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The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions

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Nova Religio Symposium: Scholars of New Religions and Law Enforcement Officials

This second *Nova Religio* symposium examines a controversial and timely subject, the increasing cooperation between new religions scholars and officials from both national and local law enforcement agencies in the United States. The symposium has its origins in a Special Topics Forum entitled "Believers, Law Enforcement Agents, and Religion Scholars: Communicating Across Worldviews of Religions and Professional Disciplines" held on 22 November 1998 at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting in Orlando, Florida. The articles presented at the forum have been revised and expanded for this symposium. They address both specific instances of cooperation between new religions scholars and law enforcement officials and larger issues raised by this cooperation. It is the journal's intention to initiate a wide-ranging dialogue that critically examines the benefits and dangers of this cooperation for scholars, law enforcement officials, and the new religions themselves.

Two critical issues that remain to be addressed, among others, are the ways in which ongoing cooperation with law enforcement agencies affects field research by NRM scholars and the degree to which this cooperation could potentially endanger field researchers. For example, are NRMs likely to view NRM researchers with ties to law enforcement officials as informers or even undercover agents? How are they likely to treat field researchers if they suspect them of collaboraton with the F.B.I. or local police? The proper relationship between societal institutions such as the academy and law enforcement is an issue that has increasingly occupied scholars across disciplines over the past decade. It is hoped that the present symposium will contribute to this ongoing examination in a constructive and critical manner.

Bridging the Gap between Scholars of Religion and Law Enforcement Negotiators

Jayne Seminare Docherty

After the Waco standoff ended in tragedy, many scholars expressed concern that the FBI had not sought advice from those who study new religious movements (NRMs).[1] The result was a debate over which experts were or were not consulted during the fifty-one days of negotiation at Waco and which experts should or should not be consulted during any future confrontations between law enforcement agents and groups motivated by unconventional religious or political beliefs. On one side, religious studies scholars criticized the FBI negotiators' lack of attention to the mediating efforts of J. Phillip Arnold and James D. Tabor during the Waco standoff.[2] On the other side, the FBI agents described a scene of "fax meltdown" in which they found it impossible to distinguish valuable expert advice from the spurious input of cranks.[3]

Happily, the discussion has moved beyond the initial rancorous debate. FBI crisis management agents and NRM scholars seem to recognize that they share a common goal: Both groups ideally would like to prevent violent confrontations between members of NRMs and law enforcement officials. In the event of another barricade situation involving an unconventional religious group, both scholars and law enforcement officials want to maximize the possibility of a nonviolent outcome. Furthermore, this acknowledgment of a common objective seems to be more than just an agreement in principle. Following their post-Waco reorganization, members of the FBI Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG) began seeking input from religious studies scholars and other NRM experts.[4] For example, CIRG personnel met with representatives from the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in June 1998 in Washington, D.C. The FBI also has invited several NRM experts to speak with agents at the FBI Academy. FBI agents came to the 1998 AAR Annual Meeting in Orlando where they attended open sessions and met with NRM scholars.

Despite the move toward dialogue, however, scholars and law enforcement agents remain separated by a worldview gap that continues to complicate their discussions. My unusual mix of education and professional training makes me acutely aware of these dissimilar worldviews. I hold an undergraduate degree in religious studies and studied one

year toward a Master of Divinity degree. My doctorate in Conflict Analysis and Resolution included broad-based, practical training in negotiation, mediation, and the facilitation of public dialogue processes. I have analyzed the negotiation transcripts from Waco in detail.[5] As someone with one foot in the academic field of religious studies and the other foot in conflict resolution practice, I have experienced firsthand the divergent unspoken assumptions about reality that guide both religious studies scholars and FBI negotiators. While I am convinced that NRM experts and law enforcement negotiators can cooperate to prevent another tragedy such as Waco, I am also extremely aware that effective cooperation will require more than just good intentions.

I see several reasons for optimism about possible cooperative work between NRM experts and law enforcement agents, particularly the FBI. First, as Nancy Ammerman notes in her recommendations to the government, the FBI Behavioral Science Services Unit "houses a number of people with considerable working knowledge of marginal religious groups."[6] At Waco, however, these internal experts were outranked and overruled by commanders and line agents who did not fully understand the importance of religious beliefs or the nature of group dynamics in a belief community. The behavioral experts also lacked substantial familiarity with more in-depth research on NRMs. This research might have strengthened their voice and standing within the decision-making structure of the FBI during the Waco standoff. Therefore, some FBI behavioral experts are interested in expanding their knowledge base. Second, the FBI agents with whom I have spoken about NRMs share the concern of many scholars when it comes to protecting religious freedom in the United States. At a January 1998 working conference of scholars and FBI agents in Charlottesville, Virginia, the term "domestic diplomacy" was coined to describe the approach that needs to be taken when law enforcement agents deal with unconventional religious and political groups. The agents embraced this term because it reflects their honest concern regarding the need to balance their duty to uphold the law and their duty to protect religious liberty.[7] Third, a number of NRM experts have demonstrated a willingness to move beyond demonizing the FBI for its handling of the Branch Davidians, and they have expressed an interest in improving their own understanding of crisis negotiation practices.

In spite of these hopeful signs, there are still obstacles that will complicate cooperation between law enforcement agents and NRM scholars. First, law enforcement agents and scholars face one another across a double worldview divide. Oakeshott defines "practice" as "the alteration of practical existence so as to agree with an idea of what ought to be."[8] In this sense, law enforcement agents are, first and foremost, practitioners. On the other hand, scholars, including those who study NRMs, are more interested in describing the world than they are in changing it. Therefore, it is useful to keep in mind that law enforcement

agents and NRM experts are separated by differences in their disciplines combined with the underlying tension between applied knowledge and scholarly research.[9] Second, scholars and law enforcement agents are, like all people, largely blind to their own worldviews. Each group is steeped in a way of seeing the world that seems "natural" and "obvious" to the members of the group. Third, law enforcement agents and scholars have not developed a shared description of the problems involved in confrontations between law enforcement agents and members of NRMs. Therefore, law enforcement agents and religious studies scholars will find it extremely difficult to delineate a plan of action for collaboratively responding to such confrontations.

This article is a modest first step toward dealing with some of the above named obstacles to cooperation. First, I attempt to move past the simplistic observation that law enforcement agents and scholars have different worldviews by describing in detail some of the worldview differences that are likely to complicate their cooperative efforts. Since analyzing the worldview of any group is an interpretive process, my analysis is necessarily tentative and incomplete. It is based on my own critical reflection on the disciplines of religious studies and negotiation practice both as I have encountered them through formal studies and as I have observed them in my conversations with scholars and law enforcement agents in the United States. No doubt, members of both the scholarly and the law enforcement communities will disagree with some of my interpretations of their worldviews. That is fine. My only intention in this exercise is to begin a dialogue in which members of the two professional groups can begin to reflect critically on their own "invisible" worldview assumptions. This type of critical reflection is one necessary precursor to working together. A second activity needed to lay the groundwork for future cooperation involves developing a shared understanding of the tasks and problems involved in managing confrontations—including barricade negotiation situations—between law enforcement agents and members of NRMs. Therefore, I also present a conceptual model of negotiation that incorporates the expertise of both law enforcement agents and religious studies scholars. Beginning with this integrative conceptual model, scholars and law enforcement agents can enrich their current dialogue and prepare a plan for cooperating during any future crisis situations.

FBI AGENTS AND RELIGION SCHOLARS FOCUS ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

If we begin with a holistic understanding of what it is to be human, it becomes apparent that FBI negotiators and NRM scholars focus on two

separate but interrelated facets of human nature. Human beings are animals: They have material bodies and occupy a physical world. Human beings are social and political animals: They form relationships with others, develop sophisticated patterns of social behavior, and establish norms and values that are integrated into social institutions. Human beings are also creators of meaning: They create and use systems of symbols in order to construct explanations for everything they experience and do. Therefore, we can say that every human being simultaneously occupies three interpenetrating worlds—a material world, a social world, and a symbolic world (see Figure 1). No field of study or practice can deal equally well with all three aspects of human life concurrently.

One way to compare the worldviews that guide different disciplines is to ask which aspect of human nature is privileged in that field of study or practice. Posing this question, we see that law enforcement officers and religious studies scholars start with different assumptions about human nature, society, and the relationship between individuals and social institutions. The implications of these assumptions for explaining NRMs

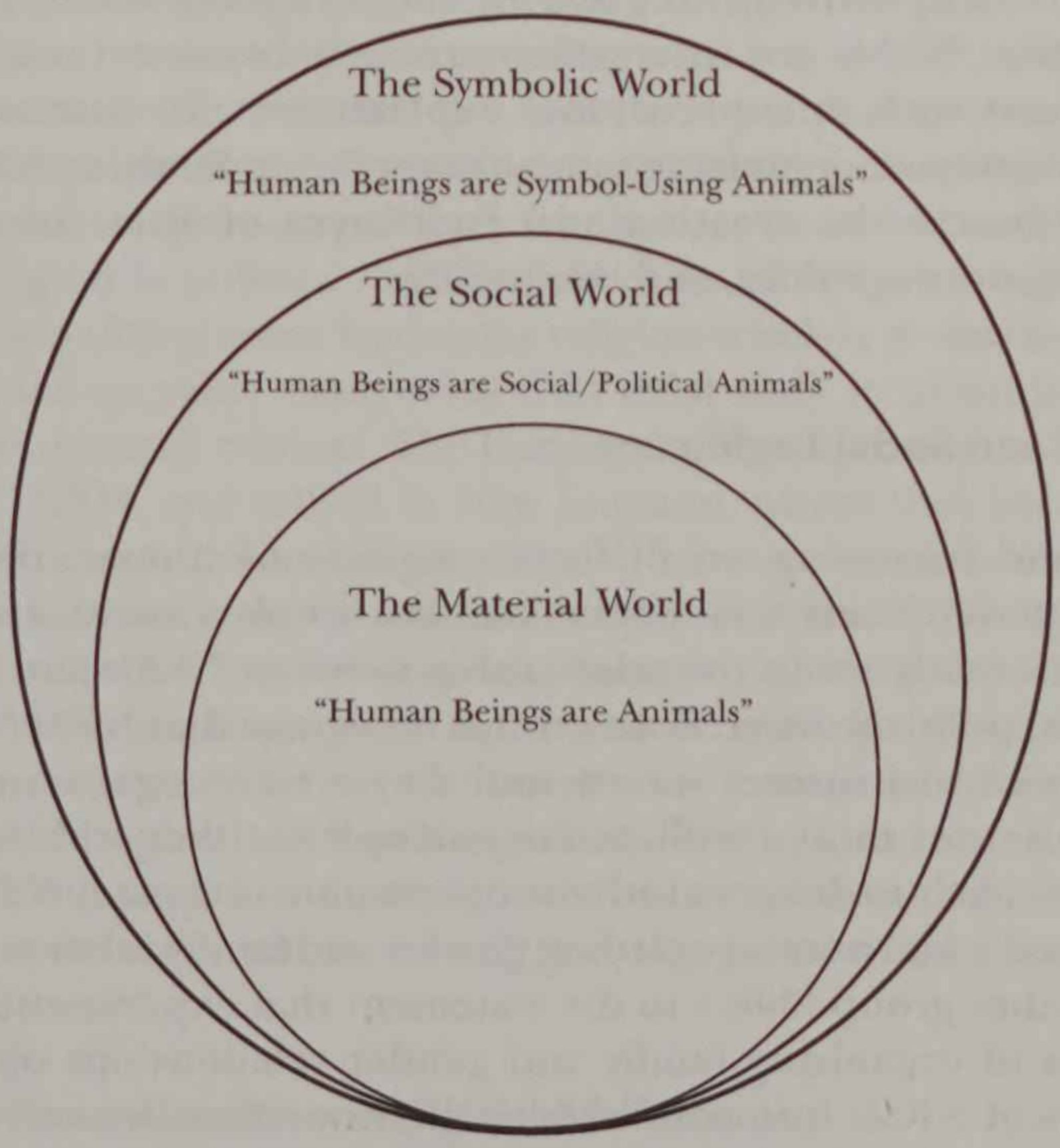


Figure 1: Human Beings Live in Three Worlds

and developing responses to such groups in crisis situations are significantly different depending upon one's analytical starting point.

Human Nature

Law enforcement agents look at people primarily as social animals. Because they are tasked with upholding the law, law enforcement agents are particularly focused on the fit or misfit between human beings and social institutions. Law enforcement is a "deviance driven" field of practice. Law enforcement agents pay greatest attention to those individuals or groups who deviate from social norms by breaking the law.

Scholars who study NRMs are more likely to be interested in human beings as symbol-using creators of meaning. This does not mean these scholars ignore the social world. However, the issue of deviance is usually held at arm's length, in part because religious studies scholars are not tasked with upholding social norms or laws, but also because many religious studies scholars adopt a methodological position of cultural relativism. As cultural relativists, many scholars of religion see all social institutions, whether labeled legitimate or deviant, as grounded in the same sociocognitive processes of meaning creation. From this perspective, NRMs are interesting precisely because their members experiment with unconventional explanations for human life and alternative ways of organizing human community. Studying NRMs allows one to observe the creation and enactment of alternative cultural identities, norms, values, and institutions.

Religion and Social Legitimacy

Beyond focussing on different aspects of human nature, law enforcement officers and religious studies scholars are also inclined to think differently about the relationship between NRMs and the larger social and political order. Both groups recognize that NRMs come into conflict with mainstream society, and they even recognize some of the same causes for those conflicts. For example, neither scholars nor FBI agents are likely to disagree with the observation that many NRMs violate established social norms regarding gender and family relationships. Nor would either group object to the statement that experimentation with new ways of organizing family and gender relationships often brings members of NRMs into conflict with their own families and the larger social and legal order. Scholars who study NRMs and law enforcement agents are more likely to diverge in their *explanation* for this "unusual" behavior and in their explanations of how and why the police become

involved with NRMs. To understand these disparities, one must recognize that law enforcement officials and religious studies scholars tend to begin with dissimilar assumptions about religion and the relationship between religious groups and the larger social order.

Based on my conversations with FBI agents and other law enforcement officers, I would argue that many law enforcement officers equate religious activity with individual piety, and therefore they view religion as private, personal, and largely apolitical. Even those who do recognize that religion can be a motive for political action seem to expect legitimate expressions of faith to occur *within* the established political order. Religious groups may vote for particular candidates, lobby for legislation, or stage peaceful protests. However, if a religious group disrupts the existing social order by breaking the law, it is labeled deviant. Many police officers suspect such groups of using religion as a cover for criminal activities. Hence, these groups may be seen as falling outside of the category of religion and therefore exempt from constitutional guarantees of religious freedom.

Scholars of religion, on the other hand, generally assume that private piety is only one form of religious behavior. Religion is also a collective phenomenon in which communities of people create shared meaning. NRM experts can point to numerous historical cases of religious communities that challenged the existing social order. Some of these communities were responsible for settling what is now the United States precisely because they rejected the social and political systems of their time as corrupt and sinful. Consequently, while the police tend to think of "legitimate" religion as apolitical, scholars are more inclined to argue that all religion is political.[10] Historical cases of religious movements acting in the political arena lead many religion scholars to view legitimacy and deviance as value categories that exist only in relationship to temporal and spatial context. The Puritans left Europe, where they were a "deviant" NRM, and settled in New England, where they became the "legitimate" or mainstream religion. Similar movement between deviance and legitimacy has occurred with the Society of Friends (the Quakers), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons), and many other NRMs. Some groups, such as the snake-handling sects in America, have existed for decades on the borderline between legitimacy and deviance. Although snake handling is outlawed in many states, persons engaging in this ritual are usually ignored by law enforcement authorities unless some dramatic public event forces the police to take action.[11]

Law Enforcement and New Religious Movements

Thus far I have argued that law enforcement agents and scholars who study NRMs focus on different facets of human nature. They also

view the relationship between religious groups and the sociopolitical order differently. So it is not surprising to find that these two groups of experts tell different stories about how and why people join NRMs. Nor is it startling to discover that each group has its own explanation for how and why the police come into contact with NRMs.

After Waco, many religious studies scholars suspected that the FBI had relied on "cult experts" rather than "legitimate" scholars for advice about how to handle the Branch Davidians. This concern is a manifestation of an ongoing division among those who direct their attention to unusual religious groups. This division is amply reflected in print and in the courts, where "experts who regularly testified in court against 'cults' brought civil suits against opposing experts" who were less critical of new religious movements.[12] Given the level of disagreement and hostility among those who claim to understand new religions, it is no surprise that the FBI agents in Waco had difficulty sorting through the contradictory advice offered by outside people during the standoff.

Negotiation practitioners who are confronted with competing experts tend to accept advice that does not require a substantial reconsideration of their own basic assumptions about reality.[13] Therefore, NRM scholars who hope to work with law enforcement agents would do well to recognize that their own worldview is less easily accommodated by the police than the worldview of "cult experts" associated with the anticult movement (ACM). Law enforcement agents and ACM activists tend to share several assumptions about reality, and these are reflected in their language and the stories they tell about NRMs. *Cult*, rather than *new religious movement*, is the term most commonly used within the law enforcement community. Law enforcement officers, like anticult activists, tend to see NRMs as havens for lost, lonely, and confused individuals who cannot find a place within legitimate social institutions. Both groups focus on individual behaviors. Both groups are inclined to grant the existing social order unquestioned legitimacy. Both groups explain deviant behavior by members of NRMs as either an expression of criminal character or the consequence of being duped and deluded by others. Thus, convincing law enforcement agents that they should cooperate with scholars who tell a less judgmental story about NRMs involves challenging both the explanations offered by ACM activists who have been granted legitimacy in the popular press and the explanations commonly validated by the law enforcement community.

Contrary to the narrative used by police, scholars who study NRMs tell a different story about why people join new religious groups. Granted that the community of NRM scholars is currently engaged in yet another round of debates over the issue of brainwashing, a sizable portion of the scholarly community is quite clear that most people who join new religious groups do so because they are acting as free moral agents.[14] They are not dupes or victims, but rather earnest seekers of truth and

meaning. Although scholars recognize that some leaders of NRMs do manipulate group members, other reasons for joining alternative communities are acknowledged. Scholars of religion are not surprised to find highly educated, extremely articulate believers in many alternative religious communities.

Competing explanations for individual involvement in NRMs are also tied to dissimilar stories about the relationship between law enforcement agents and new religious groups. As a consequence of their cultural values related to religious freedom, U.S. law enforcement agents usually prefer to ignore new religious groups. Therefore, whenever people espouse a religious explanation for behaviors that may be classified as criminal, U.S. law enforcement agents face a serious dilemma. They may even appear slow or cautious in their response to allegations against NRMs. However, I have heard law enforcement agents speak about two circumstances under which they feel compelled to abandon a live and let live policy when dealing with a new religious group. First, when new religious groups have clearly broken the law, the police feel obligated to respond to the criminal act regardless of any professed religious motivation. Second, law enforcement officers are also highly motivated to protect the innocent. Thus any time claims of abuse are leveled against a new religious group the police are inclined to take action. In their zeal to protect the innocent, they may even act on slim evidence of criminal wrongdoing.[15] Scholars who have been critical of police responses to NRMs sometimes have ignored the protective or benign motivations behind law enforcement activities. When confronted with an unconventional NRM whose motives and actions are unpredictable and possibly self-destructive, law enforcement agents frequently act out of a desire to protect the members of the community even from themselves. Once the police decide to take action against NRM members, they tend to "set religion aside." They begin thinking of the actors as criminals or innocent victims rather than as religious believers and treat them accordingly.

In contrast to the law enforcement community, scholars who study NRMs tell a much more complicated story about the relationship between new religious groups and the dominant sociopolitical order. Rather than assuming that NRMs are qualitatively unlike any other social institution, many scholars stress that new religious groups are established through the same sociocognitive processes that give rise to *all* social organizations. In other words, each NRM is a community of people who find shared meaning in a particular narrative about the world. Each NRM shapes its social relationships, institutions, and collective practices around members' shared vision of reality. These are the same processes of meaning creation through which "legitimate" social institutions are formed and maintained. Conflicts between members of NRMs and the society out of which they emerge are conflicts over legitimacy and truth.

They are confrontations between negotiated realities. Each group in the conflict is inclined to see its own reality as legitimate and the "other" reality as deviant.

Scholars of religion argue that the police are mistaken to assume that legitimacy and deviance, guilt and innocence, free will and exploitation are easily distinguished. They argue that NRMs are often under attack from those who oppose their unusual beliefs or lifestyles. Furthermore, internal conflicts within new religious groups may spill out into the larger social order. "Losers" in internal disputes often seek allies and support outside the religious community. One potential source of support for those who are unhappy with a particular new religious group is the police. Actors with their own agendas may use atrocity tales to create a climate of moral panic, and law enforcement officials may respond to pressures to "do something" about this threat to the legitimate social order. In this way, the police may become party to a process of coercion that involves more than just the straightforward enforcement of the law.

BUILDING A CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT NEGOTIATORS AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES SCHOLARS

A barricade standoff involving law enforcement agents and a new religious community is probably the most dramatic venue in which law enforcement agents and NRM scholars might cooperate. However, it is not the only opportunity for cooperation between the two groups. NRM experts also can offer law enforcement officials information that will enhance the accuracy of their risk assessments and help them design effective, nonviolent arrest plans for use with members of NRMs. To bring these professional groups together, however, requires more than good will. They must begin shaping a shared understanding of how their respective areas of expertise might intersect in useful ways. I suggest that the first place to begin conceptualizing a cooperative effort between NRM experts and law enforcement agents is to map the problem in a manner that incorporates the knowledge of both groups. Using the barricade standoff as an example of a venue in which police and scholars might want to cooperate, it is clear that mapping the problem of confrontations between legal authorities and new religious groups involves expanding our concept of negotiation.

When asked to define negotiation, most people think of a very focused encounter between two or more parties. Horse trading, bargaining, compromising, haggling—these are all associated with negotiation. Trained negotiators recognize that the process is more

complicated than these terms indicate. They have learned how to manage an interactive process that is goal-directed, future-oriented, and developmental in nature. Police negotiators have the added burden of managing these processes in an atmosphere of immediate danger and potential violence.

The goal of the police is to defuse a potentially violent confrontation and move the barricaded subject into another arena, such as the courts, where issues of guilt or innocence can be dealt with peacefully. To accomplish this task, police negotiators simultaneously must manage a repetitive, cyclical process of communication with the barricaded subject and a set of developmental negotiation phases. One researcher has explained these interconnected tasks using the analogy of an automobile in motion. The repetitive cycles of moving wheels, pumping pistons, opening and closing valves, and firing spark plugs move the vehicle through space. In negotiation practice, repetitive cycles of communication move the process of negotiation through a series of overlapping sequences or phases.[16] The successful police negotiator learns to use techniques of persuasion and influence, active listening, indirect questioning, I-messages, embedded sentences, and therapeutic communication in order to build rapport with the subject and influence his or her decision-making.[17] At the same time, the police negotiator must be able to move the negotiation process through such phases as formulating an agenda, exploring the range of the dispute, narrowing the differences between the parties, determining a viable range of outcomes, bargaining, and enacting the agreed-upon resolution.[18] The difficulties associated with managing both the interactive and the developmental facets of a negotiation process in a crisis barricade encounter should not be underestimated.

There is yet another interactive process that remains largely unnoticed during most negotiation encounters. People negotiate reality. What I call "negotiating reality" has also been described as the social construction of reality and "the fitting together of individual lines of action."[19] Those who focus on the way human beings negotiate reality emphasize symbolic action as the wellspring of social structure. They talk about scripts, scenarios, frames, and schema of various types to explain how people cooperatively structure their actions.[20] Deborah Tannen argues that "all these complex terms and approaches amount to the simple concept of what R. N. Ross . . . calls 'structures of expectations.'"[21] Through structures of expectations developed out of "one's experience of the world in a given culture (or combination of cultures), one organizes knowledge about the world and uses this knowledge to predict interpretations and relationships regarding new information, events, and experiences."[22] From this perspective, social reality is always being negotiated as people interpret, define, and mutually coordinate their actions.

If police negotiators reading this article nodded their heads in response to my description of issue-specific negotiation, I suspect scholars who study NRMs nodded just as vigorously in response to my description of the way people negotiate reality. It is only natural for each group of professionals to recognize the negotiation process with which it is most familiar. Yet these two forms of negotiation are inextricably connected. The success of an issue-specific negotiation process depends heavily on how well the parties have negotiated a shared reality. When parties begin with divergent worldviews, their lack of a common frame of reference constantly disrupts their negotiation efforts. Parties may not need to completely *share* a worldview in order to negotiate, but they must at the very least *manage* their combined worldview differences and similarities if they want to make progress in their issue-specific negotiations.

Unfortunately, very little attention has been given to this problem. Negotiation research is typically conducted in environments where the parties are working with shared assumptions about reality. Researchers study negotiation in the business world and in diplomatic circles, or by using simulations in university psychology labs. In each case, the participants—even if they have some cultural differences—usually share a "third culture" created by the specific milieu in which they are working. In such settings, the problem of negotiating reality is minimized and hence is ignored by researchers. Yet, even in environments where the parties are able to reference a negotiated reality, negotiators encounter moments of worldview opacity. An oddly used word or phrase here, a missed verbal cue there, and the parties must take time away from bargaining or problem-solving to define terms, norms, and expectations. These moments happen so quickly that participants and researchers usually do not even take note of them. However, if we focus on negotiating reality, we see that even in the simplest negotiations the parties move back and forth between negotiating reality and problem solving or bargaining.

Sometimes, however, the worldview differences between conflicting parties are so great that issue-specific negotiations appear impossible. Negotiations break down, and the parties resort to other forms of interaction or noninteraction. Waco was a textbook example of what happens when two socially negotiated realities, or worlds, collide. Each world was legitimate in the eyes of its adherents. Each world contained a rich array of scripts, schemas, scenarios, and frames that gave rise to coherent structures of expectations. However, the adherents of each worldview also made truth claims deemed offensive by adherents of the other worldview. Consequently, the lines of action preferred by the federal agents and those preferred by the Branch Davidians did not readily fit together. Collective action—that is to say, engaging in a

successful issue-specific negotiation process—was greatly complicated by the parties' inability to jointly structure their actions.

