in question.[2]

Berger's notion helps to explain the appeal of alternative religions such as paganism. The following statements articulate the collapse of the plausibility of a Christian-based worldview for two pagan women. The first woman indicates that it was primarily the basic doctrinal notion of a monotheistic deity, coupled with a disbelief in the concept of inherent sin, that led her to desire change. The second woman also talks about unfulfilled needs, especially in relation to current social issues such as gender equality.

Case One
I discovered paganism after Christianity failed to fulfill my needs. There was something lacking in Christianity. I am unsure whether it was because I couldn't comprehend God or sin, or whether the whole notion of redemption after death was too daunting. I wanted to feel the magic whilst I was alive, not after I was dead.[3]

Case Two
I was raised a reasonably strict Catholic and stayed with the church until about fourteen years of age. At about twenty-six years of age I felt the need for a nonmaterial dimension to my life. I began investigating various lifestyles and beliefs. I was looking for something which would address my needs—primarily gender equality, justice and a lack of hypocrisy. What is interesting about paganism is its multiplicity of choices.[4]

These statements are only two examples of views that are frequently reiterated by other pagans.[5] Many feel that Christianity has failed to answer personal needs and to address adequately contemporary social

issues; as a result, they began to doubt the legitimacy of Christian doctrines and practices and to search for a belief system which offered answers to their questions. Thus, the move from Christianity to paganism—what Berger calls individual transference into another world (conversion)—became not only possible, but desirable. Most say that when they discovered paganism it was like "coming home" and entering a world of "like-minded people."

MODERN PAGANISM

Modern paganism is a new religious movement that is gaining momentum throughout the world. Solid academic monographs have detailed its emergence and practice in Britain, the United States, and Australia, and many scholarly articles have addressed various aspects of the movement.[6] In addition, New Age bookstores contain a plethora of "how-to" books for those interested in practicing pagan rituals. All agree that paganism is nature-based, polytheistic, and eclectic. Included under the umbrella term "paganism" are such sub-groups as shamans, Druids, Wiccans, and witches, and some writers have gone from general discussions of paganism as part of the New Age movement to particular studies of these sub-groups. Paganism's foundations are as diverse as its sub-groups and include elements taken from Neoplatonism, Theosophy, and Spiritualism, as well as influences from the Freemasons, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Aleister Crowley, and the Western esoteric tradition in general.

Paganism asserts that pre-Christian pagan religions transmitted compelling and beneficial spiritual systems that were suppressed and replaced by monotheistic religions, especially Christianity. Modern pagans encourage a return to the "old ways" and talk about the Old Religion in a generic, all encompassing sense, while at the same time introducing newly reworked perspectives on these older traditions. The modern pagan movement has been referred to interchangeably as paganism or neopaganism and broadly encompasses any earth-centered or nature-based religion with roots in a pre-Christian past.

Modern pagans practice religious ecology, which is founded on the belief that the natural world is part of, not apart from, the deities who created it. The physical world within which humans live overlaps with the spiritual realms of nature spirits, deities, and transitional beings—yet the two worlds are apart. The goal of paganism is to bridge the gulf between these worlds and to experience self-realization by doing so. Pagans do not believe that religious intermediaries are either necessary or desirable in order to attain this goal.

Paganism is polytheistic, animistic, and pantheistic. The divine is believed to be contained in every aspect of nature and is at the same

time a creative force, an energy, which is anthropomorphized as Goddess and God. The gods are manifest in the world through the turning of the seasons. Pagans perform distinctive rituals for magical and healing purposes and to celebrate the seasons, honor the deities, attain self-realization, and initiate participants into nature's mysteries. The seasonal cycle of rituals marks out events in the natural rhythm of the seasons; equinoxes and solstices and the movements of the sun and moon are hence critical phenomena. The sacred space of these rites can be constructed anywhere and is set up according to a pagan worldview based upon compass directions, geographical position, and natural environment.

CELEBRATORY RITUALS

Most pagans follow a seasonal cycle based on twenty-one celebrations known as the Wheel of the Year. This cycle acknowledges the seasonal fluctuations and their influences on the environment. The ritual calendar is based on the solar cycle, the annual seasonal and agricultural cycles, and the waxing and waning of the moon. Seasonal changes are seen as symbolic of nature's eternal power to renew itself, and each occasion is reified and anthropomorphized. For example, the sowing of the crops becomes the play between the maiden and the corn god; the fertility of the crops becomes a ritual enactment of intercourse (either symbolic or actual) between the God and the Goddess. As the seasonal wheel turns it reveals birth, life, and death as a continual cycle that Mircea Eliade termed the "myth of the eternal return."[7] Just as the seasonal changes are reflected in the natural order, so the gods undergo an annual metamorphosis as they meet, court, consummate their love, grow, die, and are reborn. The phases of the goddess reflect the important stages in a woman's life—those of maiden, mother, and crone—while the god moves through the stages of son, lover, and Lord of the Shadows.

The story is usually told by beginning at Samhain (popularly known as Halloween), a time of darkness and silence. At this time the God is asleep in the Otherworld awaiting rebirth, and the Great Mother, as Queen of Darkness, conceives within herself. As the year progresses, so does her pregnancy. During the winter solstice the Great Mother gives birth to a son who symbolizes the reemergence of the sun from the darkness of winter. As the days lengthen, the wheel turns, moving towards spring, and the next event is Imbolc, a celebration of new beginnings and growth. The Goddess becomes a virgin once again.

Following Imbolc is the spring equinox, when the young God is initiated into the male mysteries. Between spring equinox and Beltaine, the sun's heat becomes stronger and the young man and woman pursue

one another. Eventually they celebrate their love in a sexual consummation at Beltaine, when they are joined together as husband and wife, king and queen, in a sacred marriage. Beltaine is a time of fertility and fire and celebrates the mystery of a man and woman's love for each other. As the sun reaches its greatest height at summer solstice, the woman's mature power is reflected in her approaching motherhood, and the man's power is reflected in his kingship. From midsummer the sun starts its descent into darkness, and now a dark figure appears who challenges the king. The sun begins to fade, and darkness casts a shadow over the world as the days grow shorter. The crops have matured, and the next festival is Lugnasadh, the celebration of the harvest. The cutting of the corn symbolizes death and transformation and reflects the seasonal changes. The sun's powers are waning, but Lugnasadh is celebrated as a time of fulfillment, of the reaping of all that has been sown. At the autumn equinox, the powers of light and darkness once again stand as equals, but now the darkness descends and both the king and queen face their death. The king dies and passes beyond this world to become the Lord of the Otherworld, the queen becomes the crone, and they both finally understand the ancient mystery of death and rebirth. Then the wheel returns to Samhain, indicating a new beginning of the spiral dance of life.

In this yearly cycle, gods and humans are intimately and inextricably linked, and energies flow from feminine to masculine and back again. Sexuality and death are emphasized as normal stages of an ever-repeating cycle of nature. The regular enactment of rituals, occurring as they do almost every six weeks, renews the experiential focus on the sacred, provides a framework for communal activities, and heightens pagans' perceptions of their natural environment. They thus become very conscious of the fluctuations and general rhythms of nature.

Following a mythology based on a northern seasonal cycle such as the one above, however, presents real problems for pagans living in the southern hemisphere. In the northern hemisphere, the seasonal cycle commences on 31 October (Samhain), then moves through winter solstice (December), Imbolc (February), spring equinox (March), Beltaine (April), summer solstice (June), Lugnasadh (August), and autumn equinox (September). In the southern hemisphere, the cycle is shifted by six months: Samhain (April), winter solstice (June), Imbolc (August), spring equinox (September), Beltaine (October), summer solstice (December), Lugnasadh (February), and autumn equinox (March). This means that if pagans are serious about following the rhythm of nature within their particular environment, something needs to be done about the mythology that gives it symbolic meaning. As we shall see, a mere reversal does not adequately address the problem.

The Australian pagan community is divided concerning whether, in fact, any differences should be implemented. In a series of short articles appearing in various Australian pagan newsletters in 1988 and 1989, individuals offered their own versions of an Australian Wheel of the Year.[8] Some said it should be kept the same as the northern hemisphere; others felt that the difference was important. The main argument in favor of a southern hemisphere adaptation is based on common sense; people feel it is ludicrous to be celebrating winter solstice at the height of a hot Australian summer. The sabbats therefore have to be transposed, making them opposite to their northern counterparts.

For some pagans, however, reversing the seasons of the northern hemisphere still does not resolve the problem of adaptation to the Australian continent. A simple reversal would, according to the myth, designate summer as a fertile time. In actuality, however, summer in Australia is a dry, barren time when the fierce southern sun burns into the earth, depleting human energy and bringing drought and bushfires—hardly the basis for fertility. According to these theorists, summer should be ruled by the crone aspect of the Goddess.

Fertile times in Australia are from March to May. In June and July, the earth is preparing itself for the blossoming of spring. This occurs from late July to August, when native plants flower and birds start gathering nesting materials. The height of spring is in September, with the season petering out in late October or mid-November when the sun begins to increase its intense heat. By observing the earth in its regional variations, therefore, a different picture unfolds.

The northern hemisphere myth of the year, therefore, is a poor fit for Australian pagans who are attuned to their environment. It is basically a difference between working with earth-centered forces and working with the "dance" of the sun and the moon. Because of this incongruity, some pagans feel that a different myth could be created, one that reflects what is happening both in the sky (the pattern of the sun's angle to the earth) and on the earth. Australia is a land of extremes: its relentless, scorching, drought-bringing sun and sudden electrical storms and flood-bringing downpours signify the volatile gods and goddesses believed to preside over its natural order. In some areas there are tropical rain forests, and in others a cold snowy climate. One suggestion is to look toward Aboriginal spirituality for guidance, but this notion has not been pursued.[9]

The anthropomorphic interpretation of the Wheel of the Year focuses on the interplay between the Goddess, the God, and the pattern of the seasons. The fertile and arid times are related to the meeting, courtship, and consummation of love and the growth and death of the gods and their offspring. As the seasons change their garments, the Goddess and God interact in a human way. An Australian version of this annual cycle could be as follows:

November is the time when the Goddess leads the young God into sexual initiation. The young God then grows and becomes, in the scorching heat of December, the Summer King, and she becomes the Red Queen, both beautiful and terrible. They dance the land-marriage and in a powerful rite are transformed; the God self-immolates but his ashes fall onto the ground, creating bushfires. Thus he is flame and ash, and she, as earth, becomes scorched and parched and takes on the crone aspect.

In January, she is the Dark Goddess and he is the Lord of Shadows. She is the death bringer through heat. In February, flash floods are added to the violence of the drought. The God grows while waiting for the rain. In March, the Goddess reaches a transition and looks to new beginnings. The maiden emerges from the shadow of the crone, bringing healing rains which nurture the earth and engender potential for life. Seeds germinate, and she flirts with the life spirit who is the God locked in the Underworld. He captures her and takes her into his realm of dreams. This Lord of Shadows initiates her into the Mysteries and in May she begins to learn the power of self-knowledge.

From May to June, she becomes Queen of the Underworld and they are in balance and release creative energy into the world. Unfurling leaves of new plants are enriched by the now fertile earth.

In July and August, she teaches the young God the mysteries of the world, and in September they play in the green woods. She assumes the cloak of the earth mother, and he is the young forest lord. In October, spring is in full bloom and they explore their sexuality. In November they come together in the Great Rite, and the circle continues.[10]

Another perspective argues that, depending on geographical factors, Australia should be viewed as having two or three or even six seasons.[11] Such a recognition would present even more conceptual wrinkles for Australian pagans trying to develop a regionally authentic ritual cycle.

Pagan rites are usually enacted within a sacred circle which is "opened" and "closed" by ritual actions known as "casting the circle." The way one moves within the circle has ritual significance: "deosil" is the direction the sun appears to take as it moves from east to west; "widdershins" is the opposite direction. Sometimes these directions are referred to as "clockwise" and "anticlockwise." However, in Australia, even the expressions deosil and widdershins become reversed, because they refer to the sun's direction and have nothing to do with directions of the hands of a clock. That they have become associated with clockwise and anticlockwise movements creates some confusion. Clockwise (deosil in the northern hemisphere) has become associated with good, and anticlockwise (widdershins in the northern hemisphere) is associated with dark deeds. Widdershins direction is used for banishing and closing a circle; deosil direction is used for opening a circle. These directions have sometimes assumed a moral charge, as evidenced in expressions such as the "left-hand (evil) path," and the "right-hand (good) path."