Because police negotiators are not trained to focus on negotiating reality while juggling the various facets of a crisis negotiation, the agents at Waco had few tools for interpreting the Branch Davidian worldview. *Nor did they understand why it was critical that they engage in this interpretive process.* This latter point is even more important than the negotiators' own lack of training in worldview analysis. Because they saw no need for such information, they did not take advantage of offers of assistance from scholars such as Phillip Arnold and James Tabor.

Consequently, the law enforcement negotiators at Waco persisted in using persuasive strategies, bargaining processes, and other standard negotiation tactics in ways that offended the residents of Mount Carmel Center. Simultaneously, the Mount Carmel residents persisted in their efforts to negotiate reality. The FBI negotiators grew frustrated with interactions they saw as irrelevant to resolving the immediate crisis. The Branch Davidians grew equally frustrated with having their issues pushed off the agenda. The more they talked, the more each side became convinced that the other side "just didn't get it." Ultimately, the party with the power to unilaterally end negotiations adopted more coercive strategies for gaining compliance. We know the tragic results even if we may never be able to ascertain exactly how the fires at Mount Carmel started.

Could scholars who study NRMs have helped the FBI negotiators at Waco? I believe they could have. There were two puzzle pieces missing in the Waco negotiation process. The first missing piece has to do with the fact that *religious studies scholars have the expertise to act as worldview translators, people who can explain the internal logic and beliefs of unconventional religious communities.*[23] However, incorporating this expertise into crisis negotiation practice depends upon the willingness of crisis negotiators to provide the second missing piece of the puzzle: *The worldview translations provided by scholars can only improve crisis negotiation processes if police negotiators recognize that negotiating reality is an important part of every negotiation encounter.* This type of information cannot be "tacked onto" current practices. Current issue-specific negotiation practices must be substantively reshaped in order to accommodate processes of negotiating reality.

I note here that police negotiators have a history of successfully modifying their practices to accommodate unanticipated factors in crisis barricade situations. For example, they have learned to negotiate with highly disturbed individuals who take targeted individuals, such as a loved one or coworker, hostage in order to express their anger, rage, or frustration. These encounters do not play out in the same way hostage-takings involving terrorists or criminals unfold, and the police have

learned to use different negotiation tactics. The same type of creativity is now needed to develop negotiation strategies for dealing with barricaded unconventional communities. NRM experts can assist the law enforcement community in developing new negotiation practices.[24]

If NRM scholars and law enforcement officers are to work together, they need to be clear about their roles, responsibilities, and objectives. Religious studies scholars and sociologists of religion are neither trained as negotiators nor interested in assuming the role of law enforcement agent or police negotiator. The scholars do have at their disposal a set of theories and an array of research methods that enable them to articulate the worldview assumptions of NRM members. Law enforcement negotiators are neither trained in ethnographic or interpretive research methods nor interested in becoming academicians. The law enforcement negotiators do understand how to manage crisis negotiation processes.

ANTICIPATING IMPEDIMENTS TO COOPERATION

Putting the two sets of knowledge together seems like an obvious solution, but that does not mean these two areas of expertise will be easy to coordinate. If religious studies scholars and FBI negotiators try to work together, they will discover quickly that each group operates with a different sense of time, goals, and measures of success.

Scholars study NRMs because they want to increase our understanding of society and religion, not because they want to control the behaviors of members of new religious groups. Scholars do not work under serious time constraints. Scholars do not carry the combined burdens of preventing violence, enforcing the law, and protecting the constitutionally guaranteed liberties of unconventional communities. Scholars are information junkies. They always want more data and tend to be tentative in their conclusions. There is always time to perfect one's analysis. Success is marked through a slow and laborious process of peer review and debate that may take years to affirm the validity of specific research conclusions.

Law enforcement negotiators seek knowledge about barricaded subjects that will help them formulate a strategic negotiation plan. They want to be able to predict the subjects' behaviors. They work under serious time constraints. Because they are tasked with managing a complex set of negotiation processes, law enforcement negotiators are inclined to minimize the flow of incoming information. They only want to deal with material that is useful and relevant. Their success or failure is immediately apparent for all to see, and an incorrect analysis or poorly designed negotiation process can result in fatalities.

PREPARING NOW FOR FUTURE COOPERATION

Clearly, the midst of an unfolding crisis should not be the first time NRM scholars and law enforcement negotiators have spoken to each other. These groups need to work cooperatively ahead of time to iron out their differences. They need to develop a shared sense of how expertise in NRM studies can be connected to expertise in managing a crisis negotiation. Scholars of religion and police negotiators need to develop a relationship of trust. They need to engage in their own process of negotiating reality with each other.

Negotiating reality does not happen sitting around a table with a set agenda. We negotiate our world indirectly as we interact with others. Therefore, the best way to promote a working relationship between NRM scholars and law enforcement negotiators is to create opportunities for them to interact outside of the pressure cooker environment created by a standoff. I offer four suggestions for promoting this kind of interaction.[25]

First, law enforcement negotiators and religious studies scholars should make an effort to read literature from each other's fields. It is true that some of the materials on NRMs produced by law enforcement insiders are not easy to obtain.[26] Making these available to NRM scholars certainly would advance the dialogue between academics and law enforcement agents. Equally important, however, is helping scholars understand crisis negotiation as a field of practice. Literature on crisis negotiation is readily available through any research library that can access law enforcement periodicals.[27] If scholars complain about the lack of available materials written by law enforcement agents and consultants, law enforcement officers are intimidated by the vast array of materials on NRMs produced by scholars. Several recently published or forthcoming volumes offer useful typologies and case studies of encounters between NRMs and law enforcement agents.[28]

Second, law enforcement negotiators and religious studies scholars would benefit from some "cross training." Psychologists, psychiatrists, and other consultants have been invited to take the FBI training course for negotiators. Having some religious studies scholars and sociologists who specialize in NRMs take the course would educate them about the constraints under which law enforcement negotiators work. Even more importantly, this experience would educate them about the working assumptions behind current crisis negotiation practices. These scholars could then return the favor by inviting FBI agents to attend a workshop on NRMs. The agenda for the workshop might include an overview of various types of NRMs as well as methods for entering into the worldview of an unconventional religious group.

Third, following a process of mutual education, the two groups could design a workshop or meeting to discuss possible ways of working

together. With enough shared knowledge, the two groups could address specific problems they foresee in any cooperative effort. For example, religious studies scholars could explain the unique characteristics of barricaded communities of people who are highly motivated by an alternative vision of reality and the special challenges of negotiating with such groups. Conversely, the FBI agents could explain to scholars their need to have information about barricaded subjects that can be translated into effective action plans. Together the two groups could outline protocols for working together. This exercise would need to focus on building trust as well as developing procedures for sharing information because each group has its own set of legitimate concerns about being co-opted, misrepresented, or misused by the other group.

Finally, FBI agents and scholars could agree to work on a joint research project. Using the wealth of data from one or two cases—for example, the Montana Freemen standoff or the Republic of Texas standoff— each group could analyze the materials and present its findings. Then they could collectively discuss what was done, why it was done, and how it might have been done differently.

CONCLUSION

In the United States, the FBI Critical Incident Response Group is the organization most likely to be involved in a protracted standoff involving a new religious group. They also play a role in training law enforcement personnel from around the world, and they are expected to conduct research. Therefore, CIRG is one of the most effective organizations through which NRM scholars can initiate a dialogue with the law enforcement community. This dialogue has been initiated. However, as I have explained, there are conceptual differences that make it difficult for NRM scholars and law enforcement agents to work together. I have also explained how those differences can be managed to promote cooperation that will increase the chances of preventing another tragedy such as Waco. Scholars who study NRMs and law enforcement agents can work together if they first construct a description of the negotiation process that recognizes the concepts of *issue-specific negotiation* and *negotiating reality*. To accomplish this task, scholars and law enforcement personnel need to engage in a process of mutual education and shared problem solving *before* a crisis occurs.

What I have not addressed is whether or not religious studies scholars *should* work with law enforcement officials from the FBI or other agencies. That, it seems to me, is a moral and ethical dilemma—the subject of another, much longer debate that will no doubt be taken up by members of the American Academy of Religion and others. I hope, however, that

I have at least cast doubt on any argument that it is *impossible* for concerned scholars and federal agents to work together to prevent violent confrontations between NRMs and law enforcement officers.

ENDNOTES

[1] This paper was presented on 22 November 1998 at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Orlando, Florida in a Special Topics Forum entitled "Believers, Law Enforcement Agents, and Religion Scholars: Communicating Across Worldviews of Religions and Professional Disciplines." I am grateful for the comments provided by the anonymous reviewers for *Nova Religio*.

[2] See, for example, James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 1-22.

[3] I first heard the phrase "fax meltdown" from a negotiator who spent 25 days in Waco. Fax meltdown has subsequently become common shorthand among FBI crisis management personnel, not only to explain what happened in Waco, but also to describe a problem they want to manage during any protracted barricade standoff involving an unconventional religious or political group.

[4] After Waco, the FBI reorganized the units tasked with handling critical incidents such as barricade standoffs. In this reorganization, CIRG includes the Hostage Rescue Team (HRT), the negotiation unit, and the behavioral science unit under a unified command structure. In theory, this reorganization makes it easier for "outside experts" to provide information to the FBI. In reality, CIRG is still working out a number of organizational issues, including the problem of how to sort through various types of expert input. Furthermore, dealing with NRMs who might have broken the law is one very small portion of CIRG's responsibility, and scholars who study NRMs are but a fraction of the academic community CIRG agents must deal with on a regular basis. I make this observation here to help NRM scholars understand why—in spite of the much needed reorganization of their crisis management unit—the FBI may seem slow in responding to the overtures of religion scholars.

[5] Jayne Seminare Docherty, "When the Parties Bring Their Gods to the Table: Learning Lessons from Waco" (Ph.D. diss., George Mason University, 1998).

[6] Nancy T. Ammerman, "Report to the Justice and Treasury Departments Regarding Law Enforcement Interaction with the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas," in *Recommendations for Improvements in Federal Law Enforcement After Waco* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1993), 3.

[7] This paper is addressed specifically to scholars and law enforcement agents in the United States. The importance of stipulating the cultural and legal context of my work was brought home by the comments of an anonymous reviewer of this paper and by a recent paper on NRMs in Germany (see Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, "'Verfassungsfeindlich': Church, State, and New Religions in Germany," *Nova Religio* 2, no. 2 [1998]: 208-27). One anonymous reviewer of my paper wrote, "Overall it is the law enforcement agents who come in for much criticism for failing to deal with the religious groups on their level, and in the context of their concerns . . . ." I agree with this comment, but I do not think the perspective identified is reflective of an anti-law-enforcement bias. Rather, I would trace the inclination of U.S. scholars (myself and others) to expect law enforcement agents to recognize and, insofar as possible, accommodate NRM beliefs to deeply ingrained cultural assumptions about religious freedom. Ironically, I have discovered that many FBI agents—particularly those who are trained in the law as well as law enforcement—share these concerns. They,

too, recognize the difficulty of walking the fine line between upholding constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and enforcing the law when dealing with new religious communities—particularly when the laws in question are ambiguous or the violation of the law is not blatant.

[8] Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and its Modes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 262.

[9] In many respects, the practice-theory divide is an artificial one. Scholars who conduct field research routinely struggle with the practical implications of their work, and law enforcement negotiators base their practices on implicit theories of human nature. Nevertheless, the two communities are separated by the relative weight they each give 1) to applying knowledge to accomplish practical ends and 2) to accumulating knowledge to increase understanding.

[10] In this regard, the religious studies scholars are much closer to the worldview of many NRM members. According to David Koresh, for example, God has always acted in history, and in 1993 God was acting politically through his chosen messengers, the Mount Carmel community. In Koresh's own words, "Paul tries to explain—remember this is a political thing. It's always been a political thing . . . *God would have a message for his people. And it was always a political thing*" (Waco Negotiation Tape 56, emphasis added). This tape is available in transcript form at the FBI reading room at the bureau's Hoover Building headquarters in Washington, D.C.

[11] Dennis Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia* (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995).

[12] Thomas Robbins, "Objectivity, Advocacy, and Animosity," in *Nova Religio* 2, no. 1 (1998): 24. Also see James T. Richardson, "The Accidental Expert," in *Nova Religio* 2, no. 1 (1998): 31-43; and Massimo Introvigne, "Blacklisting or Greenlisting? A European Perspective on the New Cult Wars," in *Nova Religio* 2, no. 1 (1998): 16-23.

[13] This is not a problem unique to law enforcement. I have observed similar tendencies among practitioners who are attempting to use "expert advisors" when dealing with large-scale environmental negotiations. The parties tasked with managing a particular environmental site, for example district rangers in the Forest Service, are torn between competing experts such as foresters and ecologists. Having been trained in an era when the Forest Service was focused on maintaining a steady supply of timber for the U.S. market, many district rangers are more inclined to validate the expert advice of foresters rather than the advice of ecologists. This selective preference for "expert advice" that conforms to a preexisting worldview has been known to disrupt even well designed environmental negotiation processes. In a similar fashion, law enforcement agents may be predisposed to favor the advice of "cult experts" associated with the anticult movement (ACM) over advice from NRM scholars, and the results may include a breakdown in negotiations.

[14] See Benjamin D. Zablocki, "The Blacklisting of a Concept: The Strange History of the Brainwashing Conjecture in the Sociology of Religion," *Nova Religio* 1, no. 1 (1997): 96-121; and "Exit Cost Analysis: A New Approach to the Scientific Study of Brainwashing," *Nova Religio* 1, no. 2 (1998): 216-49; David G. Bromley, "Listing (in Black and White) Some Observations on (Sociological) Thought Reform," *Nova Religio* 1, no. 2 (1998): 250-66; Benjamin D. Zablocki, "Reply to Bromley," *Nova Religio* 1, no. 2 (1998): 267-71. Also see Richardson, "The Accidental Expert"; James Richardson, "Law and Minority Religions: 'Positive' and 'Negative' Uses of the Legal System," in *Nova Religio* 2, no. 1(1998): 93-107; and Introvigne, "Blacklisting or Greenlisting?"

[15] ACM activists have found that accusations of child abuse are particularly effective as a tool for motivating police investigations of NRMs. Sociologists who study the social construction of reality—particularly those who examine the role of atrocity tales in creating a moral panic that leads social control agents such as the police to take action against unconventional groups—can be particularly helpful in the dialogue between scholars and law enforcement agents. These experts can help law enforcement officials develop

mechanisms to minimize the ability of ACM activists to manipulate the police into overreacting to NRMs. For a general description of moral panics, see Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994). For a study of the role of allegations of child abuse in motivating police to action, see Jeffrey S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993). For materials on atrocity tales related to NRMs, see David G. Bromley, Anson Shupe, Jr., and J. C. Ventimiglia, "Atrocity Tales, the Unification Church, and the Social Construction of Evil," *Journal of Communication* 29, no. 3 (1979): 42-53; Mary Josephine Downey, "Without Mittens: Religious Atrocity Narratives of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century America," (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 1996); John R. Hall, "Public Narratives and the Apocalyptic Sect: From Jonestown to Mount Carmel," in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 205-35; Stuart A. Wright, "Construction and Escalation of a Cult Threat: Dissecting Moral Panic and Official Reaction to the Branch Davidians," in *Armageddon in Waco*, 75-94.

[16] Peter H. Gulliver, *Disputes and Negotiations: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Academic Press, 1979).

[17] For excellent summaries of communication strategies used by police negotiators, see Michael J. McMains and Wayman C. Mullins, *Crisis Negotiations: Managing Critical Incidents and Hostage Situations in Law Enforcement and Corrections* (Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Company, 1996), 141-77; and Gary W. Noesner and Mike Webster, "Crisis Intervention: Using Active Listening Skills in Negotiation," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* (August 1997) which can be found at <http://www.fbi.gov/leb/aug974.htm>.

[18] Michael E. Holmes and Richard E. Sykes, "A Test of Fit of Gulliver's Phase Model to Hostage Negotiations," *Communication Studies* 44, no. 1 (1993): 38-55.

[19] See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Doubleday, 1966); Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 82.

[20] Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson, *Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understandings: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977); Gary B. Palmer, *Toward a Theory of Cultural Linguistics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986); Naomi Quinn and Dorothy Holland, "Culture and Cognition," in *Cultural Models in Language and Thought*, eds. Naomi Quinn and Dorothy Holland (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 3-40; George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Roy D'Andrade and Claudia Strauss, eds., *Human Motives and Cultural Models* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[21] Deborah Tannen, "What's in a Frame?" in *Framing in Discourse*, ed. Deborah Tannen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 16.

[22] Ibid., 16.

[23] See Phillip C. Lucas, "How Future Wacos Might Be Avoided: Two Proposals," in *From the Ashes: Making Sense of Waco*, ed. James R. Lewis (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1994), 209-12.

[24] When read with careful attention to copyright dates, the literature on negotiation in law enforcement illustrates the evolution of concepts that guide crisis negotiation practitioners. For example, this specialized field originally was called "hostage negotiation." Now a growing number of practitioners prefer the term "crisis negotiation" because not all barricaded subjects take hostages. Negotiators also have developed classificatory schema for describing various types of barricaded subjects. These typologies have become more complex and sophisticated over the past thirty years. For a description of these changes, with numerous citations, see Docherty, "When the Parties Bring Their Gods to the Table: Learning Lessons from Waco," 85-97. For an explanation of how law enforcement negotiators will need to modify their understanding of barricaded subjects to accommodate

members of new religious communities, see "When the Parties Bring Their Gods to the Table: Learning Lessons from Waco," 357-63.

[25] See Nancy T. Ammerman, "Report to the Justice and Treasury Departments Regarding Law Enforcement Interaction with the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas," 9 for similar suggestions. Also see Lucas, "How Future Wacos Might be Avoided: Two Proposals," 209-12. CIRG is tasked with managing actual crisis incidents, training FBI agents and other law enforcement officers in crisis management, and *conducting research* that will enhance the ability of law enforcement officers to manage crisis incidents effectively. In reality, CIRG agents lament the lack of time and resources available for research, but inviting FBI agents to participate in joint research and study is not tantamount to asking them to set aside their law enforcement agent identities and "act like academics."

[26] Jean E. Rosenfeld, "Response to Mayer's 'Our Terrestrial Journey is Coming to an End,'" *Nova Religio* 2, no. 2 (1999), 204.

[27] The author can provide a detailed bibliography upon request.

[28] See Michael Barkun, ed., *Millennialism and Violence* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996); Catherine Wessinger, ed., *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, forthcoming); and Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, forthcoming).

Negotiating Salvation

Eugene V. Gallagher

During the siege of the Mount Carmel Center, which lasted from February 28 through April 19, 1993, members of the Branch Davidian community and government representatives, primarily from the FBI, conducted extensive negotiations. The tapes and transcripts of those negotiations offer vivid evidence of the convictions of the besieged community, the dynamics of the negotiation process, and the barriers to a successful resolution of the conflict. They show that the ultimate failure of the negotiations cannot be traced on either side simply to a lack of comprehension of the other's position but rather to consciously conceived and consistently implemented strategies of self-presentation and persuasion by both parties. The stark differences between what the Branch Davidians and the FBI hoped to achieve through the negotiations underscore the difficulty of resolving conflicts between the government and millennial religious groups in a peaceful manner.

From the start, the standoff at Mount Carmel had a pronounced religious character. On the emergency 911 call that the Branch Davidians made to the Waco Sheriff's office on the first day of the standoff, David Koresh made it clear that for those at Mount Carmel everything was a matter of religious conviction. In response to Lt. Larry Lynch's plea that discussion of theology be deferred to another time, Koresh replied that "theology is life and death."[1]

Koresh led a community of avid Bible students who had come together to learn about God's imminent judgment. As Steve Schneider, Koresh's trusted student and a major participant in the negotiations, commented on March 1, "the spiritual aspect . . . [is] really why I'm out here."[2] Koresh himself told a negotiator on March 5, "we, the people of God . . . seek heavenly places. We seek approbation from God. We want out of here. We want to be saved. We want a real life."[3] Koresh underlined the urgency of that quest in a conversation on the following day: "What if God was trying to offer you a way out of a . . . present oncoming disaster of this nation, what if God has a witness to this nation because God is ready to deliverate [*sic*] his people . . . from the bands and the rulerships of all nations, and what if God is ready to

judge the nations . . . as foretold by these prophets?"[4] Koresh made it clear that any encounter with the saving apocalyptic knowledge he taught would necessitate a decision. On the second day of the siege, he recalled his admonition to an undercover agent who had spent time inside Mount Carmel: "Robert, you know I've showed you the truth out of the book, I am not going to hide anything from you. . . . but now you got to make a decision . . . ."[5] What was at stake in the negotiations for Koresh and his followers was the same thing that had been at stake throughout their time as students of the Bible—their own salvation and the salvation of a largely heedless humanity.[6] Steve Schneider forcefully expressed the Branch Davidians' position by telling a negotiator that "this is what it's always been about, this . . . challenge of the spiritual, of the Bible."[7]

The negotiators had a very different stake in the ongoing exchanges. Despite an occasional nod to securing a broader audience for Koresh's teaching,[8] they focused on getting the Branch Davidians to leave Mount Carmel through a standard negotiating process.[9] On March 7, referring to Koresh's teaching about the book sealed with seven seals in Revelation 5, one negotiator observed, "we are making an effort to determine what those are and to listen to you and to deal with what those things that you're telling us about. In turn, I expect you to get those children together and send them out as we have agreed."[10] The negotiators viewed Koresh's Bible studies as an opportunity to gain more insight into his character, not as an opportunity to pursue salvation. One of them later testified to Congress that what "we learned from listening to David Koresh for many hours [was] to try to understand the individual we were dealing with."[11] Concerning the Branch Davidians' goal of bringing the negotiators to an understanding of the Seven Seals, the same FBI agent emphasized that the negotiators had adopted the standard position that they should "neither embrace someone's belief system nor . . . discount it."[12]

While the Branch Davidians' concern for salvation was cosmic, transcendental, and ultimate, the negotiators' concern for the safe exit of the Davidians was terrestrial, practical, and proximate. For the FBI the negotiations had an overriding utilitarian goal, but for the Branch Davidians they provided an opportunity to exercise a divinely sanctioned mission. Steve Schneider captured those differences and their consequences in his remarks on March 15:

> You know, the biggest difficulty, no question, has been you guys are not—I mean, you know, . . . this is a . . . group that's tuned in to spiritual things or what they see as prophecies, events taking place in the final days, which they believe are here. And I know you men don't have the same background and so forth. I mean, I know you're trying to sympathize and give room for that, but I know from your perspective it would be difficult and hard. But, you know, I

mean, the reason they came here, *all that they are and what they want to be revolves around what they see him showing from that book.*[13]

Koresh himself echoed that sentiment on the same day, acknowledging that "I know you don't want to talk religion, *but that's all I am is religion.*"[14] For Koresh and his followers, negotiations with the FBI for telephone lines, access to the press, milk for the children, legal assurances, and the departure of any members of the group were clearly subsidiary to the single most important topic, the doctrine of the Seven Seals. On March 7, Koresh asserted that "seven seals is the negotiation here. If you reject the seven seals, you're rejecting me. If you reject me, you're rejecting my father. And then judgment cannot be diverted. You will be punished. And your great nation, the United States of America . . . ."[15] On April 13, he presciently observed that "there's just these Seven Seals and it's a message of life and death."[16]

Despite having radically different commitments, the government negotiators made several attempts to bridge the gap. One of the most creative was an attempt to redefine the nature of salvation itself. On March 8, a negotiator offered a hypothetical scenario to one of the Davidians:

N: Look, if I had [your brother] Joe standing down there at the end of the driveway right now, with his arms open and pleading to you, would you walk to him?
BD: (No verbal response.)
. . .
BD: I don't know.
N: Why? Why not? Couldn't that be God's way of delivering you?
BD: (No verbal response.)
N: Couldn't that be the deliverance you want? I know that he wants to be with you.

That attempt to redefine salvation or deliverance as immediate, terrestrial, and practical foundered on the Branch Davidians' unwavering commitment to a transcendent God seated on a heavenly throne, with whom a brother at the end of a driveway simply could not compete.

Neither the negotiators nor the Branch Davidians could get the other to frame the negotiations in what they saw as acceptable terms. Although there were at least a few committed Christians on the negotiating team, none of them could accept Koresh's specific understanding of the Christian scriptures, let alone his conception of his own role in the final days. Consistently, the negotiators refused to frame or conduct the negotiations in terms of the Davidians' religious convictions. They asked why understanding the Seven Seals was so important, asserted that all of the Bible studies they heard did not explain why people would not come out of Mount Carmel, denied the relevance of spiritual matters

to the negotiations, and declared as late as April 16 that negotiations would get nowhere if they were devoted to discussing the Bible.[17] When they did settle in to receive lengthy Bible studies from Koresh or one of the other members of the community, they often limited their participation to brief interjected expressions of assent designed only to keep the conversation going.[18] The following exchange captures the general frustration with the Branch Davidians' position:

N: . . . Please tell me what you're going to do.
DK: I am trying. Please look at verse 2 of Nahum.
N: Let's not talk in those terms, please.
DK: No. Then you don't understand my doctrine. You don't want to hear the word of my God.
N: I have listened to you and listened to you, and I believe in what you say, as do a lot of other people, but the . . . bottom line is everybody now considers you David who is going to either run away from the giant or is going to come out and try to slay the giant. For God's sake, you know, give me an answer, David. I need to have an answer. Are you going to come out?[19]

As Koresh continued to make his scriptural argument, the exasperated negotiator finally implored, "Don't talk to me about the scriptures."[20] Despite the patience and concern evinced by several of the negotiators in grasping the typical patterns of Koresh's teaching about the Seven Seals, that statement accurately sums up the FBI's negotiating position.