The southern hemisphere reverses the directions, so that clockwise in Australia becomes widdershins and anticlockwise becomes deosil. Because Australian pagans cling to northern hemisphere terminology and hold differing opinions about the subject, circle-casting can become confusing when different groups celebrate rites together.

Even within the sacred circle itself (which is set up according to the cardinal points of north, south, east and west, and their corresponding elements), placing the directions of north and south creates some confusion, though east and west remain in the same position in both hemispheres. In the northern hemisphere, north is regarded as the place of greatest darkness and corresponds to the element of earth. In the southern hemisphere, however, the dark unknown is in the south, and the element of earth is placed in the south. Conversely, the element of fire is in the south in the northern hemisphere, but in the north in the southern hemisphere, since the fire of the sun moves in an arc through the northern quadrant of the sky and the heat of the equator is to the north of Australia.

Theoretically, one opens the circle following the path of the sun, and because the sun appears to rise in the east and go north in Australia, the opening sequence should go from east to north, then west to south, thus following the magnetic flow of the earth and the appropriate earth current in Australia. For some pagans, such details are important when working magic. The corresponding elements for the directions of east (air) and west (water) remain the same.

In a further theoretical variation found in Sydney, New South Wales, elements are joined to compass points according to Australian coast geography: water corresponds to east because of the great expanse of Pacific Ocean immediately to the east; earth corresponds to west because the entire continent is west of Sydney; fire corresponds to north because of the sun's movement through the northern sky and the heat of the equator; and air corresponds to south.

To overcome the problem of various groups working according to hemispheric variants, it was suggested at the annual Australian Wiccan Conference in 1988 that ritual circles be cast in either direction (clockwise or anticlockwise) to reflect the different working practices used in Australia. It was also suggested that the powers from each of the cardinal directions (north, south, east, west) be invoked in a generic sense so that all present could use their own visualizations and associations. Similarly, god and goddess names would be substituted with "Lord" and "Lady," or "Ancient Ones," or some other general term. In the end, the seasonal cycle was left up to individuals and covens to determine and define as they saw fit.

Wiccans who were trained according to the northern hemisphere cycle still celebrate the seasons according to the northern hemisphere and cast the circle in a clockwise direction. One of the arguments

for retaining the clockwise direction of the northern hemisphere in circle-casting is that a ritual is performed at the astral level, and thus directions do not really matter since there are no physical directions at the astral level. Others, however, say that it does not "feel right" to be working northern hemisphere cycles in Australia and that the energies are different.

Some Australian pagans have devised a combination mode. That is, they use northern hemisphere orientations when setting up the circle, move clockwise for deosil and anticlockwise for widdershins, celebrate Samhain in October and Beltaine in May, but use southern hemisphere seasonal cycles for the equinoxes and the solstices. For them, it is appropriate to have the shortest day at the time it occurs, but it doesn't feel right to have Samhain in May or Beltaine in October. Clearly, these pagans are responding to the difficulty of relating to a myth cycle based on northern hemisphere geography and traditions.

CREATION OF MEANING

Both Peter Berger[12] and Ernest Becker[13] maintain that meaning is never given, but that it is actively created through a dialectical relationship between the individual and culture. This sort of dialectic is occurring within the Australian pagan community, which creates meaning using the natural world as its axis. Questions such as, How does the myth cycle relate to the land here?; When should one celebrate Samhain?; Which way is deosil?; In which direction should a circle be cast?; and Where should the elements be placed within a circle? lead, in turn, to a re-casting of mythology to accommodate environmental differences. These questions also generate some interesting arguments on the appropriate ways of putting belief into practice.

Philosopher and sociologist Alfred Schutz theorizes that common-sense knowledge of everyday life provides the foundation for how people gain knowledge and make sense of their worlds.[14] Berger and Luckmann develop this argument further when they analyze how the foundation of knowledge in everyday life produces human activity in which reality is socially constructed. They provide us with an understanding of the "reality *sui generis*" of society, and of the objectifications of subjective processes and meanings by which the intersubjective commonsense world is constructed.[15] We have seen how the subjective experience of everyday life in the natural world in Australia necessitates a reevaluation by pagans of a seasonal cycle based on northern hemisphere commonsense reality and its accompanying mythical, anthropomorphic equivalents.

Berger and Luckmann write that the relationship between humans and their social world is and remains a dialectical one. That is, humans (not in isolation but in collectivities) and their social world interact with each other.[16] There is a continuing dialectical process during which problems of logical coherence may arise:

> The difficulties that may arise here are connected with the theoretical activities of the legitimators and the practical ones of the educators in the new society. The theoreticians have to satisfy themselves that a hunting goddess is a plausible denizen in an agrarian pantheon and the pedagogues have a problem explaining her mythological activities to children who have never seen a hunt. Legitimating theoreticians tend to have social aspirations and children tend to be recalcitrant. This, however, is not a problem of abstract logic or technical functionality, but rather of ingenuity on the one hand and credulity on the other—a rather different proposition.[17]

This statement is particularly relevant with regard to Australian pagans. Those who learned and internalized the pagan philosophy in the northern hemisphere underwent a process of habitualization of ritual actions, philosophy, and calendrical events. Some of these people find it difficult to transpose such ingrained habits to a southern clime and prefer to conduct their Wheel of the Year strictly according to northern hemisphere orientations. They explain away discrepancies by saying that the "work" all happens on the astral plane and thus that literal geographical orientation is irrelevant. For this group of people, physical actions and objects such as athames (a blunt knife used by a practitioner to cast the circle), wands, and other ritual tools are simply mnemotechnic aids to something that is occurring at another level of reality. This approach is convenient if rituals are performed in sites insulated from obvious external differences in the environment. However, those who conduct rituals outside are obliged to modify the Wheel of the Year in order for their beliefs and practices to retain cognitive validity. They cannot accept the discrepancies between designated ritual and commonsense knowledge. For these people, the importation of nature religions requires an expansion of the dialectic between individual and culture to include the dialectic between culture and nature.

Berger offers three "moments or steps" (externalization, objectivation, and internalization) that express the process by which individuals interact, experience, and respond to the external world. Each step has a functional purpose:

> Externalization is the ongoing outpouring of human being into the world, both in the physical and the mental activity of men. Objectivation is the attainment by the products of this activity (again both physical and mental) of a reality that confronts its original producers as a facticity external to and other

than themselves. Internalization is the reappropriation by men of this same reality, transforming it once again from the structures of the objective world into structures of the subjective consciousness.[18]

Thus, humans produce society, objectify this social reality, and then internalize that reality. Major shifts initiate a restructuring of cosmological assumptions so that they retain congruence with experienced reality. Subsequent actions and cognitions are legitimated as a result of this restructuring, and cosmological assumptions are authenticated.

CONCLUSION

Some Australians, like their North American and European counterparts, are searching for a new type of spirituality—one which is based more on experience and less on text-based faith. They are also concerned with the environment and feminist issues and feel that paganism addresses both concerns: it is nature-based and concerned with environmental issues, and it deviates from monotheism in that it has both a god and a goddess, and both males and females have proportionate roles to play. Some pagans tend to be anti-Christian and regard church hierarchical structures as anathema to their own ideals of an egalitarian society and a religious community based on networks of individuals. Christianity, as a church-based doctrinal religion, has lost its plausibility for these explorers of paganism.

Modern pagans are faced with problems that their putative ancestors never encountered. As has been demonstrated, living in the southern hemisphere necessitates a dialectical process in order to lessen these problems and leave practitioners with a viable, intact structure for their world. Curiously, the discrepancies between northern hemisphere and southern hemisphere have not resulted in an abandonment of belief but in a more determined effort to fit the environment into the myth cycle, or conversely, to fit the myth cycle into the environment. In renegotiating the myth cycle, pagans engage in a more in-depth study of their beliefs, fitting action to logic and meaning to myth. In this way their beliefs become more entrenched in their way of life. Poetic myth becomes imbued with truths which can be affirmed by the immediate surroundings. By engaging in dialogue with others, each person is able to construct pagan rites and beliefs pertinent to his or her own locale and in doing so vitalize a rapidly growing new religious movement.

ENDNOTES

[1] Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 47.

[2] Ibid., 50.

[3] Personal communication from KS, female, Queensland, 1994.

[4] Personal communication from MS, female, Queensland, 1994.

[5] This information is based on personal interviews with pagans at annual Australian pagan events such as the Pagan Summer Gathering, the Oestre Festival, the Wiccan Conference, and both public and private rituals held in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia over a five year period. In addition, it is based on letters written to me from various individuals.

[6] Tanya Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980); Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, eds., *Paganism Today* (London: Thorsons, 1996); Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979); Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979); Loretta Orion, *Never Again the Burning Times: Paganism Revisited* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1995); Kevin Marron, *Witches, Pagans and Magic in the New Age* (Toronto: Seal Books, 1990); Lynne Hume, *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997).

[7] Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Harper, 1959).

[8] *Children of Sekhmet* 3, no. 2 (1989): 5; *Shadowplay*, nos. 6, 5; 14, 7; 17, 6 (all undated).

[9] The interface between paganism and Aboriginal spirituality is being pursued in another article, and the matter of appropriation of Aboriginal culture is presently being undertaken by other Australian researchers. To make the situation more complicated, many Aboriginal myths depict the sun as woman and the earth as male.

[10] Adapted from articles in several Australian pagan newsletters.

[11] In the tropical regions of the northern part of the continent, there are two seasons, wet and dry; in the inland desert regions, there are three seasons; in the coastal regions, there are six seasons.

[12] Berger, *The Sacred Canopy.*

[13] Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973); *Escape from Evil* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975).

[14] Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1962), 149.

[15] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1966), 34.

[16] Ibid., 78.

[17] Ibid., 89.

[18] Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 4.

Field Report: The Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Oslo, Norway, 12–15 August 1998

Rosalind I. J. Hackett

For three days in August, over two hundred delegates assembled at a scenic mountaintop hotel overlooking the Norwegian capital as part of the Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Our proximity to the world famous Holmenkollen ski jump seemed to drive home the serious challenges that faced the delegates in working toward greater toleration and respect for freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief. This dimension of human rights, though arguably fundamental, has been neglected by all accounts. Furthermore, incidents of religiously linked or motivated persecution seem to have gained prominence in recent times. The Oslo Conference, in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), had as its goal the building of an international coalition to protect and provide support for universal freedom of religion or belief as articulated in Article 18 of the UDHR and in the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

This important event was hosted and funded mainly by the Norwegian government and the Church of Norway, together with other religious institutions in Norway. Participants traveled from many parts of the world to be present and were complemented by strong representation from Norwegian religious communities. Despite the international composition of the gathering, we were not allowed to forget we were in Norway. The changing weather conditions on the top of the mountain, initially permitting remarkable visibility over downtown Oslo and finally clouding us in mist and soaking rain, provided a dramatic backdrop to our proceedings. Traditional Norwegian musicians added their haunting melodies to our deliberations at strategic moments, and salmon seemed to grace every meal.

Many religious traditions were represented at the conference. There were also human rights advocates from various non- or inter-governmental organizations, such as the Tandem Project, the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and the International Association

for Religious Freedom (a UN committee), who work on religious liberty issues. Legal scholars tended to dominate the small group of academics. There were also journalists and documentary filmmakers. Over coffee in the corridors one could have imagined oneself at times at the Parliament of the World's Religions and or at the United Nations. The ever-renewing mounds of papers and informational literature reinforced this impression. It drove home the point that freedom of religion and belief is a complex and multilayered issue, requiring the efforts of many heads wearing different hats.

The mornings began with plenary addresses, followed by afternoon sections on (1) Research, Information, Collection, Databases; (2) Mediation, Negotiation, Conflict Resolution; and (3) Toleration, Understanding, Respect. Recommendations from these working groups were then shared with the larger conference and incorporated into the final declaration. Although some people came seeking publicity and redress for their persecution and others focused mainly on their own vested institutional interests, there did seem to be a strong (diplomatic) sense that strengthening the global human rights platform—whether through increased support for the overworked and underpaid U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, or through developing better networks of communication for reporting and research—would be the most efficacious route for improving the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief.

The high point of the conference was our trip to the city to take part in the official celebrations to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We were privileged to hear the Prime Minister of Norway, Kjell Magne Beondevik, speak, followed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Honorable Mary Robinson (former President of Ireland). The latter made many encouraging and important remarks. The dinner hosted by the young and dynamic Minister of the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Development and Human Rights, Hilde F. Jonson, was also memorable. It was noteworthy not just because of the fine food and wine, but because in her speech she cited one of the "fathers" of the modern academic study of religion, Ninian Smart. (I discovered from her later that her principal research assistant is a religion specialist.) We were also very much impressed by the wisdom and diplomatic experience of the State Secretary from the Royal Norwegian Foreign Ministry, Janne Haaland Matlary.

Two important and useful texts received discussion at the conference, namely Bahiyyih G. Tahzib's *Freedom of Religion or Belief: Ensuring Effective International Legal Protection* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1996) and Kevin Boyle and Juliet Sheen's edited work, *Freedom of Religion and Belief: A World Report* (London: Routlėdge, 1997). The latter, which is the first report of its kind yet published, provides a

detailed and impartial account of how the right to hold beliefs is understood, protected, or denied throughout the world (fifty countries are surveyed). The former analyzes short- and long-term mechanisms for ensuring effective international legal protection of freedom of religion or belief. Tahzib concludes that a separate convention may not be the best route to take. She rather advocates an interdisciplinary and long-term approach, and outlines a seven-step blueprint for action.

I chose to speak on what I thought would be a low-key, relatively grassroots topic, the role that a nonconfessional, multireligious form of religious education could play in promoting religious tolerance. I have experience of and training in this type of academic, multi-tradition approach to education about religion in Britain, Nigeria, and the United States. Little did I know that it would turn out to be a "hot topic" at the conference. The Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom, Professor Abdellefattah Amor, spoke about the survey he had carried out on the subject, which is as yet unanalyzed due to lack of funds. The Norwegian Humanist Association chose to demonstrate on the hotel steps on the first morning of the conference over their concerns that Norway is the only country in Europe to require religious education—with a bias in favor of the state (Evangelical Lutheran) church, despite recent curricular reforms. In the sessions, there was considerable discussion about whether religious education in the public school system should meet a child's/family's religious needs or reflect the historical domination of one particular religious tradition.

Emotional appeals regarding cases of religious persecution were both heard and read during the course of the week. Fireworks flew in the session on China when Tibet came up. There was discontent on the part of the indigenous (from North and South America) delegates that a Saami (indigenous peoples from north of Scandinavia) representative did not have an official slot on the program. They also pointed to the fact that their traditions (owners of the land welcoming them to the territory) had not been respected as Jewish dietary practices had been (there was a separate kosher dining room). Minority religions, notably of the "sect" and "cult" variety, were barely present. A pastor from a minority church in the U.S. encountered some confusion about the nature of his registration and participation. Thanks to the assistance of Eileen Barker, a world-renowned expert on new religions, the problem was resolved.

Interestingly, and somewhat surprisingly, new age religion or "holistic religion" as he called it, was represented in the form of William Bloom from Glastonbury, England. His somewhat romanticized view of religion found favor with a number of participants. The Humanists proved to be both vocal and challenging on a number of occasions. The presence of these groups was undoubtedly linked to the existence of the Cooperation Council for Faith and Life Stance Societies in Norway.

They ensured that nonreligious belief traditions were represented in the documents and deliberations.

For any scholar of religion, this conference would surely be a stimulating experience. But it might also be frustrating to learn that people outside the academy employ freely categories and concepts pertaining to religion that are biased, sentimental, or generally inapplicable. I could go on at length about the privileging of "belief" over "practice" (most cases of discrimination and intolerance occur over practices rather than beliefs), but I am referring in particular here to the use of such charged notions as religious "fundamentalism" and "extremism" and confessional and popular terms such as "faith" and "spirituality." There was also a tendency, notably on the part of government officials and some religious leaders, to wax lyrical about the merits of religion, and to contrast "true" religion with its aberrations of intolerance and persecution. Perhaps such rhetorical tactics serve a useful exhortatory function, but I am left with the strong conviction that scholars of religion with their comparative and critical skills would have much to offer in such a setting. They would also learn much about public discourses on religion at national and international levels.

On the closing eve of the conference, while some participants went off to explore Oslo, the conference rapporteurs and leaders burned the midnight oil to produce a final Oslo Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Much to the relief of the organizers there was remarkable consensus over the document considering the multiplicity of voices heard throughout the conference. Now the recommendations have to be followed up, and, as with all forms of international law, it has to be one step at a time.

As a final note, I would be glad to hear from scholars working on or committed to the merits of a multi-religious, cross-cultural, nonconfessional approach to the study of religion in public education, and the way in which this may serve to promote religious toleration. The possibilities of establishing a network and organizing an international conference are being examined (rhackett@utk.edu). Also, for anyone keen to know more about the conference and work in the U.S. on religious liberty issues, please contact Michael Roan of the Tandem Project in Minneapolis (mroan@maroon.tc.unm.edu).

Field Notes

John Bozeman and Phillip Lucas

BRIEFLY NOTED:

***CHURCH UNIVERSAL AND TRIUMPHANT UPDATE*:**

The Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT) is continuing its reorganization along corporate managerial lines (See "Radical Reorganization in the Church Universal and Triumphant" in the April 1998 "Field Notes"). The church is also continuing its efforts to decentralize its operations and to encourage the growth of local congregational life around the world. CUT's self-conscious efforts at institutionalization are spurred in part by the declining health of its leader, Elizabeth Clare Prophet. Prophet revealed in January 1998 that she has suffered from epileptic seizures since the age of nine. She also revealed that she was suffering from an undiagnosed brain disorder that affected her short-term memory and her ability to learn new things. In September, Prophet asked Murray Steinman, who is currently the church's Vice President of Corporate Affairs, to apply for a "limited legal guardianship" on her behalf, citing diminished capacity due to health problems. In November, Prophet mailed a letter to her followers, acknowledging that her brain disorder had recently been diagnosed as the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. On December 10, 1998, three of Prophet's four adult children, Erin, Moira, and Sean, filed court papers in the 6th District Court of Montana in an effort to block Steinman's petition. The court papers claimed that there was an inherent conflict of interest between Steinman's role as a church leader and as their mother's potential guardian. The three adult Prophet children plan to file a cross-petition for appointment so that they can assume the role of their mother's guardian. In spite of her illness, Prophet continues to lecture at CUT conferences and seminars around the world and is still serving as the "Messenger for the Ascended Masters." More information about the church, including an on-line version of its 1998 annual report, can be found at http://www.cut.org.

***POSSIBLE SCHISM WITHIN THE CHURCH OF SATAN*:**

Church of Satan founder Anton LaVey passed away October 29, 1997. At that time, it appeared that the leadership of his organization would pass jointly to his daughter, Karla LaVey, and to LaVey's long-time companion, Blanche Barton. On October 31, 1998, however, Barton released a public letter indicating that she and Karla LaVey have parted company and that Karla is legally challenging the will left by her father. In addition, Barton is presently raising money to save the "Black House" in San Francisco that was home to LaVey and his church for thirty years. The house is presently in disrepair and in danger of being demolished.

***CONVICTION OF MONTANA FREEMEN*:**

On November 18, 1998, nine members of the Montana Freemen were convicted of bank and mail fraud and armed robbery. The convictions came after two days of deliberations which concluded a three-week trial involving 65 witnesses and approximately 350 exhibits of documents, videotapes, audiotapes, firearms, and photographs. An earlier trial last summer ended with the jury deadlocked on half the charges brought against twelve Freemen defendants. The group's most prominent leaders, including Rodney O. Skurdal, Dale M. Jacobi, Daniel Petersen Jr., and LeRoy M. Schweitzer, were among those convicted. One Freeman, Cornelius Veldhuizen, was acquitted on two counts of armed robbery and was released after two years in confinement.

***CLOSURE OF BAHA'I OPEN UNIVERSITY*:**

The Chronicle of Higher Education reported in its November 13, 1998 issue that the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education, the only institution providing higher education to Iran's largest religious minority, was closed by the Iranian government. The institute was established in response to the government's systematic exclusion of Baha'i citizens from higher education and operated out of private homes and buildings with 150 academics and instructors. It served over 900 students and granted degrees in the arts, sciences, and business. The government raided the institute in September 1998, confiscating textbooks and lab equipment and arresting lecturers.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES:

Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR)—August 5–7, 1999. Essex Inn on Grant Park, Chicago, Illinois. Information can be found at the new ASR website at http://www.sociologyofreligion.com

British Sociological Association—April 7–10, 1999. Conference theme will be "Religion and Identity," with "identity" interpreted widely to include religious identities and cultures, minorities, identity and ethnicity, identity and youth, diversity and pluralism, the New Age, globalization and identity, modernity and postmodernity, social and cultural fragmentation, and syncretism. Inquiries should be addressed to Simon Coleman and Peter Collins, Department of Anthropology, 43 Old Elvet, Durham, England DH1 3HN. Phone: 0191-374-2841; fax: 0191-374-7527; e-mail: s.m.coleman@durham.ac.uk and p.j.collins@durham.ac.uk

Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR)—June 2–4, 1999. Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. This will be a multidisciplinary conference in the human and social sciences focusing on the theme of "Religious and Spiritual Minorities in the 20th Century: Globalization and Localization." Papers will be presented in the fields of sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, law, and theology, especially on the topic of established and mainline religions' reactions to NRMs; social institutions (governments, health services, justice, media, schools) and their reactions to NRMs; NRMs' adaptation to social and cultural contexts; and NRMs and the "social contract," or the search for common values between NRMs and the larger society. For more information contact CESNUR, Via Juvarra 20, 10122 Torino, Italy. Phone: 39-011-541950 (Monday to Friday, 10 AM to 1 PM); fax: 39-011-541905; e-mail: cesnurto@tin.it. Website: http://www.cesnur.org

International Society for the Sociology of Religion—July 26–30, 1999. Louvain, Belgium. The theme for this conference is "Journeying": How does religion motivate people to begin journeys, and how do religious outlooks change once journeys have begun? How does religion guide journeys across time, space, consciousness, and society? For more information, contact Liliane Voye, Department of Sociology, Universite Catholique de Louvain, Place Montesquieu 1/1, B-1348 Louvain la Neurve, Belgium; fax: 32 (10) 47 46 03; e-mail: voye@usoc.ucl.ac.be

The Millennium Conference—April 10–13, 2000. St Catherine's College, Oxford, England. This interdisciplinary conference will explore

apocalyptic themes in religion, society, literature, and art. Keynote speakers include John Collins, Frank Kermode, Henry Mayr-Harting, Jürgen Moltmann, Christoper Rowland, and Bryan Wilson. Those wishing to offer a short paper should send an abstract of 300 words to: Professor John Barton, Oriel College, Oxford OX1 4EW, England; e-mail: john.barton@theology.ox.ac.uk. Information concerning conference arrangements can be received by contacting Carol Smith, Millennium Conference Administrator, Theology Faculty Office, 41 St Giles', Oxford, OX1 3LW, England; e-mail: carols@withington22.u-net.com

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion/Religious Research Association (SSSR/RRA) joint meeting—November 5–7, 1999. Swisshotel, Boston, Massachusetts. The SSSR program's guiding theme this year is "The Sacred in the Secular: Finding 'Religious' Dimensions in the World Beyond Religion." The meeting theme for the RRA is "What Do We Know About Religious Institutions? And How Have We Come to Know It?" Finally, it should be noted that the meetings mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the SSSR. For more information see the website at http://fhss.byu.edu/soc/sssr/index.html

18th Quinquennial Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR)—August 5–12, 2000. Durban, South Africa. The conference's theme is "The History of Religions: Origins and Visions." The deadline for paper proposals is April 30, 1999. For program details, contact Rosalind I. J. Hackett, Program Chair, Department of Religious Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee. Phone: (423) 974-2466/0965 (fax); e-mail: rhackett@utk.edu. For Congress arrangements, contact Pratap Kumar, Congress Director, P. O. Box 1376, Umhlanga Rocks, Durban 4320, South Africa; fax: (027+31)562-9416; email: velia@iafrica.com; Congress website: http://www.udw.ac.za/iahr

Book Reviews

New Religious Movements in Western Europe: An Annotated Bibliography (Bibliographies and Indexes in Religious Studies, No. 41). By Elisabeth Arweck and Peter B. Clarke. London: Greenwood Press, 1997. $89.50 cloth.