For their part, the Branch Davidians, and especially Koresh, felt compelled to teach the truth that they had found in scripture. Koresh asserted that "the doctrine that I teach, I teach it no matter how incriminating it is against me" and that "whatever the seals contain is what I am responsible for doing this time."[21] Koresh and his students, however, did little to adapt the typical form and content of their Bible studies for the radically different context of the negotiations. They employed the same focus on the message of the New Testament's book of Revelation as elaborated by the Psalms and prophets of the Christian Old Testament. As they did with whomever they tried to engage in study of the Bible, they attempted to enlist the negotiators in a detailed unfolding of the doctrine of the Seven Seals.[22] The truth that they embraced could not be modified to fit the context of the negotiations. Koresh frequently quoted long passages of scripture, and at one point Steve Schneider even read the entirety of Revelation 18 to a negotiator.[23] That an impasse developed is wholly understandable.

In the course of the negotiations, the Branch Davidians again encountered the world's familiar unwillingness to learn about the Seven Seals.[24] The negotiators' failure to engage the truth that Koresh had uncovered in the Bible and their general unwillingness to engage in a frank exchange of religious views were seen as "stumbling blocks" by

the Davidians throughout the fifty-one days.[25] What the FBI wanted was to stifle the talk about the Bible and engage the Branch Davidians in a practical, rational, and goal-oriented process of negotiation.[26] Although they never presented it or conceived it as a prerequisite for their coming out, what the Branch Davidians most wanted was the conversion of the negotiators, effected through the same process of Bible study that they themselves had followed with Koresh. On March 2, Koresh summarized the process he envisaged: "So today we, we have a truth, a Bible truth. But it's not going to overthrow just the papacy. . . . It's going to, you know, bring all the world into a valley of decision. People are going to have to hear it. They're going to have to say to themselves well, you know, that's right. That is right. That is exactly what is being said in harmony. And that, that does agree."[27]

For the members of the Mount Carmel community, such an outcome was definitely possible; their own lives were testimony to the impact of Koresh's Bible studies and could therefore easily serve as models for the negotiators to imitate. Time and again, they had seen Koresh bring a simple but powerful interpretive strategy to the Bible. He believed "that every book of the Bible meets and ends in the book of Revelation," particularly in its account of a heavenly book sealed with seven seals.[28] Koresh's interpretive task was therefore to uncover the web of relationships among individual biblical texts. He claimed that when "doctrine is properly weighed and measured, being systematically harmonized with scripture, text, chapter, book, then we develop an infallible, conclusive picture of what God's will is. Not just a little verse here, not just a little verse there. No. The content must be complete."[29] What could easily seem to outsiders to be random references to the biblical texts and the positing of arbitrary relationships between them appeared to the converted as the unveiling of hitherto unknown connections that cumulatively revealed an extraordinary message about the imminence of God's judgment in these last days. As Steve Schneider recalled, "I'm here because [of] the man who has had the ability to harmonize many—in fact all the Bible and made it very clear."[30] A self-styled seeker of truth,[31] Schneider left Hawaii for the ramshackle Mount Carmel Center because "there's something [Koresh has] got to say that I don't have the ability to do. The . . . reason I'm here is because of what the man's been able to show with the Bible, the statements he's been able to produce."[32] Schneider echoed the sentiment of Koresh's other students when he claimed that "the man already showed me more than I ever dreamed could be possible for a human being to learn."[33] With such sentiments constantly being reinforced by daily life within a small, insular community, it is not surprising that the Branch Davidians brought their faith in the transforming power of the Bible studies to the negotiations.

On their side, the negotiators perceived the persistence of talk about the Bible, the unwillingness to be practical, and, most importantly, Koresh's failure to exit as promised after his radio address was broadcast on March 2 as overwhelming impediments to progress. Nonetheless, each side could identify limited successes during the negotiations. Twenty-one children and fourteen adults did leave the Mount Carmel Center, and the Branch Davidians thought that at least a few negotiators had made sincere efforts to grasp the meaning of the Seven Seals. Nonetheless, positions quickly hardened. The Davidians saw no perceptible change until around April 14 when Koresh received God's permission to document his teaching. But because of what they saw as Koresh's failure to keep his promise to exit on March 2 and because of their ongoing distrust of Bible discussions, negotiators remained somewhat suspicious of whether Koresh would finish his manuscript and come out. The April 19 assault on the Mount Carmel Center conclusively ended the possibility of a negotiated settlement to the impasse.

The negotiation transcripts show that the Branch Davidians and the FBI agents thought about themselves, each other, and their respective missions in very different ways. By its nature as something ultimate, final, and transcendent, salvation cannot be subjected to negotiation; it can only be proclaimed. Its terms are set not by humans but by God. Truth, once identified, is absolute and makes its own demands.[34] The Mount Carmel negotiations indicate that negotiators, however they try, are highly unlikely to change any group's definition of what constitutes salvation. Nor are they likely to deter the group from the proclamation of its saving message. They may, however, be able to engage in constructive conversation about the ways in which salvation is pursued. Throughout the negotiations Branch Davidians asked the negotiators to subject Koresh's teaching about the Seven Seals to the scrutiny of scholars and theologians. On March 15, for example, Steve Schneider specifically requested that the FBI allow Phillip Arnold, a New Testament scholar, to discuss the Bible with Koresh.[35] The Branch Davidians repeatedly claimed that what they wanted was simply a fair hearing. Often, in their own conversion stories, they mentioned that they could not refute the truth that Koresh had shown them and thus felt compelled to commit to further study with him.[36] Koresh's April 14 letter made a similar proposition. He concluded that letter with this offer:

> I will demand the first manuscript of the Seals be given to you [Dick DeGuerin, his attorney]. Many scholars and religious leaders will wish to have copies for examination. I will keep a copy with me. As soon as I can see that people like Jim Tabor and Phil Arnold have a copy I will come out and then you can do your thing with this beast.[37]

Those comments suggest that the negotiators could have offered something to the Branch Davidians that they highly valued, a forum for the discussion of their distinctive theology and its urgent message of impending judgment. Such an offer would have simultaneously enabled the negotiators to remain true to their desire neither to embrace nor discount the beliefs of the Branch Davidians and afforded Koresh and his followers the opportunity to proclaim their message in a context other than the hostage-barricade situation that had been imposed on them. From the Branch Davidians' perspective it would have altered the context in which they exercised their mission while leaving unchanged the nature of the salvation they offered.[38] It could also have provided an opportunity for outsiders to influence the beliefs and behavior of the Branch Davidians by reasoning from the only source to which they granted transcendent authority, the Bible.

In fact, the negotiators repeatedly did offer the Branch Davidians a broader forum. But their offers were always linked to the prior demand that the Branch Davidians first exit the Mount Carmel Center, which itself depended upon the FBI agents' conviction that they were dealing with a complex hostage-barricade situation. The Branch Davidians found the linkage unacceptable and no significant movement on that issue occurred.

Finally, although the Mount Carmel negotiation transcripts reveal moments where the two parties seemed to achieve a fragile understanding of each others' goals and values, they reveal more often their intransigent commitments to competing definitions of the situation, understandings of authority, conceptions of justice, and visions of the future. Law enforcement officials, scholars, and believers alike need to reckon with the likelihood that understanding another's commitments and the view of the world in which they are embedded will not necessarily lead to a desired transformation of behavior. As important as it is in negotiation to understand both what and how the other party thinks, that will have no necessary consequences for what the other party actually does. Other factors in the context of negotiations can exert a powerful influence. The primary failures of the Mount Carmel negotiations can not be traced to a lack of understanding. Rather, from the initial raid, through the escalating restrictions placed on the community, to the final assault on Mount Carmel, the carefully considered and well-planned tactical actions of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and FBI agents consistently reduced the possibilities for successful negotiation. Even the most heroic acts of empathy and translation could not overcome the effects of the physical and psychological violence done to the Branch Davidians and their property. Although the negotiations were complicated by the intransigence of both parties, they were ultimately sabotaged by the

strategy of escalating pressure on those inside the Mount Carmel Center, which culminated in the April 19 assault.

ENDNOTES

[1] Transcript of 911 call, 28 February 1993. See "Waco 911," *Nightline*, 9 June 1993 (transcript, Journal Graphics), 3-4.

[2] This and subsequent references to taped conversations between FBI negotiators and the Branch Davidians are available in transcript form at the FBI reading room at the bureau's Hoover Building headquarters in Washington, D.C. FBI transcript of Tapes 4 and 5, 1 March 1993, 111. I retain grammatical, spelling, and other peculiarities from the transcripts.

[3] FBI transcript of Tape 57, 5 March 1993, 23.

[4] FBI transcript of Tape 68, 6 March 1993, 13.

[5] FBI transcript of Tapes 4 and 5, 1 March 1993, 129.

[6] I give more emphasis to the Branch Davidians' spiritual interests than Jayne Docherty does in her observation that "for the FBI negotiators the purpose of the negotiations was to get everyone safely out of Mount Carmel, **while enforcing the law**. For the Branch Davidians the objective was to get everyone safely out of Mount Carmel, **if they could negotiate an equitable resolution of the conflict started on February 28 and if God approved**" (Jayne Seminare Docherty, "When the Parties Bring their Gods to the Table," [Ph.D. diss., George Mason University, 1998], 189). My reading of the negotiation transcripts indicates that, even while they were besieged, the Davidians put the doctrine of the Seven Seals first.

[7] FBI transcript of Tape 130, 16 March 1993, 20; see also 25.

[8] See FBI transcript of Tape 57, 5 March 1993, 18.

[9] See Docherty, "When the Parties Bring their Gods to the Table," for a detailed and lucid treatment of the negotiations from the viewpoint of conflict resolution.

[10] FBI transcript of Tape 80, 7 March 1993, 18-19. See FBI transcript of Tape 68, 6 March 1993, 10-13.

[11] United States Congress, *Activities of Federal Law Enforcement Agencies Toward the Branch Davidians* (Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1996), part 2, 325-26.

[12] Ibid., 325.

[13] FBI transcript of Tape 129, 15 March 1993, 43. My emphasis.

[14] FBI transcript of Tape 128, 15 March 1993, 25. My emphasis. See FBI transcript of Tape 201, 48, 51.

[15] FBI transcript of Tape 80, 7 March 1999, 37.

[16] FBI transcript of Tape 218, 13 April 1993, 9.

[17] See FBI transcript of Tape 89, 7 March 1993, 40; FBI transcript of Tape 94, 8 March 1993, 19, 30-31, 34; FBI transcript of Tape 233, 16 April 1993, 44.

[18] See FBI transcript of Tape 10A, 1 March 1993, 19-30.

[19] FBI transcript of Tape 21, 2 March 1993, 28-29. See FBI transcript of Tape 96, 9 March 1993, 8-14.

[20] Ibid., 31.

[21] FBI transcript of Tapes 4 and 5, 1 March 1993, 128; FBI transcript of Tape 21, 2 March 1993, 15.

[22] On the consistency of Koresh's teaching about the Seven Seals from his 1985 revelatory experience in Israel through the siege, see Eugene V. Gallagher, "'Theology is Life and Death': David Koresh on Violence, Millennialism, and Persecution," in *Millennialism, Violence, and Persecution*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, forthcoming).

[23] See FBI transcript of Tape 19, 2 March 1993, 8-11.

[24] See FBI transcript of Tape 90, 8 March 1993, 49; FBI transcript of Tape 233, 16 April 1993, 10.

[25] See FBI transcript of Tape 233, 15 April 1993, 12.

[26] See Docherty, "When the Parties Bring their Gods to the Table," 271.

[27] FBI transcript of Tape 13, 2 March 1993, 13.

[28] See Koresh's unfinished manuscript on the Seven Seals in James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 187-211, quotation from 197.

[29] FBI transcript of Tape 26, 3 March 1993, 13.

[30] FBI transcript of Tapes 4 and 5, 1 March 1993, 4-5.

[31] FBI transcript of Tape 96, 9 March 1993, 8.

[32] FBI transcript of Tapes 4 and 5, 1 March 1993, 73.

[33] Ibid., 113.

[34] See FBI transcript of Tape 13, 2 March 1993, 9, 34; Tapes 4 and 5, 1 March 1993, 129; Tape 27, 3 March 1993, 26; Tape 28, 3 March 1993, 14-15.

[35] See FBI transcript of Tape 129, 15 March 1993, 24.

[36] See Steve Schneider's comments in notes 29-30.

[37] As printed in Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?*, 15-16.

[38] That was also the strategy adopted by Phillip Arnold and James Tabor, especially in their April 1 radio conversation with Ron Engelman on KGBS. See Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?*, 13-17.

Religious Studies Scholars, FBI Agents, and the Montana Freemen Standoff

Catherine Wessinger

COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS MANIFESTED AT WACO

Those who have read the book entitled *Why Waco?* by James Tabor and Eugene Gallagher know that in 1993 Phillip Arnold and Tabor attempted to advise FBI agents on the importance of understanding the Branch Davidians' biblically based worldview. When they were ignored by FBI agents, Arnold and Tabor discussed the biblical prophecies in a radio broadcast on April 1 for the benefit of Koresh and the Davidians. They argued that the Bible did not predict that the Davidians would be killed at that time, and that God wanted Koresh and the Davidians to come out and spread the message of salvation.[1]

This innovative approach, which took the Branch Davidians' worldview seriously, worked. On April 14, Koresh sent out a letter stating that he had been authorized by God to write a "little book" giving his interpretation of the Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation. Koresh said that after his manuscript was in safekeeping with Arnold and Tabor, the Davidians would come out. Attorney General Janet Reno was not told about Koresh's letter promising to come out; instead, she was told that negotiations were stalled. On April 16, Koresh reported to the agents that he had completed his interpretation of the First Seal, and the Davidians asked for a word processor. On April 17, the Davidians again asked for a word processor, and Janet Reno approved the FBI plan to assault the residence with tanks and CS (O-chlorobenzylidene malonitrile) gas. On April 18, the word processor was delivered to the Davidians, and on the morning of April 19, the assault began. A Davidian who escaped the fire carried in her pocket a disk on which was saved Koresh's interpretation of the First Seal, which is published in Tabor and Gallagher's book.[2]

The analyses of the Waco negotiation transcripts by Eugene Gallagher and Jayne Seminare Docherty show that the Branch Davidians and the FBI negotiators tried very hard to communicate with each

other.[3] The Davidians did not want to die, but they were committed to obeying God's Word revealed in the Bible in order to be included in God's salvation kingdom. The Branch Davidians' "ultimate concern," which Robert D. Baird defines as being the "most important thing in the world" to the believer, was disregarded by the FBI agents.[4]

Due to differences in worldviews, there was a lack of communication between at least three parties at Waco—the believers, the law enforcement agents, and the religious studies scholars. Training in professional disciplines involves socialization in worldviews, which determine how information is perceived, organized, and interpreted. Worldviews of professions have just as much power over perception and actions as religious worldviews. There is as much difficulty in communicating across the divergent professional worldviews of religious studies and law enforcement as there is difficulty in communication between believers and law enforcement agents.

COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES AND SUCCESSES DURING THE FREEMEN STANDOFF

This three-way difficulty in communication between believers, law enforcement agents, and religious studies scholars occurred again in 1996 during the Montana Freemen standoff, which lasted from March 25 to June 13.[5]

FBI agents consulted Michael Barkun, a political scientist who is an expert on millennialism and Christian Identity. They also consulted three religious studies scholars—Phillip Arnold, Jean Rosenfeld, and myself. The agents previously had established a relationship with Barkun, and they appeared to be more comfortable relating to a political scientist. FBI agents were in touch with Barkun throughout the standoff, but he had commitments abroad for part of that time. Barkun's advice to the agents was compatible with the advice given by Arnold, Rosenfeld, and myself. The three religious studies scholars formed a team to collaborate in deciphering the Freemen's worldview and to offer their best advice to the agents. My account here reflects the perspective of the three religious studies scholars.

The Montana Freemen, as Christian Patriots and Identity Christians,[6] believe we are living in the tribulation period leading to armageddon,[7] which will be followed by the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of God's kingdom. The ultimate concern of the Freemen is to establish an association of sovereign state republics governed by the pre-Civil War constitution, which will enforce the laws given by Yahweh in the Old Testament. In other words, the Freemen's ultimate concern is to overthrow the federal government, which they regard as

satanic, to establish the true "united States of America." Therefore, the Freemen's worldview is revolutionary and motivates revolutionary action. In 1996, the Freemen were waging "paper warfare" against the federal system with their liens, "Common Law" documents, and bank drafts. But the Freemen were also armed and prepared to fight against Satan's agents. During the standoff, some of the Freemen hoped that a violent conflict with FBI agents would prompt right-wing militia members to fight the "Second American Revolution" against the illegitimate federal government.

I analyze the Freemen as being part of a diffuse Euro-American nativist millennial movement which includes Christian Patriots, constitutionalists, neo-Nazis, Identity Christians, Odinists, and violent individuals who consider themselves members of the Phineas Priesthood.[8] These are white Americans who feel oppressed by the unresponsive bureaucracies of the federal government; they fear that their way of life and their people are being destroyed. Identity Christians in particular long for a return to a mythologized golden age by identifying white people as being the Israelites of the Old Testament. The corresponding demonization of Jews as the offspring of Satan and the controllers of government, media, and banking is typical of nativist hostility towards ethnic groups perceived as benefiting from the dominant government and economy.[9] This Euro-American nativist millennial movement is distinctive for its use of advanced communications technology, but the Freemen's use of their Common Law documents and their financial instruments can be seen as forms of imitative magic. The Freemen hope to steal the power wielded by their oppressors by unlocking the secrets of legal words, imitating the use of documents by attorneys and bankers, and utilizing this power to destroy their enemies and obtain well-being.

Unlike the Branch Davidians, the Freemen initially refused to negotiate with FBI agents because they did not recognize the agents as having legitimate authority. To encourage the Freemen to negotiate, FBI agents brought in several Christian Patriots to serve as intermediaries.

Bo Gritz and Jack McLamb served as intermediaries between April 27 and May 1. It was during this time that the twenty-one people in Justus Township made an affirmation to Yahweh that they would not leave and were told by Yahweh that they were protected by an invisible barrier.

On May 6, Phillip Arnold called the FBI Academy to offer his assistance. Earlier I had cultivated contacts in the Justice Department and the FBI. On May 7, I received a call from an agent asking if the FBI agents should tighten the perimeter. I answered that the agents should not take any action that the Freemen would view as persecution. The

Freemen possessed a dualistic worldview which saw reality in terms of good battling evil and already felt persecuted by the federal government. The agents, I advised, should not do anything to intensify this dualistic worldview and push the Freemen into taking violent action. I recommended that the agents consult Phillip Arnold and Jean Rosenfeld.

On May 9, Arnold, Rosenfeld, and I were put in contact with FBI negotiators in Montana and were encouraged to send our advice to agents there. We were told that we would receive information on the Freemen to analyze, but in fact we received a very small amount of information from the FBI. I derived most of my information on the Freemen from the *Billings Gazette*, while Jean Rosenfeld located other sources of information on the Internet and developed personal contacts in Montana. On May 9, Arnold, Rosenfeld, and I spoke to Dwayne Fuselier, the negotiation coordinator, who gave us short descriptions of each of the Freemen, characterizing most of the Freemen as not being very religious. Rosenfeld and I later agreed that Fuselier appeared to want us to conclude that the Freemen were not religious, but the Freemen were *highly* religious. The group had an ultimate concern for which they were willing to kill or die, they relied on the King James Version of the Bible in interpreting current events, and they were striving to do the will of Yahweh. When I called Fuselier on May 10 he was unavailable, and I was not confident that the agent to whom I spoke understood my advice. Arnold, Rosenfeld, and I began writing documents containing our advice, and we faxed these to Montana and sent copies to the FBI Academy and to Attorney General Janet Reno's office.

We advised that it would be counterproductive to take aggressive action against an apocalyptic group possessing a dualistic worldview and expecting conflict. We said that the Freemen's worldview had to be taken seriously and factored into the negotiations. We also urged that the agents utilize as intermediaries professionals trained to empathetically understand worldviews while maintaining the critical distance necessary to analyze those worldviews. Finally, we stressed that a successful negotiation settlement had to offer terms that permitted the Freemen to maintain their commitment to their ultimate concern while coming out of Justus Township to be taken into custody.

When the efforts of Christian Patriot intermediary Charles Duke failed on May 21 and Michael Barkun was unavailable to come to Montana, the FBI brought Phillip Arnold to Montana from May 28 through 31, a period during which the Freemen refused to negotiate. Arnold spent his time in Montana explaining to the agents the importance of religious worldviews. Arnold protested the agents' tendency to discount religion as *only* a cover for illegal activities or as

only a product of psychological pathology. The agents put Arnold in touch with the sister of Gloria Ward, who was inside Justus Township with her two young daughters and her Common Law husband. The Wards were new to Christian Identity doctrines, and they were members of a schismatic Mormon sect. They felt led by the Holy Spirit to take refuge in Justus Township to escape a custody battle over Gloria Ward's daughters. After speaking with Arnold, Gloria Ward's sister consulted with the Wards' spiritual leader, who then wrote the Wards a letter stating that God had revealed to him that the family should come out of Justus Township. The Ward family immediately came out on June 6, a major breakthrough in resolving the standoff.

Phillip Arnold also advised the agents to utilize intermediaries who could speak the language of the Freemen's Common Law as well as the language of the federal law. On June 10, three attorneys associated with the right-wing CAUSE Foundation were brought in as intermediaries.[10] They helped negotiate terms under which the Freemen were assured that their legal documents would be placed in safekeeping for use as evidence later to show the illegitimacy of the federal government. The terms assured the Freemen that they would have the opportunity to present their cases against the government in federal court.[11] Therefore, the Freemen were enabled to come out of Justus Township and remain true to their ultimate concern. They were not giving up their efforts to overthrow the federal government; they were taking their battle into the federal court system itself. Once they were in federal court, the Freemen were given no opportunity to argue the illegitimacy of the government, but they would not have come out had they not believed that they had obtained the safeguards that ensured that they would be able to do so.[12]

The FBI agents appeared to follow our advice concerning the Freemen. The Freemen were not subjected to severe pressure that might have made them despair of achieving their ultimate concern—possibly prompting them to resort to violent action. The FBI agents took a patient and low-key approach, and they relied on negotiation to resolve the standoff. They did not assault an apocalyptic group prepared to do battle. When the agents increased the pressure on the Freemen, they did so cautiously. It appeared that the agents factored the Freemen's religious worldview and their ultimate concern into crafting the settlement terms that prompted the group to exit Justus Township. Those terms permitted the Freemen to come out of Justus Township and remain true to their ultimate concern. Phillip Arnold was given the opportunity to speak to the Freemen and function as an intermediary, but he was in Montana at a time when the Freemen refused to negotiate.

Near the conclusion of the standoff, it became apparent to the religious studies scholars that the person who was serving as the

empathetic but neutral intermediary was Montana State Representative Karl Ohs (Republican), who began meeting with the Freemen as early as April 4. Ohs made it clear to the Freemen that he did not share their views, but he listened carefully to the Freemen's opinions. Karl Ohs brought an empathetic approach to understanding the Freemen's worldview while retaining the critical distance necessary to analyze it. It was crucial to the successful negotiation that, despite the Freemen's virulently anti-Semitic and racist beliefs and their belligerent stance toward the federal government, none of which were condoned by Ohs, the congressman was able to regard the Freemen as human beings and to befriend them. Ohs' attitude toward the Freemen did not dehumanize or demean them by casting them as con artists, deluded cultists, or as mentally ill individuals.[13] Before the Freemen left Justus Township, they placed all their legal papers—their evidence against the government—in safekeeping with Karl Ohs. This was a significant act of trust, because the Freemen were convinced that the federal government aimed to destroy their evidence of the government's illegitimacy.

After the exit of the Ward family, Robin Montgomery, then the head of the FBI's Crisis Incident Response Group, verbally told Phillip Arnold, "your method works." But subsequently FBI negotiators made statements to the effect that they found the religious studies advice to be irrelevant to resolving the Freemen standoff and that the religious studies scholars required "high maintenance" because we kept asking for more data to analyze.[14] The agents, in fact, had followed most of our advice, but the negotiators did not acknowledge that they had done so. Since I am not privy to the internal workings of the FBI, it is not clear to me whether the negotiators accidentally followed our advice or whether for some reason they did not want to admit that they had done so.

DEVELOPMENTS AFTER THE FREEMEN STANDOFF

I invited the FBI to send a negotiator to participate in the American Academy of Religion (AAR) session in which this paper was presented. My invitation was declined, but subsequently the decision was made to send agents to attend the 1998 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Orlando, Florida.

On 5 June 1998, Barbara DeConcini, the AAR's executive director, Eugene Gallagher, and I had a productive conversation in Washington, D.C., with Roger Nisley, the current director of the Crisis Incident Response Group, and other agents. The agents said they were receptive to using religious studies scholars as advisors and as "worldview translators"[15] in cases involving religious groups. They were receptive

to the explanations of millennialism and violence given by Gallagher and myself. I was surprised and pleased to see the agents smiling and their heads nodding when I discussed the concept of "ultimate concern."

After Waco, Nancy Ammerman, a sociologist of religion, was asked to make a report to the Justice and Treasury Departments.[16] She found that an important factor contributing to the Branch Davidian tragedy was the nature and quality of the expert advice utilized by the ATF and FBI agents. The agents consulted self-styled "cult experts" and appear to have been influenced by the anti-cult worldview.