Most bibliographies of new religious movements (NRMs) concentrate on North American material. This new bibliography focuses on Western Europe and includes not only English-language material but books and articles in almost all European languages including Finnish, Dutch, and Italian. The task was monumental, and the authors should be complimented for their bravery in even attempting to complete it. The 1,877 references cover the years through 1994, with some 1995 and 1996 works also mentioned. The work fills a vacuum and will be a welcome addition to any European or international library on NRMs.

No such bibliography may claim to be really complete, and we are told that the authors have selected first 3,000, then the final draft 1,900 entries out of an initial data base of 8,000. The criteria for such selection are often not clear. For example, the bibliography appears to be reasonably complete for Britain and English-language works, while valuable books in French and other languages have been left out. Why obscure anti-cult publications have been selected over more substantial non-English works is not explained. Perhaps, since the authors used the library of their own Center for New Religions at King's College, London, certain non-English books were not available. In addition, there are no reliable on-line services currently available for information on new non-English books in a given area.

Arranging all titles in alphabetical order makes the bibliography user-friendly, but also has its disadvantages. We are not told whether a book is a piece of scholarship, a journalistic account, or an anti-cult exposé. Titles are occasionally self-explanatory, and annotations certainly help, but not always. Separate sections on scholarly accounts, controversial literature (by mainline churches or the secular anti-cult movement), and journalistic or popular reporting may have been a preferable option.

The Introduction is helpful and clarifies the scope of the NRMs category as interpreted by the authors. Peter Clarke's well known skills in discussing Japanese and African new religious movements areas are remarkable, as usual. Doubts remain, however, in the areas of pentecostal, charismatic, and fundamentalist Christianity, where the line between NRMs and "old" religious movements, or varieties of

evangelicalism, is not easy to draw. Why the Jesus Army, or the House Church movement, or the International Churches of Christ are NRMs while other fundamentalist or pentecostal-charismatic bodies are not included needs more explicit discussion. Absent such a discussion, the authors leave themselves open to the criticism that fringe Christian groups merit inclusion in the book solely because they have become targets of media controversy or anti-cult criticism. It would also be easy to disagree with the description of Britain's Family Action Information Rescue as a more "moderate" anti-cult movement than American counterparts such as Spiritual Counterfeits Project or with the inclusion of the Dialog Centre in Aarhus, Denmark among the scholarly organizations "established for the purpose of researching the new religions" (p. xxxvi). The Dialog Centre is very explicit about Christian apologetics, and at least some of its international branches are firmly in the anti-cult camp.

In this respect, as in others, the book is the victim of its publication date. While the bibliography was going to press, the French parliamentary report on cults was published (1996), followed by the Belgian and Canton of Geneva reports (1997) and by the German report and the Swiss report on Scientology (1998). The suicides and homicides of the Order of the Solar Temple (1994, 1995, 1997) served as a catalyst for this increased official hostility toward NRMs. These government-sponsored documents generated much discussion, and it is conceivable that there will be more publications concerning NRMs in Western Europe in the second half of the 1990s than there were in the much longer period of time covered by the bibliography. In the process, anti-cult groups hardened, scholars reacted to the reports, and the overall picture was significantly altered. This bibliography, while only hinting at these developments, remains an essential tool for documenting the Western European situation as it was before the new cult wars of the late 1990s.

Massimo Introvigne, Center for Studies on New Religions

The Sixties Spiritual Awakening: American Religion Moving From Modern to Postmodern. By Robert S. Ellwood. Rutgers University Press, 1994. 369 pages. $24.95.

The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace: American Religion in a Decade of Conflict. By Robert S. Ellwood. Rutgers University Press, 1997. 271 pages. $18.95.

The titles of Ellwood's recent works denote discussion of two decades of American religion; in fact, the works are far more expansive. In each,

Ellwood takes his reader on a journey through a decade and explicates not only religion—and religious diversity—but politics, ideas, and social trends in a way that renders the ethos of the period immediate and real.

In his examination of Fifties religion, Ellwood assumes a supply-side paradigm similar to that proposed by Roger Finke, Laurence Iannoccone, Rodney Stark, and others. In short, Ellwood suggests that the decade provided consumers of religion with numerous choices which, in conjunction with demographic and economic changes, resulted in a religious boom.

Ellwood avoids the nostalgia that so often permeates discussion of this decade, instead framing explication of Fifties religion in the context of the political climate, cultural change, the impact of theologians and religious figures, and religious trends. Throughout, he provides cogent summaries of the books, philosophies, poets, and films which helped shape the decade. Further, he balances examination of the mainstream of Fifties life with explication of people and ideas at society's margins—Jack Kerouac and the Beats, and Existentialism, for example. Despite the breadth of his undertaking, Ellwood manages to weave a tapestry which portrays well both the parts and the whole of the decade.

The Sixties Spiritual Awakening, though it assumes a different theoretical approach and was published prior to *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace*, can be read as a continuation of Ellwood's account of Fifties religion. Ellwood commences his exploration of Sixties religion with a discussion of modernism and postmodernism and the declining ability of religion, in the face of the decade's burgeoning pluralism, to maintain metanarratives of universal truth and progress. Arguing that in the Sixties the secular world "placed . . . virtually religious emphasis on symbol, gesture, language and community," he concludes that the decade witnessed unprecedented spiritual awakening (p. 19).

Ellwood skillfully portrays influential trends of the Fifties and early Sixties, especially the burgeoning civil rights movement, the beginnings of drug—particularly LSD—experimentation, Pope John XXIII and Vatican II, and the World Council of Churches. He explores the early ambitious years of civil disobedience in Selma, Alabama and elsewhere, religious activism as exemplified by the "servant church," Timothy Leary's "acid church," Krishna Consciousness, Anton LaVey and the formation of the Church of Satan, UFO sightings, and more. Ellwood explicates the "soul" of the decade as embodied in Hippies, anti-war protests, the Haight-Ashbury counterculture, the Summer of Love, the Detroit and other race riots, and religious responses to these upheavals. He incorporates an important chapter on Judaism in the Sixties, analyzing Jewish civil rights activism, the growing tension between blacks and Jews following the emergence of the Black Power movement,

attitudes toward Jews in the Sixties as shaped by memories of the Holocaust, responses to the Six-Day war, and the role of the Jewish thinker as the "cheerful iconoclast" (p. 235).

Ellwood ends his examination of the decade by outlining the growing radicalism of social protesters in the late 1960s, in part as a result of violent resistance to social dissent—as was displayed at the 1968 Democratic Convention—and in part as a result of the increasing conviction that revolution alone could achieve the goals of the anti-war and Black Power movements. He also considers the resultant tension between protesters and "middle America" and between the former and mainline religious organizations.

Ellwood remains focused throughout on the impact these and other social changes wrought on religious organizations and leaders. Detailing responses exemplified in the alteration of worship and theology and in the changing relationship between clergy and congregants, Ellwood considers the multifaceted attempt by mainline religious leadership to at first lead and later follow the social changes occurring in their midst. An argument can be made that Ellwood focuses too exclusively on liberal religious organizations and their responses to the changes of the Sixties, giving only passing attention to more conservative religious sentiments and organizations.

In this lucid account of the Sixties, Ellwood incorporates, as he did in *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace,* an examination of religious diversity and significant books, ideas, theologies, personalities, and political and economic changes. Again, the presentation is so tightly and carefully woven that the reader is left, in the end, with a complex yet coherent portrait of the decade.

In his last chapter, Ellwood returns to his contention that the pluralism introduced in the Sixties transported American religion from a modern to a postmodern world; to a world in which religion is a "matter of personal autonomy," and in which religious switching is commonplace (p. 327). In the end, however, Ellwood is not fully convinced of his thesis; pointing to earlier moments of spiritual revival in which individual spiritual experience was "transmitted outside the ecclesiastical establishments" (p. 333), Ellwood concludes that the Sixties "may not have been so much an aberration as a restoration" (p. 335).

In both works, Ellwood discusses religion, cultural trends, and change in a manner that is both accessible and captivating. One leaves these works convinced that the author is an acute observer of not only religion and culture, but of the dynamic relationship between the two.

Laura Vance, Georgia Southwestern State University

Gnosis and Hermeticism: From Antiquity to Modern Times. Edited by Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff. SUNY Press, 1998. 402 pages. $24.95 paper.

This distinguished collection of papers provides access to the recent work of such notable scholars as Gilles Quispel (on "The Asclepius: From the Hermetic Lodge in Alexandria to the Greek Eucharist and the Roman Mass"), Antoine Faivre (on "Renaissance and the Concept of Western Esotericism"), Joscelyn Godwin (on "Music and the Hermetic Tradition"), and Arthur Versluis (on "Christian Theosophic Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries"). While not strictly a work of narrative history, the articles in this work are arranged in roughly chronological order in respect to subject matter, permitting the reader a rich overview of the depth and diversity contained within those strands of Western culture that have been loosely labeled "Hermeticism" or even more loosely characterized as "Gnostic." In their preface to the book, the editors point out that these streams represent an alternative to the twin pillars upon which Western culture is usually supposed to rest, Greek rationality and biblical faith. The third force emphasized instead the importance of inner enlightenment: "a revelatory experience that mostly entailed an encounter with one's true self as well as with the ground of being, God" (p. vii).

In his opening essay, "Gnosticism and Hermetism in Antiquity," van den Broek attempts the demanding task of distinguishing between those two entities. While agreeing with Hans Jonas that this endeavor is likely to leave one in a "terminological fog," he usefully restricts Gnosticism to those ancient metaphysical systems characterized by "an absolutely negative view of the visible world and its creation and the assumption of a divine spark in man, his inner self, which had become enclosed with the material body as a result of a tragic event in the precosmic world, from which it can only escape to its divine origin by means of the saving gnosis" (p. 4). Hermeticism, on the other hand, represents a relatively sunnier perspective based on Neoplatonic views of divine emanation rather than cosmic tragedy.

What of the Gnostic and Hermetic situation in the modern world? Despite widespread use of the term Gnosticism, there seem to be few really consistent attempts to present the full Gnostic package—negative universe, cosmic tragedy, and all—save in a few tiny sects and in certain controversial passages in Helena Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine.* Hermeticism is much more widespread; under whatever name and form, its fundamental assumptions underlie a number of "metaphysical" and "New Age" perspectives. Because of their contemporary interests, many readers of *Nova Religio* may find especially interesting several concluding essays in this collection that bring the story down to the syllabi of English Literature classes and to the

"metaphysical" shelves in the nearest bookstore. These efforts include those of Jos van Meurs (on "William Blake and His Gnostic Myths"), Daniel van Egmond (on "Western Esoteric Schools in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries"), and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (on "The New Age Movement and the Esoteric Tradition").

Gnosis and Hermeticism is highly recommended for all college libraries and for serious students of Western esotericism.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

Holy Hatred: Religious Conflicts of the '90s. By James A. Haught. Prometheus Books, 1995. 237 Pages. $22.95 cloth.

"Religion causes people to commit horrendous acts everyday, somewhere around the globe," and James Haught certainly provides compelling evidence to substantiate this claim throughout the aptly titled *Holy Hatred* (p. 223). Though the book has its uses, however, it is little more than a voyeuristic cavalcade of religiously inspired, violent acts. The author's disinclination to attempt any interpretive perspective suggests not only an anti-cult sentiment, but an anti-religious one as well. The introduction establishes religion as one of many cultural factors that divides people and spawns hostility. Haught asserts that "the evil side of religion" is a subject the world avoids discussing, despite its prominence in the headlines (p. 14). The remainder of the book consists of fifteen short chapters organized by geographic location and an epilogue with specific chapters on the World Trade Center bombing and the Waco conflagration.

On numerous occasions, the author mentions religious violence as a social phenomenon and the relationship between religion and social movements, but these fleeting statements are never developed in any depth. Haught ignores important questions such as why people need enemies or the meaning of religious violence with regard to community and individual concerns. Furthermore, his depth of knowledge concerning certain religious traditions is questionable. This is epitomized by his amazement that so much violence would be related to Rama when Hinduism has 333 million other gods. He could just as well say that it is surprising how much attention is given to Odysseus, considering the many other characters in the Greek epics.