Ammerman made several suggestions, a number of which are being implemented by the FBI. She recommended that agents consult experts in religion affiliated with professional associations. FBI agents now call the American Academy of Religion Executive Office for recommendations for relevant experts. Ammerman recommended that the FBI acquire a list of qualified experts on religion who are willing to advise agents. Both Phillip Arnold and I have provided the FBI with such lists of religious studies experts. Ammerman also recommended that scholars organize sessions at professional meetings and extend invitations to law enforcement agents. The AAR Special Topics Forum in which this paper was presented was such a session. Ammerman recommended that agents "forge expanded working ties" with scholars of religion so that, in the event of future crises, they will be acquainted with experts on whom they can call. Agents engaged in discussions with scholars at the 1998 meeting of the AAR, and during the same year four religious studies scholars (Ian Reader, an expert on Aum Shinrikyo, Massimo Introvigne, an expert on European and American new religious movements, Jean-François Mayer, an expert on the Order of the Solar Temple, and James T. Richardson, a sociologist of new religious movements) were invited to visit the FBI Academy in three separate meetings.

These types of interactions should continue, but one of Ammerman's recommendations remains to be implemented. She recommended that scholars and agents come together in seminars in which they examine case materials and explain to each other their different professional approaches to the data. The implementation of this last recommendation will require coordination, money, and the commitment of time, but such working seminars should prove productive in enhancing understanding between religious studies scholars and agents.

CONCLUSION

If agents want to be able to communicate with believers to avoid violent conflicts in the future, they must first be willing to learn to

communicate with religious studies scholars. Conversely, religious studies scholars must be willing to make the effort to understand the FBI worldview in order to communicate with the agents. The agents' willingness to attend the AAR's 1998 meeting is a significant step forward. Inviting scholars to the FBI Academy is another significant step. But agents can do more to build collegial relationships with religious studies scholars. There are a number of these scholars who have agreed to be resources for the FBI, but, given the nature of that institution, the agents will determine the extent to which they take advantage of the religious studies expertise that is relevant to their work.

ENDNOTES

[1] James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). This paper was presented on 22 November 1998 in a Special Topics Forum at the American Academy of Religion, Orlando, Florida, entitled "Believers, Law Enforcement Agents, and Religion Scholars: Communicating across Worldviews of Religions and Professional Disciplines." I am grateful for helpful comments on this paper from Jean Rosenfeld, Timothy Cahill, Beth Alston, James T. Richardson, Eugene V. Gallagher, Jayne Seminare Docherty, and J. Phillip Arnold.

[2] For a summary of the complex events relating to the Branch Davidian siege and the two assaults on their residence, see my chapter on the Branch Davidians in my book, *How the Millennium Comes Violently* (New York, NY: Seven Bridges Press, forthcoming). This chapter draws on sources such as Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?*; Dick J. Reavis, *The Ashes of Waco: An Investigation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995); Stuart A. Wright, ed., *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); James R. Lewis, ed., *From the Ashes: Making Sense of Waco* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994); Carol Moore, *The Davidian Massacre: Disturbing Questions About Waco Which Must Be Answered* (Franklin, TN: Legacy Communications; and Springfield, VA: Gun Owners Foundation, 1995); House of Representatives, *Investigation into the Activities of Federal Law Enforcement Agencies toward the Branch Davidians: Thirteenth Report by the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight Prepared in Conjunction with the Committee on the Judiciary together with Additional and Dissenting Views*, Report 104-749, Union Calendar No. 395 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996); selected audiotapes of the FBI-Branch Davidian negotiations kindly forwarded to me by J. Phillip Arnold; and the negotiation transcripts kindly forwarded to me by Eugene Gallagher.

[3] Eugene V. Gallagher, "'Theology is Life and Death': David Koresh on Violence, Persecution, and the Millennium," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, forthcoming); Jayne Seminare Docherty, "When the Parties Bring Their Gods to the Table: Learning the Lessons from Waco" (Ph.D. diss., George Mason University, 1998).

[4] Robert D. Baird, *Category Formation and the History of Religions* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

[5] See my chapter on the Freemen standoff in *How the Millennium Comes Violently*; see also Jean E. Rosenfeld, "The Importance of the Analysis of Religion in Avoiding Violent Outcomes: The Justus Freemen Crisis," *Nova Religio* 1, no. 1 (October 1997): 72-95; and Jean E. Rosenfeld," The Justus Freemen Standoff: The Importance of the Analysis of Religion in Avoiding Violent Outcomes," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence.*

[6] Not all of the residents of Justus Township had the same level of commitment to Freemen ideology or to Christian Identity beliefs. The highly committed Freemen, however, espoused Christian Identity. Not all Identity Christians are anti-Semitic and racist, but it is not unusual for Identity Christians to regard people of color as animals, Jews as the offspring of Satan, and, therefore, white people as the only real human beings.

[7] Armageddon in the Book of Revelation refers to a place where the final battle between good and evil will occur. Here I use "armageddon" in its popular sense of the final battle that will destroy the world as we know it.

[8] Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently*. For information on this diffuse right-wing movement, I particularly rely on James A. Aho, *The Politics of Righteousness: Idaho Christian Patriotism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990); Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); and Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America: From the Far Right to the Children of Noah* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

[9] Michael Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

[10] CAUSE is an acronym for Canada, Australia, United States, South Africa, and England, and CAUSE Foundation is reportedly allied with those on the white supremacist radical right.

[11] Clair Johnson, "Freemen Deal Includes 5: Negotiator Spells Out Points in Agreement," *Billings Gazette Online* (19 June 1996). The current web address for the *Billings Gazette Online* is <http://www.billingsgazette.com>. The news articles cited here are not included in the archive that has been established recently by the newspaper. The five terms in the agreement which prompted the Freemen to exit Justus Township were:

1) that Representative Karl Ohs would take custody of the Freemen's evidence and publish a signed statement to that effect in the three Montana newspapers;

2) that the Freemen who wished attorney assistance would retain 51 per cent control of their own cases with co-counsels. Co-counsels would have to agree to be sworn in according to the Freemen's Common Law system and swear to fight for "unfettered and unobstructed subpoena power";

3) the federal government would not oppose bond for Emmett and Ralph Clark—the two elder Clarks in the family that owned the farm that had been turned into Justus Township—if their health warranted release from prison;

4) that supporters and co-counsels would work to ensure that the incarcerated Freemen could meet together;

5) that arraignment would be with co-counsels after being sworn in.

[12] Jayne Seminare Docherty has noted to me several times that this ploy probably will not resolve a siege involving American right-wingers again. People on the radical right have observed that, despite signed agreements with law enforcement agents, the Montana Freemen and the leader of a secessionist group called the Republic of Texas have not been permitted to present their cases for the illegitimacy of the federal government in the courts.

[13] Joe Kolman, "Legislator Looks for Way Out of Freemen Standoff," *Billings Gazette Online* (2 June 1996). See note 11.

[14] Personal communication from Jayne Seminare Docherty.

[15] Jayne Seminare Docherty has used this phrase in her conversations with FBI agents, and she uses the phrase in her dissertation. Docherty derived the phrase from Phillip Lucas, "How Future Wacos Might Be Avoided: Two Proposals," in *From the Ashes*, 209-12.

[16] Nancy T. Ammerman, "Report to the Justice and Treasury Departments Regarding Law Enforcement Interaction with the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas," in *Recommendations for Improvements in Federal Law Enforcement after Waco* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993). Ammerman kindly forwarded her report to me in manuscript form.

Meeting God in Garland:

A Model of Religious Tolerance[1]

Lonnie D. Kliever

In the fall of 1997, a number of Taiwanese families bought houses in a quiet, tree-lined neighborhood in Garland, a blue-collar suburb of Dallas, Texas. Gradually the news leaked out that this was a religious group which designated the two-story brick house of their leader Hon-Ming Chen as "God's Salvation Church" and variously called themselves the True Way Church, or God Saves the Earth Flying Saucer Foundation, or Chen Tao.[2] That Chen Tao was not an ordinary immigrant church was obvious from the start. Many of the members of the community dressed in white, wore cowboy boots, and sported white cowboy hats. Apparently, none of the adults worked nor were any of the children enrolled in public schools. They held no formal services, but members of the community visited the leader's house at all times of the day. The neighborhood's curiosity was soon addressed in a backyard news conference held on 22 December 1997. Speaking through a translator, Teacher Chen declared that on 31 March 1998 God would appear as a human being in his front yard.

Following that blunt announcement was a startling succession of revelations, each one more fantastic than the last. On 25 March, God would make a nationwide television appearance on Channel 18 to preview his arrival a week later. When God came he would appear in the duplicated form of Hon-Ming Chen. He would shake hands with every pilgrim present on that occasion and address them in their own language. He would show off his power by passing through walls. Garland was "God's Land" where he would set up his office to prepare people for the Seventh Great Tribulation, a global nuclear holocaust which would begin in January 1999. Teacher Chen went on to explain that he had brought his followers to America to flee the countries of the East, which are populated by devils and devil religions. He disclosed

that he had fathered Jesus Christ two thousand years ago. He introduced two chubby ten-year olds. The one wearing a white cowboy hat was introduced as the reincarnation of Jesus Christ of the East. The slightly smaller child was introduced as the reincarnation of Buddha. There was further talk of different dimensions of space, mystical numbers drawn in the sky, flying saucers coming to save the elect, vapor trails of space ships in the sky, and the significance of the number 18. All these revelations came with an ironclad guarantee. If things did not happen as predicted, Teacher Chen would put himself in the hands of his people who could put him to death by crucifixion or stoning.

Most of the reporters were amused rather than astonished by these bold declarations, but a few saw the possibility of another Heaven's Gate in the making—both had a mystical aura, both were apocalyptic groups, both believed that UFOs would rescue the faithful from planetary destruction. Indeed, the Garland group seemed more likely candidates for mass suicide because their leader had predicted the exact day and hour when God would appear as a human on earth and had made ominous comments about his own death if his prophecies failed. Teacher Chen calmly responded to questions about mass suicide by insisting that the group valued life too much to do a thing like that. But questions of mass suicide would not so easily disappear. Those questions became the fulcrum that brought worldwide attention to this small group and thereby created a major challenge to the Garland Police Force.

Additional information about the group was forthcoming. Teacher Chen was a former associate professor of sociology at Chainan Pharmaceutical College in Taiwan. He was forty-two and had two daughters. His interpreter was Richard Liu, a thirty-eight-year-old former assistant professor of American literature in Taiwan. The group started its first chapter in San Dimas, California, in 1995, but they relocated two years later after their leader received instructions from God to move to Garland, which he said sounded like "God's Land" if you said it fast enough. Eventually 150 people arrived in Garland, and twenty-one homes were purchased, some paid for in cash. Teacher Chen and other members of the group made a car trip to Gary, Indiana, to purify themselves in Lake Michigan. Richard Liu later explained that Gary would be the rallying site for those who would be rescued from the Great Tribulation in 1999 by a flying saucer. Earlier trips had been made to Vancouver, British Columbia, and to Washington, D. C., where the members performed a purification rite at the Lincoln Memorial. The group erected billboards in front of Teacher Chen's house with printed prophecies, numerous pictures of vapor trails in the sky, and such artifacts as a Samurai sword, a large cross, and a Bible translated into Chinese. They even provided a stack of Teacher Chen's summa

theologica, entitled *God's Descending in Clouds (Flying Saucers) on Earth to Save People* for those who visited the billboards.[3] They made no effort to conceal their activities, which included performing certain rituals in the creek behind Teacher Chen's house and in a nearby public park. They did erect a high privacy fence around the leader's large back yard, but even this inner sanctum was opened to the public at the press conference on 22 December. Inside, reporters saw children playing around a gazebo containing an assortment of fresh vegetables, cases of Coca-Cola, and Ritz crackers. To one side was a wooden platform supporting a chair, cinder blocks, and an unopened barbecue grill encircled by street lamps and radial tires. This structure was explained as a model of the flying saucers which would rescue the faithful.

This publicity drew little attention outside of Garland, although the Garland Police Force was patrolling the neighborhood to protect the group from harassment and to be on the watch for any internal signs of impending trouble. For the most part, people in the neighborhood accepted the group, noting that they were quiet and kept their yards mowed. Except for the occasional carload of teenagers shouting obscenities and upset Fundamentalist Christians who wanted to argue with them, no one seemed to care about these strangers in white pajamas and cowboy hats. But on 4 March 1998, a lengthy article describing the group appeared in *The New York Times*. That story was the warning shot heard round the world. Reporters from the electronic and print media began to converge on Garland for what became a virtual "death watch" as speculation built over how the followers of Chen Tao would react to the certain failure of their leader's prophecies concerning God's appearance. Local and national "cult experts" moved in to offer their services to television stations and law enforcement agencies.

Happily, the local media did little to whip up fear and loathing of the group. This restraint was largely due to the religion writers for *The Dallas Morning News*, who wrote without the normal predictions of coming mayhem. Their levelheaded approach was supported by calls to scholars of new religious movements from around the country who located Chen Tao on a larger map of syncretistic and millenarian religious movements. I was among those scholars who counseled patience with this group, pointing out that their theology was very different from Heaven's Gate and that millenarian groups had a talent for explaining away failed prophecy. From what I had learned, there were no good reasons for labeling this a "dangerous cult."

Apparently my restrained comments were what brought me to the attention of the leaders of the Garland Police Department's task force which was handling the situation. I received a call from one of the leaders who asked if I would be willing to have lunch with him and his partner to discuss the situation in Garland. We agreed to meet at a restaurant

off campus on Thursday, 18 March, which was one week before God's predicted appearance on Channel 18. Not seeing any uniformed police, I settled myself for a wait until the host pointed me to a booth with two rather large gentlemen dressed in jeans and sport shirts. I soon discovered that they were very intelligent and well informed. They had compiled extensive information about the group. But they indicated that they needed some expert advice to help them better understand the group's specific beliefs and practices. I asked them why they had called me, and they replied, "Because you didn't come seeking to help us like the 'cult experts' have with their PR releases about media interviews and personal knowledge of UFO cults."

Their entire approach made it clear that the Garland Police Department was determined to avoid the mistakes that might have been made in handling the Branch Davidian affair.[4] We talked at some length about what the police were doing to protect the religious rights of the group, to preserve the security of the neighborhood, and to give access to the media. They also discussed, however, that they were prepared to move in if there were any indications of violence, particularly if the many children in the group were threatened. Obviously they were most concerned about what might happen to the group on 25 March and 31 March. If I were interested in advising them, they promised to provide me with all the written material in their possession, daily updates based on their continuing surveillance of the group, access to the group's spokesman, and admittance to upcoming events when the neighborhood would be shut down except to residents and registered representatives of the media. But they made it clear that I would not be involved in a direct way with negotiations if the situation turned dangerous or hostile. They also insisted that I not be publicly identified as an informant for the Garland Police Department. They explained that both of these provisos were as much for my protection as for their purposes. I in turn insisted that I be fully informed about how their department was gathering intelligence, handling information, and preparing for upcoming events, including possible crisis situations. I also indicated that I needed to be available to the media in my capacity as a religion scholar since I was frequently called or interviewed on matters of new religious movements. These agreements were ratified by the Chief of the Garland Police Department, and I began interpreting Chen Tao's distinctive theology and laying out possible scenarios of the group's response to the failed prophecies that were just around the corner.

A detailed study of Chen Tao's written materials and a helpful conversation with Richard Liu reassured me that violence was an unlikely response to their leader's failed prophecies. Five reasons supported this confidence: (1) Chen Tao's theological lineage was quite different from Heaven's Gate. A synthesis of millenarian Christianity and Pure

Land Buddhism,[5] there was nothing in Chen Tao teachings which required leaving their bodies behind in order to attain higher levels of spiritual advancement;(2) Teacher Chen explicitly condemned suicide as retrogressive, dooming the suicide to repeat the same act through many generations in the coming life;[6] (3) Chen Tao has no political agenda, at least none against the United States which in their view *is* the Pure Land of the Western Paradise. While they believe that eighty percent of the world's population will perish in a global nuclear holocaust, the United States is a protected area; (4) In Chen Tao's messianism, the faithful have no responsibility for initiating the apocalypse or for escaping its destruction. The Great Tribulation of 1999 will be set off by people who are combined with devils, and God will save the faithful by sending flying saucers to earth; (5) Members of Chen Tao were not perceived as a danger to or subject to pressures from the larger community. Nevertheless, I reminded the Police Department officials that I could not guarantee that there would be no violence.

Tension built as more and more media representatives arrived to be on hand for the predicted appearance of God on Channel 18 at midnight on 25 March. Cult Watch groups and fundamentalist preachers were on hand to condemn the group's teachings. In fact, the police were far more worried about the outsiders creating problems than insiders. The neighborhood was barricaded at noon, and only residents of the neighborhood and registered media and scholars were given admittance. But by early evening, the street in front of Teacher Chen's house was choked with remote broadcast trucks and reporters. Local radio stations had sent in people who dressed as space aliens, but they were summarily escorted out of the neighborhood by officers on duty. Teacher Chen's neighbor had rented his driveway and rooftop to several television stations, so there was full surveillance of Teacher Chen's high-fenced backyard. Most of the group had congregated in the yard. They seemed dressed for travel, and many children had sleeping bags. Youngsters played while shifting groups of adults conferred, many looking from time to time intently at the sky. At 12:15 A.M., Teacher Chen gathered the adults in a circle and apparently read them a prepared statement. The people filed out of the yard, many returning to their homes in the neighborhood, and Teacher Chen came to the front yard to meet the press. Ironically, his appearance was accompanied by a sudden rushing wind and roiling clouds—conditions which were ignored by the media but not lost on Teacher Chen or his followers.

In a prepared statement, Teacher Chen reaffirmed his belief that the Great Tribulation was coming and that God was eager to save those who turned to him. He then declared, "because we did not see God's message on television tonight, my predictions for 31 March can be considered nonsense." He went on to say that he considered the

worldwide attention of the media as a miracle since it helped them spread their message in ways they would have never thought possible. But in the question and answer period that followed, Teacher Chen made it clear that he had *not* recanted his prophecy. He explained that God had "other arrangements" and that God was putting him to this test. In short, Teacher's Chen's timetable failed but not his prophecy. He announced that his followers were free to return to their normal lives if they chose but that he would remain in Garland "to continue studying and research." As for the 31 March prophecy, he reiterated his claim that "you can consider what I have said as nonsense," but the "you" seemed directed to the media rather than to his followers. "We will keep on anticipating the date of God's coming on the 31st." There were many more questions, but to the end he remained unshakable in his faith that the end was near.[7]

The entire press conference was a remarkable event from a religion scholar's point of view. It was a virtual replay of what has happened again and again in the history of such apocalyptic groups—the apparent failure of prophecy is reinterpreted to maintain the faith intact.[8] Teacher Chen left plenty of doors open for himself and his followers to continue believing his gospel. But those very doors opened the movement to the "routinization of charisma"—that is, the adapting of an irrational and utopian faith to the normal conditions and expectations of daily living. Just how far that process had gone was evident a week later when Teacher Chen once again met the assembled press in his front yard to announce God's arrival in Garland on 31 March.

In a stunning performance, Teacher Chen reinterpreted all his remarkable predictions for this day of days—reinterpretations that were fully consistent with his basic theology. He delivered a long and complicated address, but the heart of what he said was this: God has arrived in my front yard as predicted because each of you *are* God. If you join your right and left hands, you have shaken hands with God as predicted. And each of you can understand God in your own thoughts and in your own language.

The media acted badly to this reinterpretation of prophecy. The questions were hostile and incredulous, but Teacher Chen held his ground while also reaffirming his prophecy that a global nuclear holocaust would begin in February 1999 in Taiwan, that God would send flying saucers to rescue the faithful from this perishing planet, that God had miraculously drawn the eyes and ears of the world to Garland to hear this truth, and that the storm on 25 March was God's "other arrangement" for showing his presence. Fundamentalist preachers sputtered, and media people shook their heads, but for the religious studies scholar it was a remarkable escape from disconfirming evidence.

The media "death watch" was over. Life in the neighborhood returned to normal. Richard Liu presented a plaque to the Mayor of Garland for his understanding and support. The plaque was signed, "God, and the People of God." By the end of May, most of Teacher Chen's followers had left Garland. Their leader had a dream in which the numbers of the highways intersecting in Lockport, New York were revealed, and so the group moved to Lockport to await the beginning of the Great Tribulation. There Teacher Chen has consolidated and elaborated on his impromptu reinterpretation of prophecy on March 31. The theme that all people should assume the role and responsibility of God is worked out in a fresh statement in his latest publication entitled *The Appearing of God and the Descending of the Kingdom of God—Saving Human Beings by Means of God's Space Aircrafts.*[9] Thereby the challenge of dealing with prophecies unfulfilled falls to another community.

Hopefully, that community and its law enforcement agencies will take a page from Garland, which was a model of tolerance in dealing with an unconventional religious group and a potentially explosive situation. There are valuable lessons to be drawn from this experience:

1. The leadership of the City of Garland committed itself publicly and early to protecting the civil rights of members of God's Salvation Church and to securing the safety of the neighborhood.

2. Assigning responsibility to the police department's Division of Child Protective Services rather than its Crisis Task Force avoided labeling this encounter as a stand-off or hostage situation.

3. All relevant city departments were involved in making arrangements to accommodate news reporters and special interest groups arriving on and around 25 March and 31 March.

4. The police department was diligent in gathering information about Chen Tao's beliefs and practices without harassment or disrespect to the members of the group.

5. The police department prepared itself for every eventuality but maintained a benign public posture of protecting everyone's rights.

6. The police department made good use of scholarly expertise in better understanding the distinctive beliefs and practices of Chen Tao.

There are lessons that religion scholars can take away from this experience as well. My availability to the Garland Police Department was largely due to my ongoing work with the local and national media.

Over a period of several years, I have responded to every inquiry from the press about controversial religious groups and events. These efforts have helped create an informed local press, which was so important in keeping the public informed without exacerbating the situation with anti-cult rhetoric and doomsday scenarios. In other words, the time to cultivate positive relationships with the media and law enforcement agencies is *before* an incident arises. Religion scholars will be most helpful to law enforcement agencies in such situations if certain ground rules are accepted:

1. Provide law enforcement agencies with information about *specific* beliefs and practices of a given group or individual under surveillance.

2. Interpret and predict behavior in a manner consistent with the *specific* religious worldview of the given group or individual in a conflict situation.

3. Be willing to work behind the scenes with law enforcement agencies without demanding or seeking public recognition or credit.

4. Recognize the limits of your authority and responsibility for handling a conflict or crisis situation that turns violent.

Law enforcement agencies and religion scholars can work together if both groups share the common goals of respecting religious freedom, enforcing the law, maintaining social order, and protecting life and property. But such cooperation requires mutual respect and acceptance of the different professional roles each group should play in a potential crisis situation.

ENDNOTES

[1] This paper was originally presented to a forum on "Believers, Law Enforcement Agents, and Religion Scholars: Communicating Across Worldviews of Religious and Professional Disciplines" at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Orlando, FL, on 22 November 1998.

[2] Some of the details of the background of Chen Tao and its first weeks in Garland have been drawn from newspaper articles, especially Sam Howe Verhovek, "Taiwanese Group Prepares to Meet God—In Texas," *The New York Times*, 4 March 1998, A10; Christine Wicker, "Garland Sect Prepares for God's Arrival," *Dallas Morning News*, 22 March 1998, 1A, 32A; James Covert, "Plan Nine from Garland," *The Met*, 8 April 1998, 14-17, 19.

[3] *God's Descending in Clouds (Flying Saucers) on Earth to Save People* (Garland, TX, September 1997). Spiral-bound typescript; authorship attributed to "God."

[4] See James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[5] For an account of Pure Land Buddhism, see Alfred Bloom, *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1965).

[6] *God's Descending in Clouds*, 38.

[7] See Berta Delgado and Christine Wicker, "Group Waiting for God in Garland Returns to Routine," *The Dallas Morning News*, 26 March 1998, 35A; "God Misses TV Appearance" (www.nhne.com/newsflashes/nftvappearance), 16 June 1999.

[8] Leon Festinger, Henry Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956); Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Daniel Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

[9] *The Appearing of God and Descending of the Kingdom of God—Saving Human Beings by Means of God's Aircrafts* (Lockport, NY, September 1998). Spiral-bound typescript; authorship attributed to "All the Gods."

Law Enforcement and New Religious Movements

Stephen O'Leary

Since the 1993 Waco tragedy, a number of scholars have debated the peculiar problems that occur when religious groups find themselves in conflict with law enforcement agents. While there is a long and tragic history of violent conflict between religious and state authority, the present historical moment would seem to be fraught with unusual dangers. Those of us who specialize in the psychology of apocalypticism are particularly attentive to the need for new approaches to these issues at the long-awaited transition to the new millennium. Perhaps my focus on millennial studies biases me unduly toward alarmism, but there are many scholars working on these issues who share my belief that the passage into the new millennium has the potential to be a rocky one. Numerous religious communities have deeply committed themselves to beliefs in prophecies and are expecting an imminent fulfillment associated, in a variety of ways, with the millennial timetable. While most of these groups are harmless and chiefly interesting because they afford scholars a unique opportunity to observe the phenomenon of "cognitive dissonance" on a grand scale, some of them are likely to go further than passively awaiting the End and may express their anticipation and inevitable disappointment by resorting to violence, whether directed against themselves or others. Are there any general insights into the psychology of such groups that can assist civil authorities as they deal with potentially volatile situations? How can we productively conceive of roles and responsibilities for law enforcement officials and religion scholars (and, I would add, the media) in preserving both civil order and respect for religious pluralism in these situations?

The papers presented together here are an important step forward in developing new approaches to these problems. Only through numerous and extended case studies can we gather a database sufficient to support inferences about the wisdom or folly of specific law enforcement tactics in conflicts involving religious challenges to the legitimacy of state authority. Each of the authors of these essays has offered a useful contribution to this pool of scholarly knowledge; as this pool grows, it may eventually be of use in applied settings. Rather

than respond to each paper in sequence, I have attempted to frame a more general discussion of the issues that they raise in the belief that their specific examples and findings can best be appreciated within a broader spectrum of successes, failures, and ambiguous outcomes.