Despite all these shortcomings, this book has the respectable qualities of a primer. The concise histories are useful as refreshers or to orient a novice student to a region's religious conflicts. The book's inclusiveness allows a cross-cultural perspective that is surely difficult to obtain from the original news sources. This is most evident when the *extensive* chapter

covering violence by Muslims is followed by a chapter about violence perpetrated by American cult movements and fundamentalists.

More detailed and personalized stories would have improved this book greatly. As it stands, *Holy Hatred* sometimes appears to be little more than a compilation of old news clippings. Such clippings can be found after ten minutes of web surfing or can be at one's fingertips by owning this book.

Dave Faux, University of Oregon

New Religions As Global Cultures. By Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe. Rutgers University Press, 1997. $59.00 cloth, $21.00 paper.

This book offers a fresh and original approach to the study of new religious movements (NRMs). Its central thesis is that NRMs are not simply the most recent installments in an ongoing tradition of religious invention. Rather they are perceived as a novel and distinct species of religious phenomena. Their distinctiveness, it is argued, is a function of the emerging global culture of the late 20th century, a global culture in which religions (along with many other institutions) have transcended their national or regional origins to become truly intercontinental in scope. Under these conditions, it is argued, local folk religions lose their insularity and become subject to the influence of a wide variety of transplanted religious influences coming from such sources as Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. These ancient traditions are new only in their transplanted contexts. This is an idea that many readers will be familiar with from the work of Roland Robertson, but Hexham and Poewe work out the systematic implications of this notion in more detail than Robertson has done.

The book begins unpromisingly with a chapter devoted to a rehash of all the tired old attacks on the anti-cult movement. The diatribe is imprecise in failing to recognize that the so-called anti-cult movement is far from homogeneous. But it is also unnecessary in that this chapter is in no way connected to any of the arguments developed in any of the other chapters. However, since Hexham and Poewe are quite critical of many of the NRMs they discuss, I suppose they felt professionally obligated to try to distance themselves from journalistic cult bashers by this ritualistic attack on the anti-cult movement straw man.

Once beyond Chapter One, the book develops coherence. The central idea is that NRMs are recombinant mutant forms of religious expression cobbled together out of bits and pieces of transnationalized world religious ideas and practices. These mutant forms are then grafted in new and inventive ways (via the creative process of myth making)

onto local folk religious traditions. This idea obviously fits some NRMs better than others. However, as a way of getting us to see one of the important reasons why new religions are suddenly erupting throughout the world, and why precisely at this time in history, it is an exciting approach. After developing this theory in Chapters Two and Three, the authors use the next three chapters to discuss what they consider the three major ingredients in the recombinant brew that constitutes a NRM. These are primal spiritual experiences, myths, and doctrine respectively. The scope of these chapters is comprehensive. It extends far beyond North America and Europe to Africa, Asia, and the rest of the world and makes these chapters the strongest of the book.

Concerned as they are primarily with the combinatorics of religious ideas, the authors pay comparatively little attention to issues that have been given the greatest attention in most other social scientific studies of NRMs; the process of obtaining and retaining members and the cognitive changes associated with affiliation. These topics are dealt with briefly in Chapters Seven and Eight. There is a final chapter addressing the question of whether NRMs are dangerous. The authors conclude that NRMs, while not exactly dangerous, are a symptom of spiritual malaise. While respecting the cultural creativity of these new religious forms, the authors feel that they err grievously in combining that which is best kept separate. Their argument is not against creative religious syncretism, but against combining social-psychological mythmaking, the established traditions of the great world religions, and science on the same plate. They argue that each of these three aspects of human culture is diminished through combination with the others into a single overarching belief system.

This book contains a challenging thesis that needs to be considered by every scholar working in the field of new religious movements. Although the book is essentially a theoretical monograph, its form, curiously, does not entirely match its content. The authors seem to have been undecided as to whether to write a textbook or a scholarly monograph. The book, therefore, combines elements of each in ways that are sometimes confusing. Not only are there lists of difficult words at the end of each chapter, but the narrative itself frequently lapses into a didactic voice that seems inappropriate for scholars attempting to present a controversial theory for consideration by their peers. However, anyone interested in new religious movements as a world wide phenomenon and who wants to understand why these movements have proliferated so dramatically in the closing decades of the 20th century would do well to ignore these stylistic faults and read this book for its central ideas.

Benjamin Zablocki, Rutgers University.

The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1898–1948. By Will C. van den Hoonaard. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996. 356 pages. Can. $39.95.

The growth of the Bahá'í faith in North America is still understudied by scholars of religion. Will C. van den Hoonaard, a sociologist at the University of New Brunswick and a Bahá'í, has made an impressive effort toward filling that gap. His study covers a longer period than most work on new religions, allowing him to discern phases in Bahá'í's Canadian history. While taking a narrative historical approach, van den Hoonaard also demonstrates considerable familiarity with the sociological literature on new religious movements, noting where the Bahá'ís follow or depart from the patterns of other groups.

Most of the sixteen chapters take both historical and sociological points of view. The Canadian community was a purely North American phenomenon; it included no Bahá'ís from Iran, where the movement began in 1844. The first phase (1898–1912) involved the conversion of a handful of individuals, many of whom were well-educated, upper-class, Anglophone, and interested in Methodism, Theosophy, or Rosicrucianism. Most of these Bahá'ís retained a dual affiliation with other religions or social causes; little effort was made to form Bahá'í communities.

In 1912 Abdu'l-Bahá (1844–1921), head of the faith, visited North America for nine months. Van den Hoonaard recounts Abdu'l-Bahá's eleven-day sojourn in Montreal and the generally positive reaction of the press. The chapter demonstrates two of the book's weaknesses. The first is excessive detail; we are told what the weather was every day, the cost of Abdu'l-Bahá's cable-car ride, and the name and number of the train engine that took him to Toronto. The second is uncritical use of hagiographical material; Van den Hoonaard reports that both when Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in Montreal and when he left, a customs official said there was no need to inspect his baggage. Surely Bahá'í oral tradition has twinned the story, which itself is of unknown reliability. Another example is the story of a young Mohawk boy who was sitting on a fence when Abdu'l-Bahá's train was passing, saw Abdu'l-Bahá wave to him through one of its windows, and became a Bahá'í decades later. Such stories reflect the dual audience of van den Hoonaard's work: academic researchers and Bahá'ís. It is difficult to please both.

Abdu'l-Bahá's visit strengthened Bahá'í identity, thereby accelerating the formation of Bahá'í communities (phase two, 1913–37). In 1922, Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957), Abdu'l-Bahá's successor as head of the Bahá'í faith, asked the Bahá'ís to elect nine-member local governing bodies, implement policies for enrolling new members, and hold "Feasts," Bahá'ís-only gatherings for worship, consultation, and socializing held once every nineteen days. In the 1930s Effendi asked

Bahá'ís to abstain from alcohol and follow other aspects of the Bahá'í moral code. He also translated more Bahá'í scriptures into English, thereby helping Bahá'ís to understand their religion more deeply. The result was the establishment of clearer community boundaries. Converts remained Bahá'ís longer; whereas in 1911 only 31 percent remained Bahá'ís all their lives, by 1948 the percentage had increased to 74 percent.

Van den Hoonaard can offer accurate sociological data because he has created a comprehensive database that uses archival sources and extensive oral history research. These sources include every Canadian known to have become a Bahá'í through 1948. He notes that in 1910 the 10 Canadian Bahá'ís were mostly wealthy Montreal women; in 1948 Canada had about 260 Bahá'ís, the majority of whom were childless middle to lower middle-class women. Telephone operators and music teachers were particularly common vocations for these members. Catholic, Jewish, and other non-Protestant participation increased significantly during this period, although Protestants remained the vast majority. Jewish Bahá'ís made significant innovations in presenting the Bahá'í teachings to others, and African Canadians also joined the religion.

The third phase (1937–48) focused on the creation of a national Bahá'í community. In spite of adverse social factors (religious uniformity and conservatism) and grave logistical difficulties caused by World War Two, at least one local Bahá'í community was established in every province by 1944, thus meeting the goal set by Effendi in 1937. In Chapter 12, Van den Hoonaard describes every Bahá'í community that existed in 1947, divides them into high, medium, and low-growth groups, and analyzes the factors that caused them to expand or stagnate. Canada's growing Bahá'í population made possible the election of a National Spiritual Assembly (national governing council) in 1948, marking Canada's separation from the United States Bahá'í community.

Sociologists will be struck by the contrasts found between the Bahá'í community and other new religions: the Canadian Bahá'í community never had a charismatic leader living on its soil; was democratic in form; and experienced no significant crises. Appendix B reconstructs the annual membership from 1898 to 1948 and shows its slow exponential growth.

The closing chapter, "Social and Cultural Adaptations in the Canadian Setting," notes that the Canadian Bahá'í community was characterized by *religious singleness*: the majority of members were unmarried or the only Bahá'í in their family, and they did not know the other Bahá'ís very well. Such an individualistic focus, far closer to Protestantism than Catholicism, explains why few Catholics joined the movement (the lack of Bahá'í clergy and ritual were other factors). Bahá'í communities met in living rooms and rented hotel meeting

rooms, rather than in kitchens and Bahá'í-owned buildings. The community was adult centered; there were so few Bahá'í children that few classes were held for them and they had few peers with whom they could associate or marry. As a result only 25–40% became Bahá'ís. Because Bahá'í institutions were elected, women played a central role; van den Hoonaard analyzes their status extensively. The Bahá'í community was outward looking, engaging with society and seeking new members while avoiding elitism and self-identification as an embattled minority. While maintaining clear community boundaries, these boundaries remained "permeable" (p. 290).

The book has five useful appendices and an excellent bibliography. In spite of its occasionally "popular" tone and frequent repetition of information, the book provides a wealth of information about how a new religion sank its roots deeply into Canadian soil. One hopes that van den Hoonaard will also write a history of 1948–98, when the number of Canadian Bahá'ís increased from 260 to 15,000 and the membership became even more diversified.

Robert H. Stockman, DePaul University

The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Tradition. By James Turner Johnson. Penn State University Press, 1997. 185 pages. $45.00 cloth, $16.95 paper.

Two exciting developments in the study of political philosophy and international relations include Alasdair MacIntyre's call for dialogue between traditions and the rediscovery of the role of culture in international politics. Melding the two approaches, James Turner Johnson pleads for a Western-Islamic dialogue on the regulation of war. Johnson challenges the realist perspective in foreign policy, noting that its belief in a Hobbesian state of nature existing between nations and its narrow focus on the calculus of economic advantage or distribution of power has blinded American diplomacy to the cultural dimension of international politics. He notes recent American policy failures in the Middle East (not to mention Cold War policy failures in the Far East) as examples of Foggy Bottom's confusion concerning the cultural dimensions of politics.

Earlier studies of holy war, especially that of Roland Bainton, tended to view it as a no-holds-barred affair, with the Thirty Years War or Cromwell's pacification of Ireland taken as paradigmatic case studies. Johnson challenges this conception, pointing out that questions of the justification of holy war, the authority to wage it, and the protagonists' conduct during it have exercised the greatest minds of both traditions. In the West, questions of the just war, war between Christians, and conflict between Christians and non-Christians (as occurred in the

settlement of the New World and in confrontations with Muslims) ultimately gave rise to the system of international law as expounded by Victoria and Grotius. In Islam, theorists such as al-Farabi and al-Shaybani (8th century) also wrestled with these concepts. Early Shi'ites, for their part, forbade participation in an offensive *jihad* waged by an unjust ruler, attacking the claims of *khalifs* from outside the family of Muhammad.

Perpetuation of the too common tendency to refer to the angry young men of Islam—even if they are informed more by Franz Fanon than al-Shafi'i—as "fundamentalists" is one drawback of the book. This usage, born in the wake of the Iranian revolution, tells more about the smug prejudice of sections of the American governing, academic, and media elite towards certain of their beyond-the-Beltway compatriots than it does about political ferment in large parts of Africa and Asia.