RELIGION AND VIOLENCE

The proliferation of violent incidents involving new religious movements in the nineties must give us all pause. Consider the doleful litany of recent events: the immolation of David Koresh's followers at Waco, the suicides and murders of the Solar Temple, the religiously inspired terrorism of Japan's Aum Shinrikyo, the ritual suicides of the Heaven's Gate group in California. If there is anything to be salvaged from the human wreckage of these groups, it is the reminder of an uncomfortable truth: religion is a matter of life and death. Mouthing pious platitudes on a Sunday morning, we often forget that martyrs died to defend the articles of faith that we utter so routinely and unthinkingly—or that seem so doubtful that it is difficult for us to understand how they could inspire anyone to bloodshed. It is understandable that the secular cultures of mass media, government, and law enforcement would seek to marginalize or pathologize such behavior. But as religion scholars, we need to resist the use of conceptual categories such as "cults" or "fundamentalism" as mechanisms for explaining away the problem of religious violence as somehow unrelated to religion *per se*. Most importantly, we need both to remember and remind others that where ultimate truths are at stake, violence always remains a latent possibility. Coming to terms with homo religiosus means recognizing that ultimate concerns are not always negotiable within a framework of civil society. This does not mean that such negotiations should not be attempted; but if we enter into this work with an overly irenic view of religion and the capacities of human reason, we will be ill-prepared both for the negotiations themselves and for the inevitable disappointments to follow.

SCHOLARS SHOULD ABANDON THE ATTEMPT TO PREDICT OUTCOMES

A realistic understanding of the latent possibility of violence in religious beliefs and practices is a necessary starting point. Having said this, however, how can we move on to ask questions and find answers that can help to avoid future conflicts? A common agenda is not so easy to establish. From the perspective of law enforcement agencies, the

necessary questions are practical and predictive: Which groups will turn to violence? What form is violence likely to take—directed against selves or others? Religion scholars, on the other hand, are used to asking historical and theoretical questions. Their training better equips them to explain past events than to predict future ones. Examination of religious beliefs, ideologies, and practices, and the structures of power and domination within particular groups may help to identify which groups hold the potential for danger. But to intervene in the activities of such groups or to make pronouncements about how they *might* act in the future is an act fraught with grave responsibility. To the extent that scholars in the humanities and social sciences prioritize prediction and prescription over theoretical and historical understanding, we are stepping into a role for which we are ill-prepared. Anyone who has credible evidence of ongoing or planned violence is, of course, under a human ethical obligation to prevent it if possible; but in the absence of such clear-cut evidence, we should avoid making predictions about the behavior of our subjects for the benefit of all concerned parties, including law enforcement officials. Historical and theoretical perspectives and explanations can, to be sure, provide law enforcement officials with information necessary for fully informed judgment, but scholars who offer this sort of advice have a special obligation to stress the limits of theory and the inexactness of historical parallels.

OBSERVATION AND INTERVENTION CAN INCREASE RISKS

I suggest that we need to rethink the problem. We should ask how intervention and observation may change the behavior of our subjects, who are neither robots unable to break free from ideological programming nor puppets controlled by the strings of diabolical charismatic puppet-masters, but human beings who make choices to protect and maximize their interests, whether material or spiritual. My point here is that we need to go beyond asking whether a given group presents a threat to society at large or is at risk of self-inflicted violence, and to start asking how intervention and observation—whether by law enforcement, scholars, or the media—may cause responses or create risks that otherwise would have remained dormant possibilities.

The media have played a significant role in some of these incidents. The desire for media exposure has provided both a motive for action and an issue in negotiations. Negative press coverage has also heightened tensions and increased social pressures in ways that can contribute to violence. And the choices of action by government agents—from simple surveillance to the invasive intervention of an armed raid—can worsen the psychology of paranoia and persecution

in high-demand religious groups. Negotiations between law enforcement officials and religious leaders in standoff situations may be conducted privately and under secure conditions, but media scrutiny and public perceptions can have a direct influence on the outcome of such dialogues, for good and for ill. The desire for publicity may drive some parties toward spectacular, violent actions that seize the media spotlight; at the same time, the watchful gaze of the media may serve to enforce accountability for both religious groups and government officials. In these complicated transactions, the media are not passive participants; they have a distinct commercial interest in sensationalizing confrontation and actively reproduce dominant ideologies by selecting and legitimating certain "expert" and official viewpoints. So, in short, we have to complicate the question, not simply by asking which religious beliefs are likely to result in violence, but also by considering how the complex interactions of religious groups, law enforcement, media, and public perceptions may trigger a variety of outcomes.

One theme that emerges from the essays of Catherine Wessinger and Jayne Seminare Docherty is the problem of how people who hold radically differing worldviews and commitments can communicate with each other. I am suggesting that we may need to take the worldviews of reporters into account as well as those of religious groups and government officials. The media can and does play an active role in these conflicts, and the effort to "negotiate reality" (to use Docherty's phrase) frequently begins from a base established by the narratives promulgated in the news media.

THE LIMITS OF DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

With these initial reactions and concerns on the table, I can now ask, how do the papers collected here further our understanding and open up new areas for discussion? We have three anecdotal case studies—of failure at Waco and successes in Montana and in Garland, Texas—and one theoretical overview from the field of conflict resolution. Each enhances our understanding of a problem that is likely to recur in the decades to come. I think it is useful to contrast the optimistic note found in the papers by Catherine Wessinger and Lonnie Kliever with the pessimistic tone of Eugene Gallagher's retelling of the tragic tale of David Koresh and his followers.

The peaceful resolution of the Montana Freemen standoff does give us reason to hope that the FBI has learned something since Waco, and, as Wessinger notes, the presence of FBI agents at the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion is a sign that the government is seeking to improve its handling of such incidents. Similarly, Kliever's

story of the Chen Tao in Garland contains some useful anecdotes about the evolution of this millennial group's belief system and the way that potential conflicts were averted. We can be glad that in Montana and in Garland both law enforcement officials and the media handled their respective tasks with thoughtfulness and restraint. If we can extract one lesson from the accounts given by Kliever and Wessinger, it would seem to be this: that law enforcement officials need to listen to religion scholars.

If scholars claim to offer understanding of religious beliefs and practices, and if such understanding can help to avert violence, then we would do well to heed the cautions of Gallagher. His focus on a case study of failure reminds us of an important point: that understanding another's commitments and worldview will not necessarily lead to behavioral change nor avert the possibility of violence. Notwithstanding Wessinger's statement that scholars also need to listen to and understand the worldview of law enforcement officials, the fact remains that the decisions about how to proceed in a conflict of this sort are made by one party—law enforcement agents—which has to bear the ultimate responsibility for the life-and-death outcome of each siege or standoff and which sees negotiation and conflict resolution as only one option among an array of choices that includes application of severe and lethal force. I think most readers of this journal can agree that the horrible outcome of the Waco siege might have been avoided if the agents there had not rejected negotiation in favor of tanks and CS gas. But I am uncomfortable with armchair quarterbacks, with people who claim to be able to solve problems faced by agents in the field from the comfort of their academic studies. I am not accusing any of these authors of such vanity. But we all need to be careful about our tendency to regard our own disciplinary perspective as central. It is here that Docherty's paper offers a useful vantage point, stepping outside of religious studies to look at this whole problem in terms of a clash of worldviews, not only between new religious movements (NRMs) and law enforcement officials, but also between law enforcement officials and those who seek to act as "worldview translators." Docherty's analysis of the relationships among the worldviews of NRMs, law enforcement agents, and scholars is, I think, quite helpful. It seems unlikely that significant progress in this area will be made unless the conceptual categories Docherty offers are taken up into the ongoing discussions between the FBI and religious studies scholars.

I must, however, confess to a personal response that is somewhat less than hopeful. The positive outcomes we saw in Garland and Montana were in part due to tolerance and the willingness to learn and negotiate by all the parties concerned. But these outcomes were also dependent on the relative peacefulness of the groups in question—or at least on their willingness to forego violence when other options were

made available to them. I am not convinced that the "model of religious tolerance" presented by Kliever would be of any use when confronting a group such as Aum Shinrikyo, whose leader, Shoko Asahara, appeared to be willing to use any means of violence and deception to further his ends. If peaceful resolution depends on the goodwill of the participants, we can hardly count on this in the future.

I do not wish to end on a note of pessimism. The ideals of tolerance, religious pluralism, and nonviolent conflict resolution should not be abandoned because they are difficult to put into practice or because they are sometimes actively opposed by both new religious movements and law enforcement officials. The papers presented here each contribute in their own ways to the ongoing effort to implement these ideals in the practical sphere of public life. This effort is likely to be fraught with problems and pitfalls, but we clearly have little choice but to continue. Over time, case studies such as these will have an important role to play in furthering civil dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflict.

When Prophecy Fails and Faith Persists: A Theoretical Overview

Lorne L. Dawson

ABSTRACT: Almost everyone in the sociology of religion is familiar with the classic 1956 study by Festinger et al. of how religious groups respond to the failure of their prophetic pronouncements. Far fewer are aware of the many other studies of a similar nature completed over the last thirty years on an array of other new religious movements. There are intriguing variations in the observations and conclusions advanced by many of these studies, as well as some surprising commonalities. This paper offers a systematic overview of these variations and commonalities with an eye to developing a more comprehensive and critical perspective on this complex issue. An analysis is provided of the adaptive strategies of groups faced with a failure of prophecy and the conditions affecting the nature and relative success of these strategies. In the end, it is argued, the discussion would benefit from a conceptual reorientation away from the specifics of the theory of cognitive dissonance, as formulated by Festinger et al., to a broader focus on the generic processes of dissonance management in various religious and social groups.

In the classic study *When Prophecy Fails*, Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter offer us an account of one very small occult group, dubbed the Seekers, whose leader, Mrs. Marion Keech, predicted the destruction of much of the United States by a great flood.[1] Her loyal followers were to be rescued from this apocalypse by aliens aboard flying saucers who were communicating with her by telepathy. Several dates for the end were foretold by Mrs. Keech, but each passed uneventfully. Contrary to common sense, though, the group did not abandon its beliefs and disband even in the face of stark disconfirmation of these prophecies. Rather, a faithful core persisted and redoubled its efforts to convince others of the veracity of their ideas. From the study of this one group, Festinger and his colleagues developed the theory of cognitive dissonance: when people with strongly held beliefs are confronted by evidence clearly at odds with their beliefs, they will seek to resolve the discomfort caused by the discrepancy by convincing others to support their views rather than abandoning their commitments. They will

seek some means of reestablishing cognitive consonance without sacrificing their religious convictions. With experimental confirmation, this theory has gone on to become a mainstay of social psychology, and in the sociology of religion there is something like an implicit consensus in support of this view as well. But does the record show that the response of the Seekers is consonant with that of other religious groups in the thrall of prophecy?

The thesis of *When Prophecy Fails* has not been examined as systematically as might be desired. Casting doubt on the methodology of the original study, several critics have argued that the findings are probably skewed by some "experimenter's effect." As Anthony van Fossen, Rodney Stark, and William Sims Bainbridge point out, it is difficult to put much faith in the evidence of Festinger et al. when so many of Mrs. Keech's small band of followers were actually social scientists engaged in covert participant observation.[2] Methodological concerns aside, however, the comparative study of the insights of Festinger et al. has proceeded, seizing opportunistically on those moments when scholars of religion have become aware of groups making religious prophecies about specific events. This has happened more often than might be imagined. I have found seventeen additional studies that examine at least twelve different religious groups (see Table 1), excluding studies of cargo cults in non-Western and preliterate societies.[3] It is not hard to think, moreover, of some other fairly conspicuous instances that could be investigated as well (e.g., the Church Universal and Triumphant).[4] The results of these studies are mixed, but on the whole the record shows that Festinger et al. were right to predict that many groups will survive the failure of prophecy. Why they survive is another matter. The reasons are much more complicated than *When Prophecy Fails* implies.

The entire literature on the failure of prophecy is vitiated by a certain ambiguity. For some scholars the issue at stake is quite specifically whether groups whose prophecies have failed try to convert others to their beliefs to resolve their dissonance. For others the focal point is more broadly how groups whose prophecies have failed simply survive by whatever means. These foci are related yet distinct. A review of the literature reveals a drift to the broader focus, one that I think is both understandable and appropriate. The broader focus calls attention to some of the other complex group dynamics that are equally responsible, in varying circumstances, for the persistence of faith in the face of apparent failure.

To date, the studies of groups who have made prophecies that failed have uncovered at least five different patterns of response:[5]

(a) some groups survive and begin to proselytize;[6]
(b) some groups survive and continue to proselytize;[7]
(c) some groups survive but their proselytizing declines;[8]
(d) some groups survive but they do not proselytize;[9]
(e) and some groups neither survive nor proselytize.[10]

GROUP STUDIED:	STUDIED BY:	SURVIVAL OF FAILURE OF PROPHECY
Seekers	Festinger et al. (1956)	Yes, for a time
Church of the True Word	Hardyck and Braden (1962)	Yes, quite well
Ichigen no Miya	Takaaki (1979)	Yes, barely
Baha'is under the Provision of the Covenant	Balch et al. (1983) and Balch et al. (1997)	Yes, but with difficulties
Millerites	Melton (1985)	Yes, for a time
Universal Link	Melton (1985)	Yes, for a time
Jehovah's Witnesses	Zygmunt (1970) Wilson (1978) Singelenberg (1988)	Yes, quite well
Rouxists	van Fossen (1988)	Yes, quite well
Mission de l'Esprit Saint	Palmer and Finn (1992)	No
Institute of Applied Metaphysics	Palmer and Finn (1992)	Yes, quite well
Lubavitch Hasidim	Shaffir (1993, 1994, 1995) Dein (1997)	Yes, quite well
Unarians	Tumminia (1998)	Yes, fairly well
Chen Tao	Wright (1998)	Yes, but weakened

TABLE 1

Logically a sixth category could be added: some groups begin to proselytize but do not survive. I can think of no case in the literature, however, that matches this possibility. Moreover, there is the ambiguity of cases like the Solar Temple and Heaven's Gate. They neither survived nor proselytized. But can we say that their prophecies failed?[11]

So what can we glean from the scholarly record so far? We can identify and document an array of adaptational strategies used by these groups in the face of the disconfirmation of their prophecies. We can also delineate a number of conditions that influence which strategies are used and what their effects might be. Some of these conditions are related to the social context of coping with a prophetic failure, while others refer to the larger doctrinal context of the prophecies. Some of these conditions can be derived directly from the observations made of specific groups, while others are still rather conjectural and have yet to be investigated properly. These developments are summarized in the next two sections of this paper (see Table 2). With these insights in

Adaptational Strategies	Influencing Conditions
(1) proselytization	(1) level of in-group social support
(2) rationalization -spiritualization -test of faith -human error -blaming others	(2) decisive leadership
(3) reaffirmation	(3) scope and sophistication of ideology
	(4) vagueness of the prophecy
	(5) presence of ritual framing
	(6) organizational factors

TABLE 2

place, I will question whether the study of instances of prophetic failure has been skewed in objectionable ways by implicitly referring to the interpretive framework of cognitive dissonance, thereby implying marked deviance. In many instances prophetic failures may not be as unusual or disturbing as thought.[12] Thus the study of such failures might be situated better within an analysis of the ongoing management of dissonance within all religions.[13] In fact the most economical framework might be the analysis of the generic processes of dissonance management in social groups and institutions in general.[14]

THE ADAPTATIONAL STRATEGIES OF PROPHETIC MOVEMENTS

It is not my intention to provide a natural history of the social scientific study of the religious responses to prophetic disconfirmations. One can read the literature in chronological order to acquire such a perspective. The objective here is a distillation of the theoretical dividends paid by the diverse empirical studies undertaken so far. Zygmunt provided the last theoretical overview of the issue in 1972, and most of the best case studies have been written since.[15]

An examination of the literature soon reveals that proselytizing, whether newly begun or simply intensified, is only one of several possible adaptational strategies employed by religions coping with prophetic disconfirmation. As the itemization of response patterns provided above indicates, only a minority of groups studied (four of thirteen) sought to convert others to compensate for their disappointment. This was most clearly true of the UFO cult examined by Festinger et al., the Lubavitch Hasidim examined by Shaffir and by Dein, and, to a lesser extent, the Unarians examined by Tumminia, and the Millerites. In most cases this proselytizing was used in conjunction with other strategies. So, strictly speaking, the "law" of cognitive dissonance in the case of prophetic failures as formulated by Festinger et al. is incorrect, or, at any rate, it is framed too narrowly. In the literature at least two additional adaptational strategies—rationalization and reaffirmation—have been identified.

The rationalization of seeming failure is an adaptational strategy emphasized by Zygmunt in his early theoretical overview of this issue.[16] But, as J. Gordon Melton quite correctly comments, "the denial of failure is not just another option, but the common mode of adaptation of millennial groups following the failure of a prophecy."[17] The record of case studies examined here supports this contention. It is successful rationalization, and not proselytization, that is the most important factor

contributing to the maintenance of beliefs and the survival of the group. Melton would agree with Bryan Wilson when he observes,

> For people whose lives have become dominated by one powerful expectation, and whose activities are dictated by what that belief requires, abandonment of faith because of disappointment about a date would usually be too traumatic an experience to contemplate. Reinterpretation is demanded.[18]

To some extent all of the groups that survived the disconfirmation of their prophecies did so because they were able to promptly provide their followers with a sufficiently plausible reinterpretation of events. But the leader of the one group that failed to survive altogether, the *Mission de l'Esprit Saint*,[19] and the leaders of groups that experienced dramatic declines in their fortunes (e.g., the *Ichigen no Miya* and the Baha'is Under the Provision of the Covenant, at least as first discussed by Balch et al.)[20] also provided rationalizations. In these cases, however, the leaders were too late in crafting their rationalizations, and they were inadequately communicated to the membership.

More specifically, as several of the authors suggest in various ways, we can distinguish between at least four kinds of rationalization: spiritualization, a test of faith, human error, and blaming others. Some of the groups studied favored one of these modes of rationalization over the other, but they usually appear in various combinations.

Melton clarifies what he has in mind in proposing the useful term "spiritualization" as follows:

> The prophesied event is reinterpreted in such a way that what was supposed to have been a visible, verifiable occurrence is seen to have been in reality an invisible, spiritual occurrence. The event occurred as predicted, only on a spiritual level.[21]

Probably the best known case of spiritualization in the contemporary Western world is the Jehovah's Witnesses' claim that the foundation for the millennium of peace was laid, spiritually, in 1914 when the Witnesses experienced an early and dramatic failure of prophecy. Zygmunt discusses this and other instances of spiritualization with regard to the Jehovah's Witnesses, and so does Wilson.[22] Melton provides another example from England with a small group called the Universal Link, while Balch et al. and Tumminia describe, respectively, the Baha'i and the Unarian use of this strategy.[23] Shaffir and Dein demonstrate how rapidly the Lubavitch Hasidim reverted to such a mode of rationalization with the death of their living messiah, the Rebbe.[24] Of course, in each of these instances the exact form of the rationalization invoked varies.

Consider, for example, the following passage from Shaffir's excellent description of the Lubavitch reaction:

One of the Rebbe's secretaries urged the members of the movement to remember that the Rebbe's presence must continue to dominate every aspect of life (thus reiterating the Rebbe's own recommendation when his predecessor had died). . . :

> The Alter Rebbe [the first Lubavitcher Rebbe] in Tanya [the first Lubavitcher Rebbe's work outlining the philosophy of Habad] . . . quotes the Zohar, "A Tzaddik [an inspired leader] who departs from this world is present in all the worlds more than he was during his lifetime." And the Alter Rebbe explains that the Zohar also means to say that the Tzaddik is present in this physical world more than during his life on this world. He also tells us that after the departure of the Neshomo [the soul] from this world, the Neshomo of the Tzaddik generates more strength and more Koach (power) to his devoted disciples.[25]

In speaking to the Lubavitch, Shaffir was advised that miraculous things had occurred since the Rebbe's death and that these happenings were attributable to his spiritual intervention on their behalf.

In the case of the Institute for Applied Metaphysics, a New Age group, Palmer and Finn report the curious finding that several hundred followers of Winnifred Barton, scattered in three widely separated parts of Canada, more or less spontaneously transformed a prediction of the end of the world "as we know it" (at 6:00 P.M. on 13 June 1975) into a subtle shift in consciousness. In the words of one of Palmer and Finn's informants,

> At ten o'clock suddenly Win arrives. She just came in and went to the front and started meditating. There was music playing and we all meditated. An hour passed, then suddenly, it was twelve o'clock. We were still here. What had happened? Then I heard people around me saying, "Wow! Did you feel that?" A lot of people definitely felt something, that something spiritual had happened. Certainly, nothing physical had. It's lucky that Win always tacked on that phrase, "as we know it."[26]

Not all the followers agreed. But enough did to transform the group from what was essentially a client cult into a full cult movement that chose to live communally for the first time.

Perhaps the single most interesting illustration of an attempt to spiritualize a seeming prophetic failure is provided by Takaaki's description of the actions of the leader of the *Ichigen no Miya*, Motoki Isamu. On the day when the apocalypse failed to arrive as predicted, Isamu attempted a ritualistic suicide. This seeming admission of defeat was later reinterpreted and transformed into a sign of triumph. Having cut open his abdomen, Isamu had a vision of his body as the islands of Japan in flames, causing him to realize that "god had transferred the cataclysm to my own body."[27] In Christ-like manner, he eventually

announced that he had taken on the pain of humanity, spiritually staving off the anticipated earthquake.[28]

There can be several variants of the second rationalization, the test of faith, as well. Much depends on the beliefs in question, the specific history and circumstances of the group, the resourcefulness of its leadership, and its cultural heritage and context. The Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of the True Word, the Lubavitch, and the Baha'is Under the Provisions of the Covenant all relied significantly on this approach. But there are elements of it in most of the thirteen groups analyzed. After forty-two days in the bomb shelters waiting for the apocalypse that never came, the hundred and three faithful of the Church of the True Word emerged to celebrate in unison the victory that their leader assured them they had achieved. They had proven their faith to the Lord and set an example for the world by preparing for the true destruction that they knew was still imminent.[29] In most of the other cases the role played by this rationalization is more implicit. It is more or less a constituent part of the decision of these groups to persevere in the face of adversity.

The third rationalization, attributing the failure of prophecy to human error (usually referring to the misunderstanding, miscalculation, or moral inadequacy of followers) is very common, especially in groups stemming from more traditional religious backgrounds. In the case of the Lubavitch, many members told Shaffir quite straightforwardly that the messiah "would have come, but we didn't merit it . . . if we merited it, things would have worked out differently."[30] In the eyes of many of the faithful the error was theirs in even thinking that they could discern the mysterious ways of God. Soon new interpretations of past events and the words of the Rebbe were circulating widely in the movement, all showing how the followers had failed to read the signs correctly.

The response of the leadership of the Jehovah's Witnesses to the failure of their 1975 prophecy as well as the response of the leader of the *Ichigen no Miya* was similar, though more harsh in nature. By a rather bizarre turn of logic, the leaders in each of these cases chose to place their followers in a kind of catch-22 by blaming them, after the fact, for having brought on the failure of prophecy by having believed in the prophecy too literally in the first place. In a speech to his followers, Motoki Isamu, the founder of the *Ichigen no Miya*, said,

> On 18 June at 8:30 A.M. God accepted the founder's life. Some people would speak of him as a living corpse, but God will make use of his spirit for ever . . . All of you are failures. Why? You thought that if God's prophecy did not materialize, you would be so scorned and slandered by people that you would fall into total ruin. So you looked with eagerness for a disaster to occur. That was your wish, but it was not the will of God. If you had the magnanimity to desire that everybody be saved, you could be content with slander or any

treatment you received. Above all else you should have prayed to God that everybody be saved without adversity . . . .[31]

In like manner, Singelenberg reports, the leadership of the Jehovah's Witnesses responded as follows:

"'Do you know why nothing happened in 1975?' Then, pointing at his audience, he shouted: 'It was because YOU expected something to happen.'" Thus said the Watchtower Society's president to Canadian Witnesses during a speech held in 1976. This attitude of non-responsibility of the leading members towards the Witnesses' frustrations caused by the prophecy failure was also exhibited in the Society's initial publications. As distinct from the probability of a coalescence of the first 6,000 years' termination of man's history with the beginning of the millennium, this expectation was now flatly denied. Doctrinal changes were called for. It turned out that Eve's creation was the weak link in the prophecy's starting-point: the 6,000 years should have been counted from that date on. The scriptures, however, were not decisive when that event took place, as opposed to the 1966 results of the Society's exegetic research. So it was impossible to construct a specific apocalyptic calendar. Failure had been expounded.[32]

Here, of course, we see the limitations of any typological approach, for the leadership of the Witnesses are blending two of the rationalizations I have distinguished to defend themselves against criticism. They are pointing to the role of human error, my third type of rationalization, as well as directing the blame at others, my fourth type of rationalization.

In the case of the Unarians, as studied by Tumminia, a similar blend of rationalizations is encountered. The UFOs could not or would not land as expected, we are told, because "our collective 'frequency vibration' is exceedingly low. Moreover, at [our] present level of consciousness, human beings 'put out' many negative emotions that create a bad climate for the reception of the Space Brothers."[33] More specifically, the Unarians were at pains to explain to Tumminia that the seeming failure of prophecy was the product of the erroneous reasoning of others, not themselves. Tumminia summarizes the situation as follows:

According to Unarius, errors in an outsider's understanding stem from their lack of competence in Unarian Science. Competent Unarians see no trouble with this puzzle of prophecy, while incompetent questioners, such as myself, flounder in interpretive errors. By identifying the sources of interpretive errors with logical incompetence, they explained away the charges of false prophecy. First of all, it was explained to me that there was no prophecy. The media called the event prophecy, not Unarius. Prophecy implies a prediction that could fail, and that is not what transpired, say Unarians. Uriel had a "reliving," not a prophecy. She relived the time when she was Isis. Furthermore, it was pointed out to me that Unarians do not say "prophecy" if they can help it; they

say "future viewing" or "seeing the future." Anyone using the term "prophecy" was suspect as lacking the capacity for logical discourse.[34]

Judging by the thirteen groups considered in the literature, directly blaming others (whether natural or supernatural beings or impersonal forces) for the obstruction of a prophecy is relatively rare. The only other similar instance I can think of is reported by Balch et al. when they note that one of the many subtle rationalizations used by the Baha'is Under the Provisions of the Covenant was to blame outsiders for misrepresenting their qualified and humanly fallible "predictions," based on Biblical interpretation, for absolute "prophecies" given by God.[35]

Such is not the case, however, with the third and final adaptational strategy, reaffirmation. Almost all of the groups employed this defense against dissonance, though some researchers seem to be attuned more to this fact than others.[36] In the face of the obvious social disruption attendant on prophetic failure, Melton suggests that many movements turn inward and "engage in processes of group building."[37] To illustrate his point he cites the case of the Millerites as they consolidated into the Adventist movement and the Church of the True Word as described by Hardyck and Braden. The leadership of the latter group never missed a beat. On the morning the group emerged from the bomb shelters a rousing collective service was held in which the seeming failure of prophecy was immediately cast in a new light as the followers were praised heartily for keeping the faith and admonished to keep preparing for the real apocalypse to come. Likewise, from the accounts of Shaffir and Dein, it is clear that the Lubavitch somewhat surprisingly took the physical death of their Rebbe as a challenge to proceed all the more zealously with their program of spiritual renewal and proselytization.[38] A week after his death, for example, a day-long public "teach-in" was held at their headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. On this and other occasions, Shaffir notes, speaker after speaker drove home the same message: despite the overwhelming grief felt by all, immediate action must be taken to obey the Rebbe's directives. His emissaries must turn their attention back to the most avid service of the salvific mission the Rebbe had so promisingly begun.[39] Similar patterns can be traced for the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unarians. But the fullest appreciation of the possible significance of these acts of reaffirmation is found in van Fossen's study of Rouxism[40] and in Palmer and Finn's discussion of the Institute for Applied Metaphysics (IAM). In the conclusion to their paper, Palmer and Finn make some welcome and insightful suggestions:

> When contemporary spiritual groups unexpectedly embark on the millenarian adventure, the leader appears to be responding to conflicts or "growing pains" within her or his community that require a radical reorganization—or a rebirth.

In such cases, the rite of apocalypse, ostensibly aimed at destroying the old order of the planet Earth, actually functions to bring about a new order within the cult or sect. When examined within the framework of the charismatic career of the leader-founder, or the group's changing relationship with its host society, the "acting out" of Endtime often appears to function as a collective rite of passage into a new group identity. When a loosely-knit group begins to band together in a commune, the apocalyptic ritual may be compared to Kanter's (1968) six commitment mechanisms operating simultaneously in full force.[41]

These observations help to explain the survival and transformation of the IAM in particular, and they are indicative of how I would like to see the analysis of the failure of prophecy recast in a broader framework of organizational processes as well (see below). I am less sanguine than Palmer and Finn, however, about the value of using this specific explanatory framework for most cases of prophetic failure. The same reservation applies to van Fossen's even more specific suggestion that religious groups must expand their organizational structure, become more hierarchical, and enlarge the cosmological identity of the group's leadership and its mission if it is to survive the failure of prophecy.[42] There are hints of a similar though more limited transformation occurring in the Japanese group studied by Takaaki.[43] In lieu, however, of additional studies that take this possible mode of adaptation into specific consideration, at this point it seems wiser to see this kind of transformative process as a particularly striking instance of the larger category of adaptations classified as reaffirmations. Some of what van Fossen says about the fate of Rouxism and Palmer and Finn's analysis of IAM are most helpful, though, in delineating the conditions influencing the nature and relative success of attempts to cope with the failure of prophecy.

CONDITIONS INFLUENCING ADAPTATIONAL STRATEGIES AND THEIR SUCCESS

Moving roughly from the most empirically substantiated to more speculative conditions, the current literature on prophetic failures suggests there are at least six conditions researchers should keep in mind when considering the effectiveness of adaptational strategies. These conditions are interrelated and overlap to some extent.

The first and most commonly addressed condition, from the classic study of Festinger et al. on, is the level of in-group social support present in the situation of prophetic failure. The push to proselytize, to rationalize, or to reaffirm will, more often than not, take the sting out a failure of prophecy if the need for and commitment to these strategies is shared by others. This condition figures prominently in the findings

of Festinger et al. for the Seekers, Hardyck and Braden for the Church of the True Word, Zygmunt and Singelenberg for the Jehovah's Witnesses, Takaaki for the *Ichigen no Miya*, van Fossen for the Rouxists, Palmer and Finn for the Institute of Applied Metaphysics, Shaffir and Dein for the Lubavitch, and Tumminia for the Unarians. To some extent, the larger the group in question, the better. The loss of some members and the continued dissent of others can be borne more effectively by a larger group. But in the end it does not seem to be so much the size as the solidarity or cohesiveness of the group that really matters. To some extent it is the sheer amount of intra-group social interaction that makes the difference. As indicated above, for example, the small gatherings of people awaiting the fulfillment of Winnifred Barton's prophecy were willing to act with little prompting on the cue provided, more or less spontaneously, by a few members to effect the complete spiritualization of her failed prediction.

A sub-aspect of this condition that several researchers have called some attention to is the need for clear lines of communication when the members of a group are geographically scattered.[44] Ideally, to survive the failure of prophecy a group should be united in one location, as with the Church of the True Word. Or, as in the case of the Lubavitch, they should be so intimately connected by whatever means possible to the hub of activity around the leader that the alienating effects of distance are mitigated. In the last years of the Rebbe, a great many Lubavitch lived with pagers to be ready at a moment's notice to receive the latest news of the messiah, or as happened, to fly to New York to participate in the Rebbe's funeral and the dawning of a new era. With some tenacity, the Lubavitch have sought to take advantage of all that technology can offer (e.g., the Internet[45]) to spread the word and to keep in close contact with their religious comrades worldwide. The three groups that suffered the most serious setbacks from the failure of their prophecies—the *Ichigen no Miya*, the Baha'is Under the Provision of the Covenant, and the Catholic extremists of the *Mission de l'Esprit Saint*—all failed to establish effective lines of communication amongst their often dispersed members, and this significantly undermined the solidarity of their groups at the moment of crisis.

This state of affairs best illustrates the second most obvious condition affecting the way a group will respond to the failure of prophecy as well: the role of leadership. Looking at the obverse situation, the three groups most successful in surviving the disconfirmation of their prophecies—that is, the Church of the True Word, Institute of Applied Metaphysics, and the Lubavitch—it is clear that the quick, confident, coordinated, and resourceful reaction of the leadership was crucial. Perhaps this should come as no surprise, for as Zygmunt observes astutely, "the processes involved in meeting prophetic failure and in sustaining millenarian dreams do not seem to be altogether different

from the processes mediating the generation and diffusion of prophecies in the first place."[46] Most particularly, it is the exceptional charisma of specific leaders that is instrumental to the birth of prophetic movements, and it is the abdication of that charisma that is fatal to these movements. If the leader appears to pause in confusion in the face of failure, as happened with Motoki Isamu of the *Ichigen no Miya*, Leland Jensen of the Baha'is Under the Provision of the Covenant, and Emmanuel Robitaille of the *Mission de l'Esprit Saint*, all may be lost. What is more, as Palmer and Finn suggest, the ability of a group to weather the storm of failure may be related to specific features of the charismatic authority in question. Barton, the leader of IAM, was the founder of a growing new movement and her charisma was on the rise, while Robitaille led an established group founded by his father. The charisma he exercised was derivative. It was the charisma of office and was associated with his priestly function. His apocalyptic vision was in some respects derivative as well. The prophecy was received from his father in a dream, and there is some reason to believe that his own authority within the group was waning at the time of this prophecy.[47]

Singelenberg's detailed analysis of the nature and consequences of the 1975 prophetic disconfirmation of the Jehovah's Witnesses presents an interesting test case of the role of leadership, one that falls between the extremes examined so far. The leaders of the church responded quite strongly, though not too quickly, to the failure of 1975. They chose, however, more or less to repudiate the prophecy, even though they had promoted it. They hid behind the vagueness of the prophecy's terms of reference, terms that may well have been kept vague as a safeguard against the possibility of failure. This definite yet compromised response prevented a full scale disaster, but it cost the church many members in the short run.[48]

The third most significant condition affecting the response to prophetic failure is the scope and sophistication of a group's ideological system.[49] If specific prophecies are anchored in a broader and more complex set of beliefs that frame a fairly comprehensive worldview, sense of mission, and collective identity, it is unlikely that specific disconfirmations will have a serious impact on the integrity of a group. In part this is simply because the movement will have the ideological resources at hand readily to formulate plausible rationalizations. The immediate failure can always be subsumed within a larger and more ingrained repertoire of millennial hopes and fears.[50] In analyzing specific cases, several researchers discuss how followers could persist in their faith if their beliefs were elaborate enough. Speaking of the Baha'is Under the Provision of the Covenant, Balch et al. say,

> . . . most believers had strong identities as BUPC that transcended their commitment to Doc's prediction. For them the faith offered both an all-

embracing theodicy and an eminently desirable plan for living. While most had been attracted to the faith by its apocalyptic orientation, they subsequently acquired a firm grounding in a coherent body of Baha'i teachings dating back over 100 years. As a result, Doc's followers were able to cope with disconfirmation by shifting the focus of their lives away from Doc and placing greater emphasis on the fundamentals of the BUPC faith.[51]

Singelenberg suggests that most of the losses experienced by the Dutch Jehovah's Witnesses he studied after the 1975 failure reflected the departure of people who had been attracted only recently to the faith by the prediction. Such people had yet to be properly socialized into the larger worldview and lifestyle of the Witnesses.[52]

In some ways this insight plays upon the obvious. But as Melton stressed more than a decade ago, it bears repeating, especially in the shadow of the third millennium,

> The belief that prophecy is the organizing or determining principle for millennial groups is common among media representatives, nonmillennial religious rivals, and scholars. In their eagerness to isolate what they see as a decisive or interesting fact, they ignore or pay only passing attention to the larger belief structure of the group and the role that structure plays in the life of believers. Unfulfilled millennial expectations failed to invalidate Apostolic Christianity, which gradually reinterpreted the apocalyptic elements of its emerging theology; similarly, unrealized expectations failed to invalidate the faith of other groups.[53]

As Melton and van Fossen stress, millennial groups are not really "organized around the prediction of some future events."[54] Festinger et al. were misguided in seeing prophecies in simply true or false terms. Prophecy in these groups is part of a denser continuum of cosmologically significant beliefs and activities that can embrace and contain contradictions.[55]

The fourth condition is the very nature of the prophecies made and the kinds of actions the prophecies inspire. Festinger et al. stipulate five conditions under which their theory of cognitive dissonance holds.[56] The third condition is that the prophecy in question must be sufficiently specific and focused on the real world to allow for its unequivocal refutation by events. Many of the later studies, however, voice the suspicion that groups have a better chance of surviving the failure of prophecy if the predictions in question are vaguely formulated.[57] Clearly vague prophecies are more readily rationalized, as exemplified by the spiritualization of Winnifred Barton's prophecy, with its convenient escape clause about changing the world "as we know it." Balch et al. point out that the leaders of the Baha'is Under the Provision of the Covenant began eventually to purposefully incorporate "disclaimers" about the reliability of their predictions into their prophecies.[58]

Singelenberg takes special note of the incongruity of the vague 1975 Witness prophecy in a group known for its inflexible and legalistic approach to doctrine. In line with James Beckford and James Penton, he speculates "that the '1975' prophecy [may have] been consciously formulated rather ambiguously in order to prevent massive falling away in case of disconfirmations."[59]

Similarly, it seems likely that the impact of a prophetic failure will be shaped by the kind of actions undertaken in service of that prophecy. Zygmunt, for example, suggests that different prophecies might be associated with different patterns of action, or combinations of actions. He identifies four possibilities: expressive, agitational, preparatory, and interventional actions.[60] Without delving into the details here, it is apparent that disappointment is likely to be greater in cases where more extreme actions have been elicited from followers. When bridges have been burned, through, for example, the sale of worldly belongings or withdrawal from society, the significance of the specific prophetic moment is heightened. Disconfirmation may then have a shattering effect on the individual. With appropriate social support and a resourceful leader, however, the heavy investment of followers in a movement may actually assure the successful navigation of disconfirmation. Likewise, elaborate preparatory actions may either exhaust the capacity of individuals and groups to persevere, or at least lead them to fail to act on future prophecies. The former seems to have been the case, in part, with the *Mission de l'Esprit Saint*, and the latter certainly was the case with the Baha'is Under the Provision of the Covenant.[61] The strain of engaging in agitation or interventions in the world also may lead to burn-out. These actions may galvanize the hostility of outsiders toward the group, leading to the ridicule of its beliefs and preparations. Intense ridicule may demoralize the group and hasten its disintegration. Contrarily, though, as Hardyck and Braden argue, groups faced with such ridicule may work all the harder to proselytize or simply to maintain solidarity to escape cognitive dissonance.[62] The bottom line is that we lack enough empirical case studies of appropriate specificity to make sound generalizations at this point. We can only stipulate the different possibilities that are all contingent on circumstances.

The fifth condition determining whether a group will outlive a prophetic failure is the role of ritual in framing the experience of prophecy and its failure. Palmer and Finn most intriguingly call attention to the fact that "waiting for the world's end is a symbolic act—'stylized,' 'intrinsically valued,' and 'authoritatively designated' like other rituals—and requires the presence of ritual actors and the organization of sacred space and time."[63] Like many other rituals, both the process of preparing for the apocalypse and the process of successfully rationalizing a prophetic failure can be used to purge old sins and purify believers, to

initiate them into a new identity and relationships, to induce a greatly heightened sense of excitement and purpose, or to create altered states of consciousness and ecstasy. Palmer and Finn postulate that the successful ritualization of "Endtime events" is essential to the survival of groups, pointing to the experience of the Institute of Applied Metaphysics.[64] A similar reading could be applied to the experience of the Church of the True Word, the Rouxists, and the Unarians. In fact the Unarians explicitly transformed a specific prediction of UFO landings into a repeatable "reliving" or "facing of the past" involving the creation and recurrent re-enactment or witnessing of a psychodrama about the "Isis-Osiris Cycle." Participation in this psychodrama, even merely as an informed spectator, is said to have a "healing" effect that confirms the "truth" of the prophecy. The spiritualization effected by the Unarians, that is, is enacted and embodied through ritual activities.[65]

Sixth and lastly, various organizational factors undoubtedly condition the adaptive strategies adopted by groups and their ability to cope with prophetic disconfirmation. Surprisingly, however, these factors have not been examined systematically. As Melton pointed out some time ago, "millennial groups vary widely in their thought worlds and lifestyles. Some are tightly structured, communally organized, and separatist; others are the opposite. Some are small, informal, and intimate while others are relatively large, well organized, and composed of members unacquainted with each other."[66] Are these differences significant factors? At this juncture, for lack of reliable evidence, we cannot say.[67]

Clearly more case studies are needed, and with the dawning of the third millennium sociologists may be provided with the opportunity to enrich the literature.[68] It is time, however, for these studies to proceed in a more focused and cumulative manner. Hopefully, this analytic ordering of the findings so far will facilitate the development of even more precise and systematically comparable insights into what happens when prophecy fails. To that end, however, my reading of the literature suggests that a broader theoretical reorientation is required.

FROM CRISES OF DISSONANCE TO DISSONANCE MANAGEMENT

As Zygmunt adeptly explains, the disconfirmation of a specific prophecy may threaten the success of a religious movement on a number of fronts:

> It may invalidate the charismatic status of the movement's leadership and thus contribute to group discoordination and the attrition of membership support. It may foster the rise of new leaders, whose competition with each other and

with existing leaders contributes to organizational fragmentation in the form of factionalism or schism. Insofar as the prophecies in question were derived from, or were linked to, a broader body of doctrine, their disconfirmation may undermine faith in the latter, thus precipitating more comprehensive ideological crises. Preparatory actions taken in anticipation of prophetic fulfillment may have depleted the resources of individual members and of the movement, leaving them in a stringent predicament. Agitational, preparatory, or interventional actions previously undertaken may have alienated other groups, who heap abuse and ridicule upon the movement for its delusions and rash behaviors. Discreditation of the movement in the eyes of marginal or potential supporters may seriously reduce the movement's recruiting ground and the effectiveness of its proselytization.[69]

As indicated, all of these things are possible. They may even seem likely. Yet the record of empirical investigations so far suggests that they rarely happen. Only one of the thirteen groups examined actually collapsed after the failure of a prophecy. In this case, as explained, it was the singular ineptness of the leadership that played the decisive role in the dissolution of the group. Several other groups did experience serious reversals in their fortunes after a prophetic failure. But in the first flush of disconfirmation neither the authority of the leaders, charismatic or otherwise, nor the ideology of the groups was challenged by the membership, even though their individual and collective resources had been depleted. When the leaders of these groups stumbled, however, and failed to provide rationalizations for the disconfirmations sufficiently soon after the experience of disillusionment, a true crisis was precipitated. In every other case, it could be said that the groups in question took the failure of prophecy more or less in stride. This suggests, as intimated by Zygmunt, van Fossen, and Palmer and Finn, that prophecies and their failures should be placed in the larger analytical context of the transformation and institutionalization of religious organizations.[70] More specifically, following the suggestion of Robert Prus, I think prophetic failures might best be seen as one dramatic instance of a more pervasive aspect of all religious life, if not life in all groups and organizations: the interactive and collective management of dissonance.[71]

Balch et al. describe how the Baha'is Under the Provision of the Covenant developed a "culture of dissonance-reduction" in the face of the repeated failure of their leaders' prophecies.[72] As Prus points out, religious believers, especially in the modern world, are apt to encounter a great deal of information that is inconsistent with their religious convictions. These people and their religious leaders must cope with this dissonance on a daily basis.[73] Studies by Mauss and Petersen, Dunford and Kunz, and Prus begin to demonstrate the myriad ways in which most religious groups and individuals can neutralize the dissonance pressing upon them.[74] Prus describes some of the ways in

which dissonance is managed in many regular and important aspects of religious life. Religious organizations learn how to cope with or defuse dissonance with regard to recruiting people, while individuals learn how to deal with dissonance in contemplating whether to join religious groups. Groups and individuals develop procedures for keeping and strengthening the faith of existing members through the neutralization of dissonance. Likewise they learn how to manage dissonance with regard to such things as choosing between and coordinating the diverse demands of a religious commitment. As with joining, individuals also call upon various dissonance management techniques in contemplating why and how they might leave a religion, while groups develop specific means of managing dissonance to help dissuade people from leaving. In each case, Prus argues, we will learn to appreciate just how pervasive these processes are in religious life if we heed a more fundamental insight too often neglected in the discussions of such seemingly dramatic events as prophetic failures:

> While the degree of importance attributed to a discrepancy is critical vis-à-vis dissonance-reduction motivation, the intensity of any dissonance is not an intrinsic quality of the discrepancy in question, but is a problematic and negotiable subjective assessment, reflecting one's cultural experiences, specific referent and contact [with] others, and immediate/anticipated interests. While dissonance provides a motivational impetus, persons may learn to tolerate or to accentuate it, with others influencing the extent to which dissonance is recognized and experienced, as well as the manner in which it is handled.[75]

The resilience displayed by religious groups in the face of prophetic failures suggests, as several commentators have argued, that the level of dissonance experienced by insiders is less than that imagined by outsiders, particularly social scientific researchers with their greater personal and professional commitment to logical consistency.[76] In the simple and poignant words of Snow and Machalek, "Unlike belief in science, many belief systems do not require consistent and frequent confirmatory evidence. Beliefs may withstand the pressure of disconfirming events not because of the effectiveness of dissonance-reducing strategies, but because disconfirming evidence may simply go unacknowledged."[77] In *When Prophecy Fails*, however, Festinger et al. stipulated, as a condition of the theory of cognitive dissonance, that the disconfirmation of a prophecy must be recognized forthrightly by believers. But how can we ever gauge if this kind of recognition really has happened? This is more than just another version of the metatheoretical problem of "other minds." It is not simply that we can never know fully the thoughts of others. Rather, we are returned to the basic question undergirding the debate about the failure of prophecy. In principle, if a group did fully recognize the failure of its prophecy, then why would the group persist in its beliefs? As in most cases, we

now know they do—whether they engage in more proselytizing or not. The very continuation of these groups, which in a sense provided the *raison d'être* for the formulation of the theory of cognitive dissonance, also implies the reverse state of affairs: real recognition has not occurred, and that is why the groups continue. As this analysis of the full range of case studies reveals, it does in fact seem that in these groups we are dealing with a significantly different standard of evidence than that applied by researchers. From their perspective there is ample "evidence" of impending doom in the abundant imperfections of this world, and every reason to keep seeking dramatic release from these imperfections in the ever receding yet open-ended promise of the future. In the face of this perplexing proclivity, we need more and more nuanced ethnographic accounts of the words, deeds, thoughts, and feelings of the men and women awaiting the end. Once again, more stories must be told, and with greater theoretical and empirical care, if we are to gain an adequate understanding of how and why faith does persist in the face of the repeated failure of prophecy.[78]

ENDNOTES

[1] Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956).

[2] Anthony B. van Fossen, "How Do Movements Survive Failures of Prophecy?" in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, eds. L. Kreisberg, B. Misztal, and J. Mucha (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1988), 194-96; Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 220; William Sims Bainbridge, *The Sociology of Religious Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 136-38.

[3] There are of course other discussions of this topic, but either they are not case studies of the failure of prophecy in specific groups or they are passing discussions of this issue in the context of larger studies of specific groups or other topics. For example, Roy Wallis has published a brief essay with the rather misleading title "Reflections on *When Prophecy Fails*" in his book *Salvation and Protest: Studies in Social and Religious Movements* (London: Frances Pinter, 1979), 44-50. This essay describes the group led by Mrs. Keech, contrasting its features with those of another UFO cult, the Aetherius Society. This is done, however, to highlight some points Wallis has made about the traits of cults. The issue of surviving the failure of prophecy plays no significant role in his reflections. All the same, through ignorance or oversight I may have failed to discuss some relevant and significant studies. Suggestions from readers of this article about such additional sources are welcome.

[4] J. Gordon Melton presented a paper on prophecies in the Church Universal and Triumphant at the 1998 meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, November 6-8, Montreal, Canada, entitled "Preparing for the Endtime: The Case of the Church Universal and Triumphant," but I have been unable to secure a copy.

[5] I am extending an approach first taken in Susan J. Palmer and Natalie Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada: Experiences of Endtime in *La Mission de l'Esprit Saint* and

the Institute of Applied Metaphysics," *Sociological Analysis* 53 (1992): 397-415. They specify three response patterns.

[6] See Festinger et al., *When Prophecy Fails*. The Seekers studied by Festinger et al. survived for some time. But, as Robert Balch has told me, Mrs. Keech (whose real name was Dorothy Martin) eventually moved to Sedona, Arizona, where she started another group under the name Sister Thedra.

[7] See, for example, Joseph F. Zygmunt, "Prophetic Failure and Chiliastic Identity: The Case of Jehovah's Witnesses," *American Journal of Sociology* 75 (1970): 926-48; J. Gordon Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation: What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails," *American Studies* 26 (1985): 17-29; William Shaffir, "Jewish Messianism Lubavitch-Style: An Interim Report," *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* 35 (1993): 115-28, "Interpreting Adversity: Dynamics of Commitment in a Messianic Redemption Campaign," *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* 36 (1994): 43-53, and "When Prophecy is Not Validated: Explaining the Unexpected in a Messianic Campaign," *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* 37 (1995): 119-136; Simon Dein, "Lubavitch: A Contemporary Messianic Movement," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 12 (1997): 191-204, and "When Prophecy Fails: Messianism Amongst the Lubavitch Hasids," in *The Coming Deliverer: Millennial Themes in World Religions*, eds. Fiona Bowie and Christopher Deacy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 238-60; Diana Tumminia, "How Prophecy Never Fails: Interpretive Reason in a Flying-Saucer Group," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 59 (1998): 157-70.

[8] See, for example, Bryan Wilson, "When Prophecy Failed," *New Society* 26 (1978): 183-84; Richard Singelenberg, "'It Separated the Wheat from the Chaff': The '1975' Prophecy and Its Impact among Dutch Jehovah's Witnesses," *Sociological Analysis* 50 (1988): 23-40; Rodney Stark and Laurence Iannaccone, "Why the Jehovah's Witnesses Grow So Rapidly: A Theoretical Application," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 12 (1997): 133-57; Robert W. Balch, John Domitrovich, Barbara Lynn Maknke, and Vanessa Morrison, "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy: Coping with Cognitive Dissonance in a Baha'i Sect," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem*, eds. Thomas Robbins and Susan Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 73-90.

[9] See, for example, Jane Allyn Hardyck and Marcia Braden, "Prophecy Fails Again: A Report of a Failure to Replicate," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 65 (1962): 136-41; Sanada Takaaki, "After Prophecy Fails: A Reappraisal of a Japanese Case," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 6 (1979): 217-37; Palmer and Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada"; and Stuart A. Wright, "Chen Tao: A Case Study in the Failure of Prophecy," a paper presented to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, November 6-8, 1998, in Montreal, Canada.

[10] See, for example, Robert W. Balch, Gwen Farnsworth, and Sue Wilkins, "When the Bombs Drop: Reactions to Disconfirmed Prophecy in a Millennial Sect," *Sociological Perspectives* 26 (1983): 137-58; Palmer and Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada."