A second drawback is the author's failure to compare the holy wars of the Christian past and Muslim present with the revolutionary struggles and other wars of "secular" ideologies. Modern secularism arose as a promise to end the sectarian strife that ravaged 17th-century Europe, yet spawned ferocious political violence in the names of such "secular" idols as race, class, economics, and historical necessity. The unfulfilled promises of secularism only underscore the urgency and propriety of Johnson's project. Despite its shortcomings, this book has heightened relevance for a world in which traditional ethnic and religious identities have become major lines of conflict. Johnson has provided a major service to all concerned with the role of religion in political conflict, whether academics, journalists, or diplomats.

Peter J. Herz, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

Krishnamurti: Reflections on the Self. By Jiddu Krishnamurti. Edited by Raymond Martin. Open Court Publishing Company, 1997. 214 pages. $16.95 paper.

This collection of essays, based largely on informal talks, explores the notion of "self" from a variety of perspectives. The editor has grouped the essays according to the following themes: inquiry, emotion, self and identification, and freedom. The first section invites the reader to engage in the process of self reflection. The second section includes Krishnamurti's thoughts on fear, loneliness, discontent, pride/ambition, anger, guilt, desire, and happiness. The third and fourth sections discuss freedom and the possibility of surrendering attachment.

Krishnamurti in many ways defined the allure of the East in the twentieth century: he was born into a poor Brahmin family, groomed

by the Theosophical Society of Annie Besant to become this century's avatar, lived a life of nonstop world travel, and successfully founded various schools. Despite his interesting past, Krishnamurti never allows his personal narrative to enter into his discussions concerning the self. Krishnamurti's philosophy, method, and life demands an immediacy, a presence without grasping—what he refers to as "passive alertness." In one telling encounter, the great Buddhist teacher Rahula Walpola suggests that elements of Krishnamurti's teachings parallel Buddhism. Krishnamurti dismisses such analogizing, suggesting that when we fall out of our immediate experience and attempt to explain anything, we have lost our freedom.

Raymond Martin, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Maryland, has chosen these excerpts well. Without oversimplifying Krishnamurti's thought, Martin's groupings indicate a cogent progression from the quest for truth to the discovery of freedom. The work provides an excellent introduction to the key ideas of Indian philosophy regarding the self, as indicated in the following sentence: "Many of us have experienced, at one time or another, that state when the 'me,' the self, with its aggressive demands, has completely ceased, and the mind is extraordinarily quiet, without any direct volition—that state wherein, perhaps, one may experience something that is without measure, something that is impossible to put into words" (p. 134). These and many other passages read like modern day Upanishads.

This well designed, easy to read, and modestly priced book serves as a solid introduction to the teachings and teaching style of Krishnamurti.

Christopher Key Chapple, Loyola Marymount University

The New Book of Goddesses and Heroines. By Patricia Monaghan. Llewellyn Publications, 1997. 371 pages. $19.95 paper.

In the third edition of her encyclopedic work, Monaghan sets out to inspire and enchant her reader with the range of guises the Goddess has worn throughout history. This diversity is represented through a twenty-three page name index and the identification of twenty-eight different culture groups across the globe. There is also a very brief listing of festival days. The heart of the book, Myths of the Goddess, contains wide-ranging myths and tales of particular goddesses, often compressing contradictory variants into a single tale. The entries, however, are uneven in length and style. Sati, for example, is barely described (perhaps because her myth is one which directs women towards obedience?), while the sections on Kali and Inanna range over a page in length. Where the myths are lengthy, they are told in evocative

prose, a move which fosters Monaghan's stated intent to stir the imagination and invoke the possibilities of the divine. This goal is also supported by the astoundingly wide range of goddesses uncovered and by photographs from Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History. A more extensive bibliography at the end of each entry or culture group would have increased the book's usefulness. As it is, an inadequate bibliography is found only at the book's end.

This volume is a useful source book for Wiccans and others searching for particular goddesses or types of goddesses.

Rudy Leon, Syracuse University

Betrayal of the Spirit: My Life behind the Headlines of the Hare Krishna Movement. By Nori J. Muster. Foreword by Larry D. Shinn. University of Illinois Press, 1997. 213 pages. $24.95 cloth.

Nori Muster is a Krishna devotee and second-generation disciple of A. C. Bhaktivedanta (d. 1977), who founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and brought Chaitanya devotionalism to America in 1965. She joined ISKCON in 1978, and her first tutor in Krishna theology was Subhananda (Steven Gelberg). After graduating from the University of California, Santa Barbara, Muster moved into the Los Angeles temple and began working in the public relations office. From 1980 to 1988, she was a key writer and editor of *ISKCON World Review*, which during that time moved from being a "good news" publication to one that discussed ISKCON's problems.

Muster's book illuminates numerous important aspects of new religious movements: the bumbling process of routinization of charisma after the death of the founder; the pitfall of attributing divinity to religious leaders; how the sexism of a foreign tradition can be adopted enthusiastically by converts; the treatment of children; the painful maturation of a new organization and its youthful constituents; the problem of attributing infallibility to revered sources of authority (fundamentalism); financial difficulties; how catastrophic millennial expectations increase when a group experiences opposition and internal problems; the evolution of public relations efforts within a criticized organization; the perils of public relations' glosses over real abuses; and finally, the process by which a believer becomes disenchanted with leaders and an organization and decides to leave.

The foreword by Larry Shinn, a scholar of South Asian religions, provides a context for understanding Muster's ISKCON experiences. Shinn points out that while ISKCON is authentically Hindu and looks normal in India, it is culturally anomalous in the United States. He also

alerts the reader to the fact that Muster writes about ISKCON in the 1980s when it was struggling with the institutional issues which arose after the death of A. C. Bhaktivedanta. In short, Muster's book is not about ISKCON in the 1990s. Shinn argues that the rationality displayed by Muster and other American devotees who criticized the abuses of the successor gurus belies the brainwashing theory. Many critical devotees such as Muster left ISKCON, while others remained to work for reform within the organization.

The problems of ISKCON described by Muster are also found in mainstream religious institutions. Muster quotes one male leader who observes that ISKCON was a "hierarchical society" that did not permit independent action (especially on the part of women) and was "just like the Vatican" (p. 177).

Scholars of religion will find much of value in Muster's thoughtful and well written account. Anti-cultists will find ammunition for their crusade as well.

Catherine Wessinger, Loyola University, New Orleans

Prophetic Charisma: The Psychology of Revolutionary Religious Personalities. By Len Oakes. Syracuse University Press, 1997. 246 pages. $30.00 cloth.

Len Oakes is a senior psychologist with the Cainmillar Institute of Melbourne, Australia. More importantly, he is a former member of one of the prophetic groups he describes in this fascinating and insightful analysis. Drawing on a broad literature (especially the theories of Heinz Kohut on narcissism) as well as personally conducted field interviews of prophetic leaders and their followers, Oakes makes a persuasive argument that is seldom heard: Prophetic groups often provide great psychological aid to their members and are characteristically able to do so not because of their leader's manipulativeness and trickery, but in large part because of the leader's genuinely extraordinary qualities.

Rarely psychopathic though characteristically highly narcissistic, these leaders typically have high intelligence, sensitivity to what others need, a willingness to take risks, persistence, and an air of certainty. What makes them special—and Oakes stresses their specialness—is the dynamics of their narcissistic personality. Their need to create a world safe for their narcissism, their ability to objectify their followers or enemies, and the fact that their narcissistic regression gives them a perspective others lack, make them powerful influences—sometimes for evil but more often for good—in the lives of their followers. They are facilitators in the "great work" (personal growth or the resolution

of private problems) that members seek to achieve in the group. Some members fail and leave and are for the most part no worse off, while others achieve their ends and then depart. Only a very few remain—the turnover in these groups is in most cases nearly complete every five years.

Oakes offers a five-stage natural history of such movements and their leaders and very usefully distinguishes between messianic prophets (offering a remarkable truth that leads to the achievement of a transcendent connection) and charismatic prophets (offering a raw, disorderly, and very often destructive love). He notes the great variety of social backgrounds among prophets and followers, the role of visionary experiences in prophets' lives, and the distorted view of messianic groups that result from the imposition of the prophetic Jesus Movement as a model. Oakes also asserts the crucial role of secret, often sexual rites, in the leader's inner circle and the distinctive role of women in such groups. The analysis is nuanced and clearly written.

This is a book that should not only be read by scholars of charismatic prophets and prophetic groups, but also by those who come into contact with such leaders and their followers.

Robert S. Robins, Tulane University

Taking with the Left Hand: Enneagram Craze, People of the Bookmark, and the Mouravieff "Phenomenon." By William Patrick Patterson. Arete Communications, 1998. 156 Pages. $12.95 paper.

In *Taking With the Left Hand*, William Patrick Patterson, a follower of George Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way tradition, examines three contemporary movements which he believes misinterpret and misuse the teachings of Gurdjieff. The book is quite short and presumes at least a general familiarity with Gurdjieff's teachings on the part of the reader.

Patterson begins by taking to task the psychotherapy community's adoption of the Enneagram as a tool for discerning personality types in the practice of secular psychotherapy. The Enneagram has become remarkably popular among therapists, as seen in the many books, articles, and web sites devoted to it. Patterson argues that the Enneagram was introduced to the West by Gurdjieff as a tool for spiritual development. Its current use as a technique in secular psychotherapy is seen by Patterson as a perversion of its true spiritual function. Patterson offers an interesting history of the spread of the Enneagram in the West, identifying Oscar Ichazo, Claudio Naranjo, Helen Palmer, and others as culprits in the progressive debasement of the Enneagram from its true meaning and purpose.

From Enneagrams Patterson moves to the Fellowship of Friends or "People of the Bookmark," a contemporary American group founded by Robert Earl Burton. Patterson argues that while Burton claims to be a teacher in the Fourth Way tradition, his teachings and practices significantly depart from those of Gurdjieff. The specific criticisms made by Patterson are, however, often rather subtle and are not likely to appear that significant to non-Gurdjieffans.

The final subject of *Taking With the Left Hand* is the "Fifth Way" teaching of Boris Mouravieff, who attempted to synthesize Gurdjieff's Fourth Way with Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Mouravieff died in 1966, but his work continues to be advanced through the efforts of Robin Amis. Patterson makes much of the fact that Mouravieff was not an actual disciple of Gurdjieff, but rather a follower of P. D. Ouspensky, who broke from Gurdjieff's inner circle and continued to spread his teachings, producing what is often acknowledged as the most philosophically lucid account of Gurdjieff's thought, *In Search of the Miraculous*. Followers of Gurdjieff criticized Ouspensky for having only a superficial intellectual understanding of the Fourth Way, and Patterson applies the same criticism to Mouravieff. He argues that since Mouravieff lacked training under a true Fourth Way master, his interpretation of the tradition is at best incomplete and often completely inaccurate. This is particularly so with regard to Mouravieff's misunderstanding of the relationship of Gurdjieff's thought to Christian doctrine. Again, however, much of the detail of Patterson's critique of Mouravieff will be meaningful only to those already familiar with the Fourth Way.

Unlike many interpreters of the Gurdjieff tradition, Patterson writes in a clear and concise style. While this book is primarily of interest to students of Gurdjieff and his movement, it also has a broader significance as a case study of a spiritual tradition defending itself against those who seek to dilute and secularize its content for the purpose of marketing it to a larger audience.

George Adams, Susquehanna University

The Book of Enlightened Masters: Western Teachers in Eastern Traditions. By Andrew Rawlinson. Open Court, 1997. 650 pages. $29.95 paper.

The Book of Enlightened Masters is oversized in three areas: its physical dimensions, its subject matter, and its ambition. In fact, it can be seen as two distinct books bound together. The first, *How to Understand Spiritual Teachers* (pp. 3–142), is an introduction to Buddhist, Hindu, Sufi, and independent religious traditions as they have developed in the West, with a historical overview of the rise of Western teachers in

these traditons. Rawlinson introduces a promising, if complex, new typology for analyzing and classifying the teachings and practices of the groups he presents; his model may prove useful for delineating the generic similarities in a wide range of religious movements.

The second book, *A Directory of Spiritual Teachers* (pages 145–621), is a massive encyclopedia of western roshis, sheiks, schools, gurus, and teachers who are united by the fact that they all show some element of "Eastern" theory or practice in their teachings. In all there are about 150 major and thirty minor entries, with literally thousands of cross references and links indicated in the text.

Both books also contain an initially bewildering array of charts, diagrams, and tables intended to show connections between teachers or to clarify Rawlinson's typological analysis. Though the graphics can ultimately be understood, it takes time and dedication to work through the figures; some pages contain more coordinate planes than a high school geometry text, and deciphering the virus-shaped diagrams in particular seems more trouble than it is worth.

Rawlinson takes an ecological view of his material, seeing all Western teachers and groups—famous and obscure, upright and scandal-ridden, stable and eccentric—as part of a complex, interdependent system; they all matter, and in some unspecified way, each enables the others to exist. As a consequence, there are entries for individuals and groups most readers will scarcely have heard of, alongside the predictable cast of relatively well-known spiritual leaders. Specialists will no doubt object to Rawlinson's criteria for inclusion, or at least quibble over his choices. However, all things considered, the author has done an excellent job with his editing, which must have been tremendously difficult since the present book is half the size of his initial manuscript.

In any project of this dimension there are sure to be errors and admissions of ignorance that seem out of place in an otherwise well researched book. For example, when speaking of *tulkus* (recognized reincarnations in Tibetan Buddhism) Rawlinson writes, "I do not know how many of them there are but it must be over a hundred" (p. 562). Indeed. A little digging would have shown that there are over 2,000 *tulkus* still identified, out of the roughly 5,000 known before the Chinese invasion of Tibet. However, this is nit-picking. *The Book of Enlightened Masters* is a work of epic proportions; it is nearly impossible to browse through it without stumbling upon some fascinating new fact or even an entire tradition of which one was unaware.

Scholars might also criticize Rawlinson for not taking a harder critical line with some of the more questionable teachers he discusses. While understandable, such criticism misses the point. Rawlinson obviously wrote this book out of love for the exotic, fascinating, innovative, and sometimes bizarre teachings of these Western "masters." His enthusiasm, interest, joy, and occasional astonishment

escape the mask of scholarly detachment and are displayed openly on every page.

In October of 1997 when *The Book of Enlightened Masters* became available, my students were already reeling from textbook "sticker shock." I felt reluctant to force another purchase on them, but nevertheless ordered Rawlinson's book as a supplementary text for my course on Asian Religions in the U.S. The students who could afford the book loved it; others borrowed copies or stood in the campus book store browsing, oblivious to the sales clerks' stares. All of us spent hours delightfully lost in the *Directory* section, following the links from one entry to another, invariably forgetting our original questions in the process. Several students reported reaching for a mouse to click on the next link before realizing that they were reading a book and not a web page—high praise in the electronic age!

Many books have promising titles; most serve up less than anticipated. *The Book of Enlightened Masters* exceeds all reasonable expectations. It is engrossing, informative, academically solid, and entertaining. After ordering it for the library, I bought another copy for myself.

Scott Lowe, University of North Dakota

Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream. Edited by Jonathan D. Sarna. University of Illinois Press, 1998. 377 pages. $21.95 paper.

Focusing on the period from 1860–1920, this collection of lucid, well integrated, and nicely detailed essays investigates the "fundamental tension between accommodation and resistance, between absorption and retention, and between assimilation and identity that is characteristic of all groups that seek simultaneously to be part of and yet apart from the dominant culture" (p. 5). Individual essays address the complex interactions of Jews, Catholics, Mormons, later Protestant immigrants, and African-Americans with the Protestant mainstream. The other essays address several "arenas of conflict," including the Bible, education, missions, the Supreme Court, and "visions" of America.

Several contributions are particularly noteworthy. Sarna, for example, uses Benny Kraut's identification of four strategies for Jewish survival within a majority culture—geographic mobility, erection of communal infrastructures, acculturation, and defense—to construct a framework for a general comparison of minority responses to the dominant Protestant mainstream. In her discussion of the Mormons, Jan Shipps draws nuanced distinctions between Mormon "otherness" and "difference" before and after the 1890 manifesto announcing the

abandonment of plural marriage. David Wills skillfully evokes the deep resonance of the biblical paradigm of exodus in African-American piety, and Mark Noll clearly demonstrates how the Bible itself was used both to create a common culture and to reinforce distinctive minority reactions to that culture.

Scott Appleby shows the complex interactions between missionary efforts to convert immigrants, Native Americans, and Jews and the countervailing attempts to construct secure religious "enclaves" resistant to missionary influence. The articles have an admirable tendency to complement and reinforce each other as particular issues and individuals reappear from essay to essay.

This is a well conceived, thoughtful, and rewarding treatment of the dynamics of American religious life from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. It should be of interest both to students, for its accessibility and vivid vignettes, and to scholars for its substantive and careful analysis.

Eugene V. Gallagher, Connecticut College

Living at the Edge of Chaos: Complex Systems in Culture and Psyche. By Helene Shulman. Continuum Books, 1997. 252 pages. $19.95 paper.

This book is somewhat mistitled insofar as I and other readers might approach it hoping to find something specifically about chaos or systems theory. The focus is on mental illness (i.e., schizophrenia) and the perspective is unapologetically Jungian. The argument is akin to that of Thomas Szasz: schizophrenics are not really mentally ill. The Jungian spin is to romanticize: these patients are on a quest for a higher spiritual reality. They are like the canaries in the mines; their sickness should be a warning to all of us that we live in a sick civilization which has severed our connection to our primal roots.

Yes, I've heard these points before. No, Shulman's argument does not convince me. However, this book is worth a read because it is so well written. If you love Jungian discussion of the divine child and connectionist models, this is the book for you. There is even the New Age view of Jung's synchronicity as a bridge to the parapsychological: "The experiences of synchronicity, clairvoyance, healing, or alchemical psychological rebirth, then, rest on potential energy, a reservoir of invested energy that reaches toward the future rather than the present" (p. 162). The author is well read in the field of sociology and anthropology of mental illness and knows which sources to cite. She also has experience in one of the most creative approaches in psychotherapy today: art therapy. The case studies are written in a

fashion that is riveting but not ready for publication in most peer reviewed psychiatric journals. Some of the causal inferences drawn from the reported statistics are questionable. She admits her respect for the role of neuroleptic medications, but her criticism of the established nosological system, the *Diagnosis and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association,* is excessive in my opinion.

I would love to see a mental health care delivery system that takes homeless schizophrenics off the streets and off of restraints and transforms them into functioning shamans, but I am just not sure how to do that. I wonder why the romanticizers always choose schizophrenia as their exemplary disease, when it is overshadowed by the sheer numbers of cases of depression, anxiety, and now dementia. I was a Jungian in graduate school, but the more live patients I saw, the more I gained an appreciation for the reality of neuroscience, the need for diagnostic guidelines, and the benefits of psychopharmacology.

T. L. Brink, Crafton Hills College

Jung and Shamanism in Dialogue: Retrieving the Soul/Retrieving the Sacred. By C. Michael Smith. Paulist Press, 1998. 274 Pages. $29.95 paper.

1997 was a good year for the topic of Jung and shamanism. David Noel's *The Soul and Shamanism* addresses the subject as does the collection edited by Donald Sanders and Steven Wong, *The Sacred Heritage.* These books overlap, to some extent, with *Jung and Shamanism* by C. Michael Smith.

Smith's work is divided into three sections. The first section, entitled "Shamanism," examines various definitions of the term. While aware of the criticisms raised concerning Mircea Eliade's claim in *Shamanism* (1964) that shamanism is equivalent to an archaic technique of ecstasy, he seems, in principle, to accept the claim's value. Smith also focuses on the sacred as a key component in the shamanic experience of call, quest, disintegration, and reintegration. This section ends with a reading and critique of Victor Turner's notion of ritual and liminality using the theories of psychologist of religion R. L. Moore.

Part 2, entitled "Jung and Shamanism," offers a reading of Jung's life as represented in his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* and in such secondary sources as Anthony Stevens' *On Jung* (1990). Smith's intention is to uncover possible shamanic elements in Jung's early life experiences, in his preoccupation with spiritualism and the occult, and in his use of "active imagination." Jung used this technique to encounter the archetypal figures of the unconscious. His experiences culminated in the appearance of his inner guru, Philemon.

Smith goes on in this section to describe the emergence of Jung's psychology and to compare and contrast the archetypal images of the collective unconscious with the spirit entities of classical shamanism. He concludes that classical shamanism is the early mapping of a transformative experience that emerges from a journey into the deeper layers of the collective unconscious. The last part of this section seeks to tease out of Jung's few references to shamanism the author's contention that it contains the same archetypal figures that are present in any profound encounter with the unconscious.

The book's final section, "Some Implications and Applications," looks at the more practical possibilities of an identification of shamanism with Jung's psychology. Smith's purpose is to offer an updated shamanic reading of various psychological disorders using the work of the psychiatrist Colin Ross and the "white shaman" Sandra Ingerman. In the last chapter, "Implications for the Future," Smith argues for the retrieval of the soul in modern culture through the application of the contemporary shamanic technique of Jungian psychology.

In many ways Smith's book reads like a doctoral dissertation revised for a wider audience. Though the author's overall argument has some merit, this reader was left with the lingering feeling of there being too great a contrast between the book's informative and suggestive detail and the many unexamined assumptions at the heart of its argument. That scourge of comparativists, parallelism, bears much of the burden of Smith's argument but is left unsupported by a more careful analysis of the issues it raises. A more subtle reading of contemporary shamanism and its "fictions" along the lines laid out in Noel's *The Soul and Shamanism* would have strengthened Smith's arguments. A more detailed consideration of the historical influence of spiritualism on Jung and its relation to shamanism would have provided needed perspective in the section on Jung's life and thought. The last section could have been strengthened by the inclusion of a discussion of Stanislav Grof and others in the Transpersonal school of psychology. Lastly, the entire book could have benefited from a thorough index.

F. X. Charet, Aion Center for the Study of Spirituality and Culture, Montreal, Canada

Recognizing the Latino Resurgence in U.S. Religion: the Emmaus Paradigm. By Ana Maria Stevens and Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo. Westview Press, 1997. 272 pages. $24.00 paper.

This is high-powered scholarship from the authors, affiliated with Union Theological Seminary and Brooklyn College respectively. In this book

they go beyond some of their previous articles in *Latin Studies Journal* and some of the presentations they made at the Program for the Analysis of Religion Among Latinos at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1996. There are more than a dozen graphs and tables, three hundred references, and a fifteen page, double column index. The tone is objective without any obvious agenda distorting the facts. All of the aforementioned qualities make this book an essential addition to libraries serving graduate programs in sociology, religion, or Latino Studies.

Nevertheless, I found this book unfulfilling because it is not always that clear where the facts are pointing. Sometimes there are simply too many trees in the forest to get one's bearings. This is not helped by the authors' sometimes vague section headings (e.g., Syzygy, Ledger).

The central theme of the book is that the religion of U.S. Latinos is a thorough syncretism of various influences (Spanish, indigenous, African, and colonial, among others). U.S. Latinos, when compared to Euro-Americans and African-Americans, tend to be disproportionately younger, foreign-born, less educated, and in lower income brackets, yet they show high labor force participation rates for both males and females. They have a larger household size and a higher proportion of households with children. They are two-thirds Roman Catholic, but a rapidly growing number are becoming Pentecostals.

The authors deftly avoid stereotypes and consistently note the differences between Mexican, Puerto Rican, and other Hispanic backgrounds. They also explain some of the differences between native born and immigrant generations and examine geographical and regional variations.

The last half of the book attempts meticulously to document every minor blip on the radar screen of U.S. Latino religion over the past half century, with frequent references to newspapers. One refreshing analogy is to look at religious denominations as supermarkets: many larger denominations are offering special Latino sections that target this growing market.

T. L. Brink, Crafton Hills College

Little X: Growing up in the Nation of Islam. By Sonsyrea Tate. HarperSanFrancisco, 1997. 230 pages. $22.00 cloth.

Award winning journalist Sonsyrea Tate reacted to Louis Farrakhan's 1996 condemnation of American black journalists like a chastised child. Her autobiography, *Little X: Growing up in the Nation of Islam*, is a curious addition to the expanding literature on the black separatist movement.

In an intensely personal response to an impersonal rebuke from a respected elder brother, Tate is angry yet apologetic. Farrakhan's remarks at the 21st annual convention of the National Association of Black Journalists and the frisking of convention attendees by the Fruit of Islam security force no doubt triggered Tate's memories of the time when "Elijah Muhammad had our minds completely" (p. 60).