[11] Many past attempts to test the conclusions of Festinger et al. have framed matters too simply by not adequately taking into consideration a diachronic view. Some groups, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, can be said to both confirm and disconfirm the theory of cognitive dissonance. It depends on when in the history of the group the question is asked. Joseph Zygmunt (1970) is impressed by the resilience of the Jehovah's Witnesses—their capacity to survive the repeated failure of prophecies and to continue proselytizing. Bryan Wilson (1978) expresses similar views. But Zygmunt expressed his views before the most recent failure of Jehovah's Witness prophecy in 1975. Moreover, like Wilson, who is writing in response to the 1975 disconfirmation, he lacks the best data with which to accurately assess the impact of this and previous prophetic failures on the movement. Writing with better information, Singelenberg (1988) is able to argue that proselytizing efforts underwent a marked and sustained decline following the 1975 disconfirmation despite the group's ability eventually to replace the members who left shortly after this fiasco. In other words, in the long run it would seem that the Jehovah's Witnesses might best be identified with the second response pattern noted above. They have outlived several prophetic failures and continued to grow. In the short run, however, there is

reason to favor the third pattern. They survived the failure of the 1975 prophecy, but their proselytizing declined sharply. Similar diachronic variations may affect the assessment of other groups, like, for example, the Baha'is Under the Provision of the Covenant as studied by Balch et al. in the early 1980s and then again in the late 1990s.

[12] See, for example, David Snow and Richard Machalek, "On the Presumed Fragility of Unconventional Beliefs," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 21 (1982): 15-26; Colin Campbell and Shirley McIver, "Cultural Supports for Contemporary Occultism," *Social Compass* 34 (1987): 41-60.

[13] See, for example, Franklyn W. Dunford and Phillip R. Kunz, "The Neutralization of Religious Dissonance," *Review of Religious Research* 15 (1973): 2-9; Robert C. Prus, "Religious Recruitment and the Management of Dissonance: A Sociological Perspective," *Sociological Inquiry* 46 (1976): 127-34.

[14] See, for example, Robert C. Prus, "Generic Social Processes: Maximizing Conceptual Development in Ethnographic Research," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 16 (1987): 250-93 and Robert C. Prus, *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 141-72.

[15] Joseph F. Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail: A Theoretical Perspective on the Comparative Evidence," *American Behavioral Scientist* 16 (1972): 245-67.

[16] Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail."

[17] Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation," 21.

[18] Wilson, "When Prophecy Failed," 184.

[19] See Palmer and Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada."

[20] Balch et al., "When the Bombs Drop."

[21] Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation," 21.

[22] Zygmunt, "Prophetic Failure and Chiliastic Identity"; Wilson, "When Prophecy Failed."

[23] Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation"; Balch et al., "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy"; Tumminia, "How Prophecy Never Fails."

[24] Shaffir, "When Prophecy is Not Validated"; Dein, "Lubavitch."

[25] Shaffir, "When Prophecy is Not Validated," 129; see Dein, "Lubavitch," 203 as well.

[26] Palmer and Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada," 406.

[27] Takaaki, "After Prophecy Fails," 227.

[28] See Wright, "Chen Tao," 12-14 for another illustration.

[29] Hardyck and Braden, "Prophecy Fails Again," 138-39.

[30] Shaffir, "When Prophecy is Not Validated," 127; also Dein, "Lubavitch," 203.

[31] Takaaki, "After Prophecy Fails," 224.

[32] M. James Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of the Jehovah's Witnesses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 100; Singelenberg, "'It Separated the Wheat from the Chaff,'" 34.

[33] Tumminia, "How Prophecy Never Fails," 168.

[34] Ibid., 165.

[35] Balch et al., "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy," 79-80.

[36] For example, Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation"; van Fossen, "How Do Movements Survive Failures of Prophecy?"; Palmer and Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada"; and Tumminia, "How Prophecy Never Fails."

[37] Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation," 25.

[38] Shaffir, "When Prophecy is Not Validated" and Dein, "Lubavitch."

[39] Shaffir, "When Prophecy is Not Validated," 128.

[40] van Fossen, "How Do Movements Survive Failures of Prophecy?"

[41] Palmer and Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada," 414.

[42] See van Fossen, "How Do Movements Survive Failures of Prophecy?" 201-04.

[43] Takaaki, "After Prophecy Fails," 227-28.

[44] For example, Festinger et al., *When Prophecy Fails*; Takaaki, "After Prophecy Fails"; Balch et al., "When the Bombs Drop"; Singelenberg, "'It Separated the Wheat from the Chaff'"; and Palmer and Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada."

[45] See the fascinating chapter on the Lubavitch use of the Internet in Jeffrey Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 8-26.

[46] Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail," 258.

[47] Palmer and Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada," 412-13; see also Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation," 28.

[48] Singelenberg, "'It Separated the Wheat from the Chaff.'"

[49] See Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail"; Balch et al., "When the Bombs Drop"; Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation"; Singelenberg, "'It Separated the Wheat from the Chaff'"; Shaffir, "When Prophecy is Not Validated"; and Dein, "Lubavitch."

[50] See Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail," 251.

[51] Balch et al., "When the Bombs Drop," 153.

[52] Singelenberg, "'It Separated the Wheat from the Chaff,'" 35-36.

[53] Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation," 19.

[54] Ibid.

[55] See van Fossen, "How Do Movements Survive Failures of Prophecy?" 196-97.

[56] These conditions are as follows (*When Prophecy Fails*, 4):

1. A belief must be held with deep conviction and it must have some relevance to action, that is, to what the believer does or how [they] behave.

2. The person holding the belief must have committed [themselves] to it; that is, for the sake of [their] belief, [they] must have taken some important action that is difficult to undo . . .

3. The belief must be sufficiently specific and sufficiently concerned with the real world so that events may unequivocally refute the belief.

4. Such undeniable disconfirmatory evidence must occur and must be recognized by the individual holding the belief.

5. The individual believer must have social support. It is unlikely that one isolated believer could withstand the kind of disconfirming evidence we have specified. If, however, the believer is a member of a group of convinced persons who can support one another, we would expect the belief to be maintained and the believers to attempt to proselytize or to persuade nonmembers that the belief is correct.

These conditions are important to an assessment of the theoretical value of the Festinger prediction. They can be used, however, to devise sensible explanations or excuses for why some religious groups either do not engage in increased proselytizing after the disconfirmation of their prophecy or disband altogether. In many cases it is a matter of interpretation whether any of these five conditions apply, let alone all of them. Obversely, it would be more accurate to say that even the studies claiming to have falsified the Festinger thesis, like Hardyck and Braden's study of the Church of the True Word, actually are just pointing to ways in which these five conditions need to be modified to make the theory work. The conditions set by Festinger et al. are better read as variable features of groups coping with prophetic failure that can combine in different ways with different results.

[57] See, for example, Hardyck and Braden, "Prophecy Fails Again"; Singelenberg, "'It Separated the Wheat from the Chaff'"; Palmer and Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada"; and Balch et al., "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy."

[58] Balch et al. , "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy," 82.

[59] Singelenberg, "'It Separated the Wheat from the Chaff,'" 35; James A. Beckford, *The Trumpet of Prophecy: A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), 220; James M. Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of the Jehovah's Witnesses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 95.

[60] Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail," 251-57.

[61] As indicated in Balch et al., "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy."

[62] Hardyck and Braden, "Prophecy Fails Again," 140-41.

[63] Palmer and Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada," 409.

[64] Ibid., 410.

[65] Tumminia, "How Prophecy Never Fails," 166-67.

[66] Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation," 28.

[67] Some systematic consideration of these issues can be found in van Fossen, "How Do Movements Survive Failures of Prophecy?"

[68] As reflected, for example, by Wright's study of the Chen Tao group. Another interesting possibility is presented by the Concerned Christians, a group who recently hit the headlines worldwide after leaving their homes in Denver, Colorado, to await the Second Coming of Christ in Jerusalem. The leader of the Concerned Christians, Monte Kim Miller, had prophesied Christ's return by the year 2000 after his own death and resurrection in Jerusalem. Fearing some violent actions, fourteen members were deported from Israel in January of 1999.

[69] Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail," 5.

[70] Ibid.; van Fossen, "How Do Movements Survive Failures of Prophecy?"; Palmer and Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada."

[71] See Prus, "Religious Recruitment and the Management of Dissonance" and Dunsford and Kunz, "The Neutralization of Religious Dissonance."

[72] Balch et al., "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy."

[73] Prus, "Religious Recruitment and the Management of Dissonance," 133.

[74] Armand Mauss and David Petersen, "The Cross and the Commune: An Interpretation of the Jesus People," in *Social Movements*, ed. R. Evans (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1973), 150-70; Dunford and Kunz, "The Neutralization of Religious Dissonance"; Prus, "Religious Recruitment and the Management of Dissonance."

[75] Prus, "Religious Recruitment and the Management of Dissonance," 127.

[76] For example, Snow and Machalek, "On the Presumed Fragility of Unconventional Beliefs"; Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation"; van Fossen, "How Do Movements Survive Failures of Prophecy?"; and Balch et al., "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy."

[77] Snow and Machalek, "On the Presumed Fragility of Unconventional Beliefs," 23.

[78] An additional article on the failure of prophecy has been published since this paper was accepted for publication: Chris Bader, "When Prophecy Passes Unnoticed: New Perspectives on Failed Prophecy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 1 (1999): 119-31. Bader seeks to apply two propositions derived from the "rational choice" theorizing of Rodney Stark, William Sims Bainbridge, Laurence Iannaccone, and Roger Finke to a handful of the case studies treated here and to his own observations of a UFO center. The results are promising, but as yet inconclusive. A comparative analysis of the results of our two papers could prove useful. On first appraisal, it appears that the wider sampling of the existing literature undertaken here points to some limitations in the applicability of Bader's propositions (at least as presently formulated). But his attempt theoretically to integrate the diffuse research has real merits and is to be applauded.

Defectors, Ordinary Leave-takers, and Apostates: A Quantitative Study of Former Members of New Acropolis in France

Massimo Introvigne

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EXIT NARRATIVES

A considerable amount of sociological literature exists on exit processes from social organizations in general.[1] A good number of these studies deal specifically with religious organizations[2] and, more particularly, with new religious movements.[3] An important part of this research is concerned with how exit roles are socially constructed. Starting from earlier methodology developed by David Bromley—and leaving aside less frequently occurring roles, such as whistle-blowers[4]—I shall use three ideal types of exit roles: defectors, ordinary leave-takers, and apostates.[5] My assumption is that different exit roles may co-exist among former members of the same organization (a possibility Bromley also mentions). These types identify the experience of an ex-member at a given moment in his or her personal history (an ordinary leave-taker may eventually become an apostate, and vice versa) and correspond to *socially constructed* roles. An exit narrative results from the dynamic interaction between the psychological and social experience of the person who leaves an organization and the environment. The latter is the social context in which the former member is situated and by which he or she is requested (with greater or lesser pressure) to give an account of his or her former affiliation. Although social-psychological explanations of exit role constructions have been attempted in the past,[6] there is no such a thing as a "pure," "photographic" narrative of an exit process. All such narratives are socially constructed, culturally conditioned, and politically negotiated.

Type I narratives characterize the exit process as defection. According to Bromley, "the defector role may be defined as one in

which an organizational participant negotiates exit primarily with organizational authorities, who grant permission for role relinquishment, control the exit process, and facilitate role transition. The jointly constructed narrative assigns primary moral responsibility for role performance problems to the departing member and interprets organizational permission as commitment to extraordinary moral standards and preservation of public trust."[7] The ultimate responsibility for leaving the organization is attributed solely to the exiting member. The latter accepts that he or she was simply not able to conform to the standards required by the organization. The exiting member had tried to merge into the organization but failed because of personal difficulties. The organization and the former member negotiate an exiting process aimed at minimizing the damage for both parties. It is expected that the former member expresses a certain amount of regret for not having been able to remain in an organization he or she still regards as benevolent and highly moral.

Type II narratives—ordinary leave-taking—are both the most common and the least often discussed. In fact, participants exit a wide variety of organizations every day, and little is heard about the actual exit processes unless they are contested in some way. Noncontested exit processes involve a minimal degree of negotiation between the exiting member, the organization he or she intends to leave, and the environment or society at large. In fact, contemporary society offers a readily available narrative of how a person, in what has become the normal process of moving from one social "home" to another in different fields, simply loses interest, loyalty, and commitment to an old experience and proceeds to a new one. In this sense, the usual narrative implies that the ordinary leave-taker holds no strong feelings concerning the past experience. Since loyalty towards it has diminished, and the organization was ultimately exited, the leave-taker's narrative will normally include some comments on the organization's more negative features or shortcomings. The ordinary leave-taker, however, may also recognize that there was something positive in the experience. In fact, ordinary leave-taking is not normally seen as requiring any particular justification, and there will be no deep probing into the causes and responsibilities behind the exit process.

Type III narratives define the role of the apostate. In this case, the ex-member dramatically reverses his or her loyalties and becomes a professional enemy of the organization he or she has left. "The narrative," in Bromley's terms, "is one which documents the quintessentially evil essence of the apostate's former organization chronicled through the apostate's personal experience of capture and ultimate escape/rescue."[8] The former organization could easily label the apostate a traitor. However, the apostate—particularly after having joined an oppositional coalition fighting the organization—often claims

that he or she was a "victim" or a "prisoner" who did not join voluntarily. This, of course, implies that the organization itself was the embodiment of an extraordinary evil. Having been socialized into an oppositional coalition, the apostate finds a number of theoretical tools (including powerful brainwashing metaphors) ready for use which help to explain precisely *why* the organization is evil and able to deprive its members of their free will.

It is normally assumed that the more controversial a religious organization is, the higher the number of apostates there will be. Conversely, highly respected organizations will produce more defectors and fewer apostates. Comparisons should preferably be made between voluntary associations a person freely *joins* rather than between denominations or churches within which he or she was *born*. There are, however, several voluntary associations within the mainline churches, such as religious orders, lay movements, and even the Roman Catholic priesthood in general. Although extremely vocal apostates exist among former Catholic priests and nuns, many of those leaving the priesthood or religious orders would rather blame themselves for their failure to meet the Church's standards. Accordingly, they will often reconstruct their experiences through Type I (defector) narratives. This happens, we are told by Ebaugh and others, because the Roman Catholic Church is a powerful (although, of course, not unchallenged) organization.[9] It is thus able, more often than not, to negotiate damage-controlling narratives with exiting members. By contrast, organizations perceived as subversive—including most new religious movements—are typically less able to negotiate damage-controlling narratives with exiting members, thus generating more apostates and fewer defectors. This theoretical expectation seems eminently reasonable on the surface, but is not entirely confirmed by empirical research. New religious movements are normally perceived as subversive, and they tend to generate extremely vocal apostates. Current research, however, seems to suggest that apostates may represent but a minority segment of former members of even the most controversial new religious movements.[10] A large majority of former members can be classified as ordinary leave-takers, and some of them even as defectors.[11]

A distinction may be established here between *visible* and *invisible* former members. Most former members are *invisible* insofar as they do not care to discuss their former affiliation. In fact, their very existence can often only be discovered through quantitative research that is able to access a group's membership records. They are even less likely to be available for qualitative sociological work, although this should not be ruled out entirely. *Visible* former members are primarily apostates, and the oppositional coalitions they have since joined make every effort to assure their visibility. In a much smaller proportion, defectors may also become visible and can occasionally be mobilized by those organizations

attacked by the apostates. They may also spontaneously come out of their social closet to defend their former organization as being unfairly criticized or misrepresented. This means that, although apostates (and defectors) may constitute only a minority of former members of several organizations, no matter how controversial, they may well constitute the majority of *visible* ex-members. This is a risk run also by mainline and relatively noncontroversial organizations. Vocal apostate ex-priests are much more visible than the quiet majority of former priests who prefer not to go public with their defector-type narratives. The almost exclusive visibility of apostates may also become the rule for controversial organizations such as some new religious movements.

FORMER MEMBERS OF NEW ACROPOLIS IN FRANCE

New Acropolis

New Acropolis is commonly labeled as a "cult" by the anti-cult movement and was listed as such in a 1996 French parliamentary report. It emphatically denies being in any way a religious movement, however, and prefers to be regarded as a school of philosophy. While it is outside of the purposes of this paper to reconstruct the history and the ideas of New Acropolis, some general information is offered to provide a useful context for what follows.[12]

Founded in Argentina in 1957 by Jorge A. Livraga Rizzi (1930–1991), New Acropolis is a post-theosophical movement, combining ideas of the Theosophical Society with other sources. In the 1970s, it expanded into Europe and in 1974 was established in France by Fernand Schwarz, an archaeologist. In 1997, the movement claimed some 20,000 members worldwide. It is currently headquartered in Brussels, and its international president is Delia Steinberg Guzman. In accordance with the larger theosophical tradition, New Acropolis accepts the idea of a universal "philosophy" or "Tradition," the existence of which is presupposed behind the world's different religious and esoteric traditions. However, compared with the Theosophical Society, New Acropolis emphasizes Western rather than Eastern esotericism (although Eastern references are occasionally included) and focuses particularly on Greek philosophy in the tradition of Pythagoras and Plato.

The stated aim of New Acropolis is to help each member reach his or her Higher Self and to reclaim a higher consciousness that, while normally dormant, is preserved in the esoteric schools and accessible through symbols, the active use of imagination, the study of one's own

dreams, and other techniques. The Higher Self, in turn, is a gateway to the Cosmic or Universal Self, described as a collective archetypal reality. When an adequate number of human beings achieve that Higher Self, the Universal Self may emerge as a collective consciousness and may have important social and political implications. Although the society inspired by the collective consciousness of the archetypal Universal Self has been described in different ways throughout the history of the movement, it is certainly different from modern democracy. Indeed, the founder's criticism of contemporary democracy (quoting Plato and other authors) is often offered by critics of New Acropolis as evidence of the movement's "reactionary" or "fascist" political attitude, although other texts by Livraga and his successors unequivocally condemn Nazism, Fascism, and, more recently, the National Front in France.[13] The use by New Acropolis of allegedly paramilitary language, symbols, and forms of organization has also been criticized in much the same vein. More recently, brainwashing charges have been added, particularly within the framework of the new European cult scares following the suicides and homicides of a number of members of the Order of the Solar Temple in 1994, 1995, and 1997. New Acropolis has thus become particularly controversial in some European countries, including France, a country in which widespread fear of "cults" (*sectes*, in French) and right-wing extremism are often part of the same rhetoric. These controversies—and the role of apostates in them—made New Acropolis in France a promising subject for a quantitative case study of former members.

The Research

Another reason why the French branch of New Acropolis seemed a promising movement for a quantitative investigation of former members is that, as mentioned earlier, it does not claim to be a religious organization as such. It neither requests nor receives any tax benefit associated with the status of religious congregation. Under French law, it is obliged to keep complete and accurate records of the annual fees paid by its members. In the wake of recent public controversies, it became the subject of an in-depth tax investigation concluded in 1989 which ultimately judged in its favor. In 1997, the French leadership of New Acropolis accepted a proposal by CESNUR (the Center for Studies on New Religions, whose managing director is the undersigned) to conduct a quantitative survey of members who had left the association in France between January 1986 and April 1997.[14] Under the agreement reached between CESNUR and the French branch of New Acropolis, we were given access to membership records for the previous ten years which indicated how many members had stopped paying their yearly

fees after the year 1986. A CESNUR team verified all New Acropolis records. We found no evidence that records had been tampered with, and any such tampering would indeed have been extremely dangerous for New Acropolis given the not exactly benevolent attention paid by French tax officers to groups listed in the 1996 parliamentary report as "cults."[15] We recognized the names of a couple of its more prominent apostates who had gone public with their criticism of New Acropolis, but most names meant nothing to us. Labels were affixed to the envelopes enclosing the questionnaire, and no copies of them were kept by CESNUR. We had to dispatch a second limited number of questionnaires, which had come back with no clear indication that the address was hopelessly wrong, but under the agreement we had with New Acropolis all the envelopes including names of the senders were destroyed. We had, at any rate, recommended that answers be sent anonymously, and most were.

A discussion of what a "member" of New Acropolis in France exactly is seems, at this stage, in order. The by-laws distinguish between six different membership categories. Categories I, II, and III include, respectively, the two founders in France (Mr. Schwarz and Ms. Winckler), honorary members, and supporters who are not part of the association but contribute to it financially or otherwise. Category V includes the core members of the association who have followed at least a first degree course, have requested recognition as full members, and participate in the activities of the New Acropolis' Center for Philosophical Formation. Category IV includes members of Category V occupying national leadership positions. Category VI includes members of what is called the Cultural Center of New Acropolis. They pay a small yearly fee and receive various publications as well as reduced rates for attendance at conferences organized by the association. These people are not members of the Center for Philosophical Formation (the real core of the association) but only of the Cultural Center. They have limited contacts with the association and can not be regarded as members of the corresponding social movement in any usual sociological sense.

The members of the Cultural Center numbered around 2,000 in 1991, and the figure was roughly the same in 1997. The members of the Center for Philosophical Formation (we refer to them as members of New Acropolis in France belonging to Categories IV and V) numbered 701 in 1986, 710 in 1991, and 260 as of 30 April 1997. It appears, therefore, that New Acropolis lost almost two thirds of its membership in France between the years 1991 and 1997. In view of the fact that new members have joined in the meantime, the number of leave-takers is higher than 450. Our examination of the records showed 530 leave-takers (i.e. former members who had ceased their annual fee payment) between January 1986 and April 1997. Questionnaires were sent to all these 530 leave-takers, although an obvious problem was that the

association did not keep track of their changes of address once they had left. In fact, of the 530 questionnaires sent, 236 were later returned with "transferred" or similar indications on them (in some cases, Post Office comments were ambiguous, and we tried a second mailing with prepaid notices of receipt). Of the 294 addressees who presumably received the questionnaires, 120 replied (although two replies were very incomplete). This means that 40.8% of the questionnaires received were completed and returned, yielding a 22.6% response rate out of the total population of former members, a respectable result in terms of quantitative research.

An important question is whether or not those who did not respond might systematically differ in attitude from those who did. Similar problems obviously affect any research conducted by means of a mailed questionnaire, rendering their results always to some extent tentative. In this case, however, one may specifically ask whether, in the heated climate of the current French cult wars, apostates may have been less likely than other ex-members to return a questionnaire to CESNUR. It is true that CESNUR has been criticized by anti-cultists in France as an association of "cult apologists" and that the anti-cult milieu is extremely suspicious of scholars in general. On the other hand, it is also true that apostates are more eager than other ex-members to make their voices heard and to engage in fierce debates with scholars.[16] The latter circumstance may possibly balance the former.

The Questionnaire

Questionnaires are, in turn, socially constructed tools culturally conditioned by the status of the research and by the different biases of the scholars involved.[17] They are aimed at proposing falsifiable conjectures, "models," or "figures," which presuppose the relationship with empirical reality to be one of analogy, rather than one of transparent "truth."

I present in this paragraph some relevant answers from the questionnaire.[18] Questions 13 to 17 requested demographic and general information (sex, age, religion, profession, and marital status). The first and second questions asked how long each respondent had been a member of New Acropolis and when he or she had left. Questions 3 to 12 requested an evaluation of life within New Acropolis, the reasons for leaving it, and an opinion on the most common criticism (including political) of the group.

The sample appears to be equally divided among male and female respondents. The age group most represented (42.5%) is 30 to 40 years, followed by 40 to 50 years (28.3%). Younger former members appear to be comparatively rare (nobody under 18 years and only 2.5% in the

18-25 years group). 57.1% of the respondents indicated their religion as "Catholic" (the questionnaire did not ask whether they were *active* Catholics), and 25.2% declared themselves to be "nonreligious." A variety of professions, mostly middle-class, is represented in the sample. Lawyers, doctors, and business consultants prevail (14.3%), followed by professors and schoolteachers (9.2%). A significant minority is unemployed (8.4%). A majority of the respondents (57.1%) is unmarried.

Most respondents remained in New Acropolis for more than three years (31. 7%), with only 2.5% leaving within less than six months of their joining it. In terms of their leaving New Acropolis, the largest group had left more than three years previously (48.7%). Bearing in mind that several members who left three or more years ago probably have not been reached since their address has changed, this percentage could be even more significant.

Respondents were evenly distributed between those who regarded their former engagement in New Acropolis as "very important" (24.2%), "important" (39.2%), and "not particularly important" (35%). 74.8% have internalized—and still maintain—the self-definition of New Acropolis as "a philosophy"; 19.3% regard it as a "cultural association"; only 3.4% define it as "a religion"; and even fewer (2.5%) view it as "a political organization." In terms of the "main" reason for quitting, a large majority (65%) indicated (selecting among a range of eight possible replies, plus "other") that the experience, "while interesting, had lasted long enough." The second largest group (10.2%) mentioned negative changes in the internal climate of the association, and 8.5% simply stated that they had moved (presumably to a city where there was no New Acropolis center). "Ideological" reasons for quitting were mentioned by smaller percentages: 7.6% indicated that they have changed to "another movement, or group, or church" or that they "no longer believed in the doctrines." Another 6.8% had been influenced by media hostility, and 1.7% by the negative judgments of relatives and friends.

An important question is whether or not anti-cult movements had played a role in the decision to leave New Acropolis. In this context, 7.5% mentioned ADFI (Association for the Defense of the Families and the Individual, the largest French anti-cult movement). No one in our sample mentioned CCMM (Center Against Mental Manipulations, the second largest French anti-cult movement), whilst 0.8% referred to other unspecified anti-cult organizations.