Writing from a child's perspective and using a child's voice, Tate relives her childhood and adolescence from the ages of six to sixteen. She tells of changes within her family and within the Nation of Islam between 1972 and 1982. Historical contextualization is in largely impressionistic terms. Tate touches lightly on many of the contradictions inherent in Nation of Islam doctrine but leaves the reader to decide what these contradictions mean. She struggles to make a case for the exceptionalism of life in the Nation, but succeeds only in telling tales, most of which might be found in any American teenager's diary. Contributing nothing that is truly significant to our knowledge about this particular chapter in African-American religious history, Tate raises more questions about growing up in the Nation of Islam than she answers.

Delmarshae Sledge Tinsley, University of Pittsburgh

The Eye of Spirit: An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad. By Ken Wilber. Shambhala, 1997. 414 pages. $25.00 cloth.

Since Jungian psychology was recently called a cult, a similar exaggeration might view transpersonal psychology as a new religious movement. If so, Ken Wilber is its leading theologian and this book is the latest volume of his *Summa.* As in previous works, his synthesizing skill is evident, his intellectual ambition vaulting. Trading on the transpersonalists' metaphor of mapping, his aim is to encompass the entirety of human consciousness as it has been charted by the more circumscribed cartographies of individual disciplines. This attempt at summative coverage is reflected in the organization of his chapters: philosophy, feminist thought, literary theory, religious studies, and, of course, psychology. Moreover, Wilber wants all modes of knowing to be included, from shamanic ecstasy to empirical science, from artistic apprehension to mystical contemplation. Nothing may be left out of his "integral vision."

Some Jungians would say something crucial *has* been left out, however, what they call soul—psyche's imagining—in distinction to spirit. Wilber, apparently ignorant of James Hillman's work, relegates this imagining to "archaic" and "prepersonal" stages of cultural evolution

or psychological development—even while his own thinking is caught up unmindfully in imagining with sometimes mishandled metaphors.

His earlier notion of a "spectrum" of consciousness, for instance, is a strange one, claiming preeminence atop a pyramid for white, the clear radiance of a lofty nondualism that renders the other colors, which reside at lower levels of his structure, subsidiary. Similarly, his transpersonal "master template" is a template of mastery, which takes all supposedly partial models and systems into itself as Total, True, and Transcendent. This domineering tone is also reflected in the relentlessly self-referential, if not self-promotional, preoccupations of the book, as many pages of its main text are given over to Wilber's search-and-destroy operations against critics of his earlier efforts. Perhaps Ken Wilber is not only the Aquinas of this new religious movement but the Lord at the center of its cult of transpersonality.

Indeed, there is a hint of neo-Buddhist *hubris* here that lends a disquieting glint to Wilber's oft-noted brilliance. But perhaps the author of the first *Summa* and his old religious movement would have appreciated Wilber's exclusivistic catholicity: outside the transpersonal *sangha* there can be no full salvation.

Daniel C. Noel, Vermont College of Norwich University

God at the Grass Roots: The Christian Right in the 1994 Elections. Edited by Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995. 274 pages. $24.50 paper.

For much of the 20th century, Americans described an unyielding adherent to a losing cause as "stubborn as a Republican in Texas," while the "Solid South" referred to a Democratic lock on power in Dixie. As the century ends, both Texas and the South in general have become strongholds of the Republican Party and the religious Right, the latter playing an important role in a profoundly partisan political realignment of the region.

Pronounced dead in 1989 when Jerry Falwell disbanded the Moral Majority, the Christian Right rebounded and became a potent force in the 1994 elections. Nearly forty incoming Republican congressional freshman elected that year were pro-life evangelicals, and Christian conservatives proved dominant in Republican organizations in many states. Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox have collected thirteen studies by eighteen political scientists analyzing how the Christian Right was able to bounce back in eleven states, despite countermobilization and Democratic success in turning candidates' ties to the religious Right into a salient political issue.

The obvious lessons drawn from *God and the Grass Roots* are that enthusiasm, an ability to build bridges to like-minded groups and coalitions (as has happened between Evangelicals, Mormons, and Roman Catholics on the abortion issue), entrepreneurship, and good organizational skills add up to a powerful political force. Fielding too controversial a candidate and splitting a coalition (as happened with Oliver North's candidacy in Virginia) squanders political assets. Thus, the religious Right is shown to resemble other powerful political coalitions of the past and present.

The authors and editors of this collection are able observers of empirical politics. But other issues need to be explored. Although there is discussion of how "Reagan Democrats" and the descendants of Progressives and New Dealers came to the political right, none of the contributors seems especially interested in analyzing how and why Evangelicals turned rightward. Could Democratic bungling have contributed to the creation of a Christian Right which is "right" only by default? Further, little interest is shown in the ideological and theological underpinnings of the Christian Right. Yet the impact of dispensational premillennialism on this faction's pro-Israel policy stance probably has important parallels in its domestic policy preferences.

On balance, *God and the Grass Roots* represents a thoughtful and insightful approach to the interplay of religion and politics in American life. Hopefully, it will stimulate further study of this important social phenomenon.

Peter J. Herz, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category. By Michael Allen Williams. Princeton University Press, 1996. 335 pages. $49.50 cloth.

Two aspects of Williams' work are especially noteworthy for readers of this journal. First, Williams successfully calls into question both the accuracy and usefulness of the term "gnosticism" as an analytical category. In the process of constructing his argument he provides a thorough survey of the ancient texts usually called "gnostic," as well as the ancient anti-gnostic writings. He demonstrates conclusively that the diversity of those documents can not effectively be contained within a single abstraction and proposes instead that "the texts in question are better understood as sources from a variety of new religious movements" (p. 5). Williams' conclusions should have far reaching implications for students of new or alternative religions who intend their categorizations of them as in some way "gnostic" to have descriptive and interpretive

persuasiveness. The recent characterization of Heaven's Gate's teachings as in some sense "gnostic" is a case in point. Williams' argument also undermines the idea that there exists a single, unbroken gnostic tradition stretching from antiquity to the present.

Second, in developing an alternative understanding of various gnostic texts, teachers, and movements in the ancient Mediterranean world, Williams makes ample and effective use of the theoretical work of Rodney Stark and his collaborators on the nature of "religious economies," the mechanisms of cult and sect formation within them, and the processes of conversion. He frequently exposes the sociological naïveté of many who have discussed the origins and development of "gnosticism" and offers simple and sobering reminders such as "this is the way innovation in religious traditions works everywhere" (p. 83).

Overall, Williams provides compelling support for the results of Stark's own interpretation of Christian origins in *The Rise of Christianity* and suggests the broader usefulness of Stark's theoretical model for understanding ancient Western religious movements. Though its discussion of ancient texts is sometimes thick with detail, this book has much to offer scholars of alternative or emergent religions—whether these religions be modern or ancient.

Eugene V. Gallagher, Connecticut College

Clarification

In the review of Ian Reader's *A Poisonous Cocktail? Aum Shinrikyo's Path to Violence*, which appeared in *Nova Religio* 1:2 (April 1998), there was an ambiguous statement that needs clarification. In the concluding paragraph of the review, it was stated, "Aum is still recruiting new members in spite of being formally proscribed as a subversive organization" (p. 306). In fact, Aum Shinrikyo remains a legal organization in Japan. I apologize for the misunderstanding.

Jeffrey Kaplan, Book Review Editor

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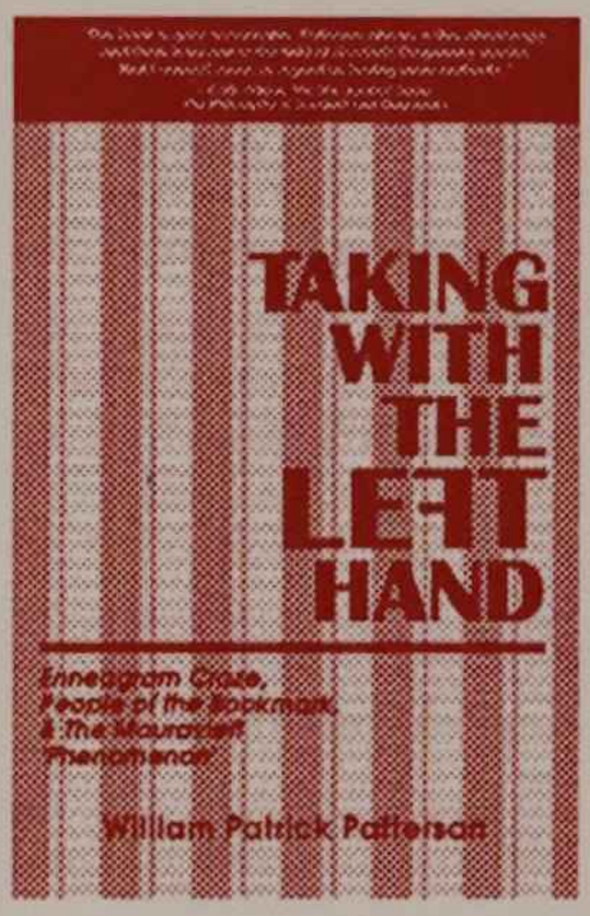

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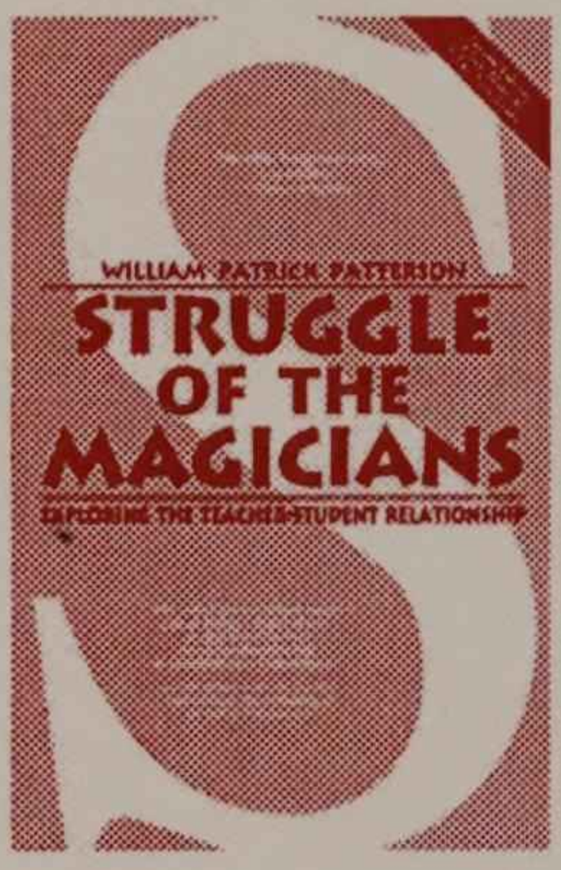

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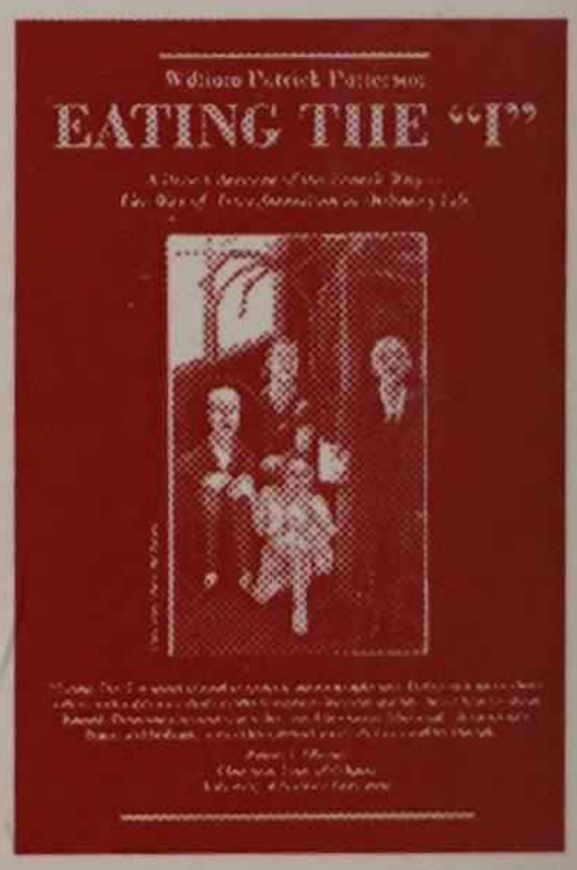

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