Another important item was the present opinion of respondents about New Acropolis. Respondents were offered a choice between five possible answers: "It is a dangerous cult"; "It is probably my way, I regret having left it"; "It is an interesting way, but it is not my way"; "It is not very interesting"; "It is an association spreading false ideas." The answer

"It is probably my way, I regret having left it" identifies the classical defector, and a total of 18% of the respondents gave this answer. A large proportion, however, answered that "it is an interesting way, but it is not my way" (67.4%), and 2.6% regarded New Acropolis as "not very interesting." The apostate-type answers (an association "spreading false ideas" [1.7%] and "a dangerous cult" [10.3%]) reflect a sizable minority of the respondents. Another question asked whether New Acropolis exerted "excessive pressure" on them, with four options offered. 68.3% replied that they felt "they have always been free" (option 1), and another 21.7% also answered in the negative, conceding nonetheless that the association was "strict" (option 2). A further 6.7% accused New Acropolis of "brainwashing" practices (option 3) and 2.5% of "fraud" (option 4). A parallel question concerned money (three options). 85.8% did not regret money spent during their time with New Acropolis (option 1). 6.7% regretted having spent money in the interests of the association (option 2), and 5% felt the money had been "stolen by fraudulent means" (option 3).

We also included two questions about politics. One asked the reaction of each respondent when he or she had heard New Acropolis accused of being a "nazi," "fascist," or "extremist right-wing" movement (three options were offered). 77.1% of the respondents regarded these accusations as "false and a libel" (option 1), and 5.1% as "true" (option 2). A total of 14.4% selected option 3, i.e. that New Acropolis is a "right-wing movement, but neither nazi nor fascist." Answers to the second political question (with only "yes" or "no" offered as options) indicated that 7. 6% also felt that New Acropolis was guilty of propagating a "racist" ideology.

We compared the responses of those who attributed a role to the anti-cult movements in their decision to leave New Acropolis to the general sample. The majority of those influenced by anti-cult movements in general (the "anti-cult" sample) regarded their former engagement in New Acropolis as important (60%). Some of them are now persuaded that New Acropolis (according to the usual anti-cult version) is in fact a religion (20%, compared to 3.4% in the general sample), whilst half of them still regard it as a "philosophy." Those who have been in touch with the anti-cult movements are also more likely (30%) to have been influenced by the hostile media. They generally regard New Acropolis as "a dangerous cult" (90%) and attribute their own persistence within it to the use of "brainwashing" techniques (80%). They are also more likely to regard its leaders as "intolerant" (70%) and to claim that their money was stolen from them fraudulently (50%). No less than 30% of those who had had significant contacts with an anti-cult movement regarded the "extremist right-wing," "nazi," or "fascist" labels attached to New Acropolis as "true" (although 50% of them still preferred to regard the movement as "right-wing but neither nazi nor fascist"). A

total of 70% of the "anti-cult" subgroup also regarded New Acropolis' ideology as "racist." The principal difference in demographic terms is that 70% of the anti-cult sample respondents (compared to 35.3% of the general sample) were married. Table 1 compares a number of answers given to different questions by the total sample (T; n=120) and by those respondents (8.3% of T) who had stated that an anti-cult movement had played a key role in their decision to leave New Acropolis (AC).

TABLE 1

Total and "Anti-Cult" Samples Compared

	T	AC
New Acropolis as religion	3.4	20
Influence by hostile media	6.8	30
NA regarded as "dangerous cult"	10.3	90
Brainwashing used by NA	6.7	80
Leaders of NA as intolerant	7.6	70
Money stolen by fraud	5	50
NA as extremist, nazi, or fascist	5.1	30
NA as racist	7.6	70
Respondent married	35.3	70

Note: Each row refers to a different possible answer to a different question. For example, the first row identifies what percentage of the total sample gave "a religion" in answer to the question about the nature of New Acropolis (96.6 % gave answers different from "a religion," or no answer, to that question), as opposed to what percentage of the anti-cult sample indicated "a religion" in reply to the same question (80% in the anti-cult sample gave answers other than "a religion," or no answer, to that question). For this reason percentages do not add up.

Table 1 shows the relationship between the former members' perception of New Acropolis and their socialization process into an anti-cult movement. Theories of brainwashing often rely on the "consistency" of apostate accounts, and they regard as highly significant that "a great many individuals independently report similar accounts of disenchantment."[19] The research suggests that, in some cases at least, the situation may actually be more ambiguous. Similar accounts may simply be the effect of a comparable exposure to a pre-existing anti-cult milieu. On the other hand, ex-members with a particularly negative view of their former movement may be more likely to associate with an anti-cult movement.

We cross-tabulated some answers according to a preliminary classification of the respondents on the basis of the three identities presupposed by our study, i.e. the ordinary leave-taker, the defector, and the apostate. Once again, this classification represents a definition rather than a "discovery" of some unquestionable "truth." Such definitions may be useful, however, in generating additional falsifiable conjectures. We have considered as *defectors* those who replied to question 7 that New Acropolis "is probably my way, I regret having left it" and who, at the same time, do not feel that New Acropolis exerted "excessive pressure" on them. We have classified as *apostates* (1) those who regard New Acropolis as "a dangerous cult" or "an association spreading false ideas"; and/or (2) those who accuse New Acropolis of "brainwashing" or of fraud. Respondents who do not qualify as defectors or apostates have been classified as *ordinary leave-takers*. Results are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Defectors, Ordinary Leave-takers, and Apostates

	(numbers)	(percentages)
Ordinary leave-takers	86	71.6
Defectors	20	16.7
Apostates	14	11.7

Cross-tabulations reveal no highly significant results in terms of time spent in New Acropolis, when the movement was left, and demographics.

On the other hand, apostates are less frequent (6.9%) and defectors more frequent (31%) among those who regarded their former engagement in New Acropolis as "very important." Apostates represent 75% of the total number of respondents who categorize New Acropolis as "a religion." However, 42.9% of the apostates still look on New Acropolis as a philosophy. Not surprisingly, 88.9% of those attributing a role to ADFI in their decision to leave New Acropolis have become apostates. The great majority of apostates, however, are still reluctant to identify New Acropolis as "fascist" or "nazi." A large proportion of them (46.1%) prefers to view it as a right-wing movement, but neither nazi nor fascist. It is *only* apostates who accuse New Acropolis of spreading racism.

TABLE 3

New Acropolis' Political Perception among Former Members (percentage)

	Total Sample	Ordinary Leave-takers	Defectors	Apostates
Accusations generally unfair	77.1	82.1	100	15.4
Right-wing, but neither nazi nor fascist	14.4	13.1	0	46.1
Accusations True: NA as extremist, nazi, or fascist	5.1	1.2	0	38.5
No Answer	3.4	3.6	0	0

Note: Rows indicate answers to a single question (multiple responses were not permitted). The "no answer" subgroup has been included so that columns add up to 100.

CONCLUSIONS

Although, in order to be complete, a study of former members of New Acropolis in France should also include a significant amount of qualitative research in the form of case histories of individual ex-members, the importance of quantitative research in this field should not be underestimated. In fact, when it comes to new religious movements in general, some anti-cult authors oppose the approach of social scientists and the experiential truth of ex-members, the latter being allegedly closed to social analysis. This is, obviously, a misunderstanding, because the positions and experiences of ex-members are open to both qualitative and quantitative social analysis. Quantitative analysis would seem to be particularly appropriate in assessing whether the individual experience of a given ex-member is representative of a larger group. In this respect, the results of this study, although by no means definitive, may nonetheless be useful in raising further questions and promoting further research.

1. The present study suggests that Type II (Ordinary Leave-taker) narratives may prevail among exiting members of even a controversial social organization such as New Acropolis. The common presupposition that apostates are likely to be more prevalent in highly controversial organizations may not, in itself, be untrue; it does not necessarily mean, however, that apostates constitute the greater number of members exiting from such groups. There is little doubt that New Acropolis in France is an extremely controversial organization. Irrespective of whether or not the accusations are true, for a sizable number of French media New Acropolis embodies two of the most widespread current subversion fears: the fear of the *sectes* (cults) and the fear of right-wing extremism. Controversies notwithstanding, our research suggests that the majority of members exiting from New Acropolis are ordinary leave-takers who, whilst they have mixed feelings about New Acropolis, still regard their past experience as not entirely negative. These ex-members remain largely invisible and do not usually talk to the media. The fact that ordinary leave-takers and uncontested exit processes prevail even within such a highly controversial organization as New Acropolis is not really so surprising. After all, those repelled by the very ideas of groups such as New Acropolis would not join them in the first place.

2. It is possible that defectors—i.e., former members who actually *regret* having left the organization—are less evident among members exiting a minority controversial group such as New Acropolis than among those leaving a voluntary association within a more mainline organization such as a Catholic religious order. However, even in a group like New Acropolis, the percentage of defectors (16.7%) is not insignificant and there are, in fact, more defectors than apostates.

3. The percentage of apostates among former members of New Acropolis (11.7%) should also not be overlooked. Again, further research on this point is needed. It is, however, not improbable that apostasy is more prevalent among former members of New Acropolis than among ex-members of less controversial social and religious organizations. Examples of the latter may include the Roman Catholic priesthood and perhaps even some of the new religious movements subjected to less extreme forms of criticism. The hypothesis that apostates may, however, constitute a minority among ex-members of even very controversial movements—a possibility emerging from previous research on a variety of groups—appears to be supported by this study.

4. A quantitative study may not adequately answer the question of why some exiting members become apostates rather than ordinary leave-takers or defectors. One point, however, emerges unambiguously from our results and confirms other similar studies (such as those by Lewis and Solomon). An overwhelming majority of the apostates have apparently had contact with an oppositional coalition of some kind, in this case an anti-cult movement (in France, mostly ADFI). Large numbers (88%) of those who have left New Acropolis after contact with an anti-cult movement have since become apostates. Conversely, *all* apostates have had some contact at some time with one of the anti-cult movements. Most (88. 9%) of those who regard New Acropolis as a "dangerous cult" have also had contact with an anti-cult movement, and 80% of the respondents who had been in touch with such a movement explained their sustained allegiance to New Acropolis on the basis of its use of brainwashing techniques. Words like "dangerous cult" and "brainwashing" were selected almost exclusively in the questionnaire by respondents who had been in contact with an anti-cult movement. As mentioned earlier, it may also be true that ex-members whose assessments of New Acropolis were negative were more likely to seek contact with an anti-cult movement. On the other hand, once socialized into the anti-cult subculture, former members not only became apostates but also found a number of interpretive tools (primarily the brainwashing model) that would ultimately shape the narrative of their experience within the movement. Conversely, those who *had not* been exposed to the anti-cult model rarely, if ever, used the "cult" narrative. Most apostates may thus be described as exiting members who apparently sought or had contact with anti-cult movements and were socialized into their peculiar subculture.

5. In general, former members—be they ordinary leave-takers, defectors, or apostates—strongly resisted the idea that New Acropolis is a "nazi," "fascist," or "racist" movement. In contemporary French society, these labels are so unacceptable that not even in the interests of constructing a credible apostate narrative is it easy to admit having

supported such subversive ideas. On the other hand, apostates and those who have been socialized into the anti-cult subculture are clearly much more likely to view New Acropolis as a "fascist," "nazi," or "racist" organization, although it should also be said that a significant number of them disapprove of these labels.

6. It is interesting to note that 75% of those who regarded New Acropolis as a "religion" were apostates. This is consistent with the anti-cult narrative, which describes New Acropolis as a religious (or pseudo-religious) cult. Defectors, ordinary leave-takers, and even some apostates still believe that the movement is what it claims to be, i.e. a school of philosophy, or a cultural association.

7. As we mentioned earlier, New Acropolis lost almost two thirds of its core members (or members of the Center for Philosophical Formation) between the years of 1991 and 1997. Its leadership has occasionally blamed the campaigns of the anti-cult movement that, as far as New Acropolis is concerned, became particularly vociferous from March 1991 onwards. However, as previous research on new religious movements indicates, similar claims, by both the anti-cultists and the "cults" themselves, may be exaggerated. The activities of the anti-cult movement and the reports in the media influenced by it are but two of several factors which determine why and how many members decide to leave a controversial movement. In fact, less than 8% of our sample were of the opinion that either hostile media reports or the anti-cult movements were important factors in their resolve to leave New Acropolis. *Internal* factors seem to have played a much more important role in this disaffiliation process. On the other hand, external factors and the anti-cult movements themselves may be more relevant in explaining why fewer *new* members have been attracted to groups such as New Acropolis in the last few years.[20] Media and anti-cult criticism, thus, appear to have influenced the membership decline by making the movement less attractive to would-be followers, rather than by directly provoking a significant number of disaffiliations.

ENDNOTES

[1] See, for example, Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); Frances DellaCava, "The Process of Leaving a High Commitment Status," *Sociological Enquiry* 45 (1975): 41-50; J. Keith Murnigan, "Defectors, Vulnerability, and Relative Power: Some Causes and Effects of Leaving a Stable Coalition," *Human Relations* 34 (1981): 589-609; Helen Rose Ebaugh, *Becoming an Ex: The Process of Role Exit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[2] See, among others, Roger Jehenson, "The Dynamics of Role Leaving: A Role Theoretical Approach to the Leaving of Religious Organizations," *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science* 5 (1969): 287-308; David G. Bromley, ed., *Falling from the Faith* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1988); David G. Bromley, ed., *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998).

[3] See Janet Jacobs, *Divine Disenchantment: Deconverting from New Religions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Trudy Solomon, "Integrating the Moonie Experience: A Survey of Ex-Members of the Unification Church," in *In Gods We Trust: New Patterns of Religious Pluralism in America*, eds. Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony (Princeton: Rutgers University Press, 1981), 275-94; James R. Lewis, "Reconstructing the 'Cult' Experience," *Sociological Analysis* 47, no. 2 (1986): 151-59; James R. Lewis, "Apostates and the Legitimation of Repression: Some Historical and Empirical Perspectives on the Cult Controversy," *Sociological Analysis* 49, no. 4 (1989): 386-96; Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Law, Social Science, and the 'Brainwashing' Exception to the First Amendment," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 10 (1992): 5-30.

[4] A whistle-blower is commonly defined as a member of an organization who advises an external regulatory agency (e.g. the police) of real or alleged wrongdoings taking place in his or her organization.

[5] This is a modified typology with respect to David G. Bromley, "The Social Construction of Contested Exit Roles: Defectors, Whistle-blowers, and Apostates," in Bromley, *The Politics of Religious Apostasy*, 19-48. While largely relying on Bromley's seminal study, I would like to focus more on the role of ordinary leave-takers. I am also largely indebted to Bromley's chapter for a number of invaluable bibliographical leads.

[6] See Lewis Coser, "The Age of the Informer," *Dissent* 1 (1954): 249-54.

[7] Bromley, "The Social Construction of Contested Exit Roles," 28.

[8] Ibid., 36.

[9] Ebaugh, *Becoming an Ex.*

[10] See Solomon, "Integrating the Moonie Experience"; Lewis, "Reconstructing the 'Cult' Experience"; Lewis, "Apostates and the Legitimation of Repression."

[11] In addition to Solomon and Lewis see Stuart Wright, "Post-Involvement Attitudes of Voluntary Defectors from Controversial New Religious Movements," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 23 (1984): 172-82; Jacobs, *Divine Disenchantment*; Bromley, *Falling from the Faith.*

[12] For a scholarly assessment see Antoine Faivre, "Nouvelle Acropole en France," in *Pour en finir avec les sectes. Le débat sur le rapport de la commission parlementaire*, 3rd ed., eds. Massimo Introvigne and J. Gordon Melton (Paris: Dervy, 1996), 236-46.

[13] See Faivre, "Nouvelle Acropole en France," 245, for the references. See also Horacio Labat and Isabelle Ohmann, *Le Défi de la démocratie. Vivre ensemble libres* (Paris: Editions Nouvelle Acropole, 1997) for New Acropolis' present assessment of democracy.

[14] CESNUR is an association of scholars of new religious movements established in 1988 and independent of any church, denomination, or religious movement. Religious affiliations of its directors vary, while CESNUR per se is in no way sponsored or financed by any religious organization. Its only institutional funding comes from the Region of Piedmont, Italy. The research discussed in this paper was part of CESNUR's regular activities and was not financed by New Acropolis or by any other group or association.

[15] Of course, some conspiracy theorists may still argue that parallel bogus records were produced solely for our perusal. We doubt, however, that the benefits for New Acropolis of this research, if any, would have balanced the efforts required. Besides, the records we used obviously included militant apostates, as the results of the survey show.

[16] As even a cursory search among the usenet groups would reveal, apostates and anti-cultists in general immediately react to the posting on the internet of scholarly papers

about the group to which they were affiliated and express their disagreement accordingly. CESNUR receives a large amount of unsolicited correspondence of this kind.

[17] On common scholarly biases in this field and their influence, see David G. Bromley and Anson Shupe, "Organized Opposition to New Religious Movements," *Religion and the Social Order* 3 (1993): 177-98.

[18] In the text of the article, statistical results have been rounded to the closest decimal. Questions were not open, i.e. only one answer was allowed. It was, on the other hand, possible to leave one or more question unanswered, and this explains why the total (in percentage) of the answers to each question is occasionally lower than 100 percent.

[19] Benjamin D. Zablocki, "Exit Cost Analysis: A New Approach to the Scientific Study of Brainwashing," *Nova Religio* 1, no. 2 (April 1998): 231.

[20] Laurence Bernard-Mirtil, *Sûkyô Mahikari: Une nouvelle religion venue du Japon* (Trignac, France: Bell Vision, 1998), 129, suggests the same conclusion for the Japanese new religious movement Sûkyô Mahikari currently operating in France. The anti-cult campaigns and the inclusion of the group in the list of "dangerous cults" in the 1996 report of the French parliamentary commission, according to Bernard-Mirtil, made no decisive contribution to the number of defections, but they were partially responsible for the lower number of new members. Interestingly, Sûkyô Mahikari has also been accused in France of being both a cult and a right-wing political organization.

Drugs and the Baby Boomers' Quest for Metaphysical Illumination

Robert C. Fuller

In 1882, America's foremost psychologist and philosopher recounted his personal experience with nitrous oxide gas. William James had become interested in the use of nitrous oxide while reviewing a work entitled *The Anaesthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy.* The book recounted the amateur philosopher Paul Blood's claim that after breathing nitrous oxide he had been afforded an "insight of immemorial Mystery."[1]

James considered himself a thoroughgoing empiricist, one for whom all ideas must be tested by experience. So, with respect to Blood's mystical claims, he decided to experiment for himself. The results were impressive. The intoxication proved so enjoyable that James was moved to "urge others to repeat the experiment, which with pure gas is short and harmless enough." He informed his readers that although the effects will vary from person to person, there is nonetheless a general pattern to the subjective effects of nitrous oxide: "With me, as with every other person of whom I have heard, the keynote of the experience is the tremendously exciting sense of an intense metaphysical illumination."[2]

The developed fruits of James's metaphysical illumination can be seen in his epochal *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* First published in 1902, the *Varieties* argues that there is an experiential core to religion that underlies all of the various creeds and rituals associated with religious organizations. In brief, James contended that religion can be reduced to experiences that provide individuals with the felt conviction (1) that the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance and (2) that a union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end. Importantly, James's understanding of the authentic core of religion could be directly traced to his own earlier metaphysical illumination:

> Some years ago I myself made some observations on this aspect of nitrous oxide intoxication, and reported them in print. One conclusion was forced upon my

mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different.[3]

As a psychologist, James knew that our normal waking consciousness is structured by the interplay between our senses and the interpretive categories provided by culture. He further recognized that our normal waking consciousness has tremendous utility in adapting us to the physical and social environment. But as a psychologist James also knew that many other states of consciousness (e.g., dreaming, hypnosis, mysticism) exist as well. It struck James that these other types of consciousness must have certain utilities of their own: "We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation."[4] Indeed, James concluded that

The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also; and that although in the main their experiences and those of this world keep discrete, yet the two become continuous at certain points, and higher energies filter in.[5]

James had, in essence, defined religion in terms of certain expanded states of consciousness that enable us to be receptive to "higher" spheres of experience. As historian William Clebsch has noted, James's psychological rendering of religion drew new attention to the aesthetic spirituality found in such writers as Jonathan Edwards and Ralph Waldo Emerson. That is, James had succeeded in defining spirituality not in terms of church membership or consenting to doctrinal standards, but in terms of attaining a certain consciousness of living in harmony with a divine reality. In so doing, James "set the agenda for American religious thought, now fully distinct from theology, in the twentieth century."[6] James was, of course, more an early creature than the historical creator of this modern religious "agenda." Yet his life and thought surely prefigured the religious pathway that many other twentieth-century Americans were destined to take as they turned away from institutional religion while yet desiring metaphysical illumination.

This "agenda" of equating authentic spirituality with the attainment of expanded states of consciousness has factored significantly in the religious life of many members of the Baby Boomer generation. As Wade Clark Roof demonstrated in his *A Generation of Seekers*, many Baby Boomers found experimental drug use to be a springboard to fascination

with alternative forms of spirituality. According to Roof, hallucinogenic drugs opened up ways to expand consciousness. Getting high led to psychic adventure, an exciting freedom from conformity that prompted individuals to explore novel philosophies and religions. Roof offers us the example of Mollie, one of the persons whose spiritual journeys features prominently in his study. Mollie, who began experimenting with drugs in the sixties, "has been on a spiritual quest ever since. She has explored many of the spiritual and human potential alternatives of the post-sixties period: holistic health, macrobiotics, Zen Buddhism, Native American rituals, New Age in its many versions. She's read a lot about reincarnation and world religions. . . . She's an explorer down many religious paths."[7] It would appear that Mollie, much like William James before her, traveled a path that led from experimental drug use to spiritual outlooks that might be characterized with such words as pluralism, postmodernism, and religious eclecticism.

This article seeks to focus attention on the connection between drug use and Baby Boomer spirituality. I am particularly interested in the connection between drug use and what might be called the "seeker" style of Baby Boomer religiosity. By this I mean the penchant for forms of religious expression that lie outside of our nation's established church traditions. The hallmarks of this largely unchurched form of spirituality are a commitment to the symbolic rather than literal nature of religious truth, pluralism of perspective, a hunger for a felt connection with a higher spiritual reality, and rapidly changing interests or affiliations. While almost every historian of late twentieth-century American religion acknowledges that drugs have played a role in shaping the spirituality of the most "highly active seekers" of the Baby Boom generation, few have tried to explain this connection in any detail. I can not here look at how the use of such socially accepted drugs as caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate) and alcohol (wine, beer, liquor) has influenced Baby Boomer spirituality.[8] Instead, I will limit myself to a few comments on how the psychological effects of both psychedelic drugs (especially mescaline and LSD) and marijuana helped to create the defining characteristics of "seeker" spirituality. More specifically, I will argue that the Baby Boomers' acquaintance with these drugs played an important role in popularizing a form of spirituality that emphasizes the pluralistic nature of religious truth, monistic ideas of god, and the primacy of the "private" sphere of religious experience.

THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION SWING OPEN

A revolution in middle-class America's metaphysical outlook began on a smogless morning in Los Angeles. It was 4 May 1953, and Humphry Osmond was eager to share three hundred milligrams of mescaline with

the British writer and intellectual Aldous Huxley.[9] Osmond was a psychiatrist visiting Los Angeles to attend the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association. He had become interested in how mescaline, the principal psychoactive substance in peyote, might help us understand the biochemical basis of schizophrenia and other mental disorders. It was Osmond who coined the term psychedelic from the Greek words for "mind" and "to manifest." The term psychedelic had obvious advantages over such other possible nomenclature as "drugs" or "narcotics." Indeed, both mescaline and the newly synthesized substance known as LSD-25 seemed to act less as a poison than as a catalyst for revealing the manifold powers of the mind. Osmond was curious about what Huxley might think about mescaline's mind-manifesting capacities.

A half hour after swallowing a glass of water containing the dissolved dose of mescaline, Huxley became aware that his visual perceptions seemed to have a greater intensity. Colors became brighter and more vivid. Gazing at a glass vase containing three flowers, Huxley began to see things in novel way: "I became aware of a slow dance of golden lights . . . red surfaces . . . bright nodes of energy that vibrated with a continuously changing, patterned life."[10] Huxley believed that the mescaline had somehow allowed him to bypass the filtering functions ordinarily imposed upon experience by our limited physical senses. He was beholding the universe in its indescribable glory. He records that his experience was that of "seeing what Adam had seen on the morning of his creation—the miracle, moment by moment, of naked existence."[11]

When trying to communicate his mescaline-induced epiphany, Huxley recalled a line from William Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it really is, infinite." Mescaline had cleansed Huxley's doors of perception. He found himself staring face to face at the infinite, sacred reality permeating the whole universe. Everything that he beheld radiated the very essence that the mystic Meister Eckhart had called *Istigkeit*, "isness." Having pierced beneath the world of verbal description, Huxley was immersed instead in "a world where everything shone with Inner Light, and was infinite in its significance."[12]

Huxley did not consider psychedelic experience to be the ultimate purpose of life. He compared mescaline-induced experience to what Catholic theologians call "a gratuitous grace." It shakes us out of the ruts of ordinary perception and allows us to see life as it is apprehended by what he called "Mind at Large." And while Huxley did not offer a full theological discourse on the ontological and metaphysical significance of Mind at Large, he did give some broad hints. First, it was clear to him that institutional Christianity had little of importance to say about the Light which radiates through being. True, certain Christian mystics had slipped past the doors of ordinary perception and gained insight. Yet

Christianity, by proclaiming that the Absolute was incarnate only in Christ, makes it difficult to see that the Absolute is actually incarnated in the whole of being. In contrast, the Romantic visionaries such as Blake, Wordsworth, and Whitman are reliable guides to circumventing the reducing valve of the brain and to glimpsing the "isness" of existence. So, too, are the philosophies of Vedanta Hinduism and Zen Buddhism. In fact, Huxley realized that mescaline had ushered him directly into the realms of Eastern enlightenment. He had studied Eastern philosophies for many years, realizing that they were alluding to understandings that evade all verbal description. Now he had found his own way of cleansing the doors of perception, paving the way for an experiential realization of how the radiating presence of the "Dharma Body" of the Buddha permeates all living things.

Others soon joined Huxley in connecting the use of mind-altering drugs with the pursuit of metaphysical illumination. Albert Hofmann, for example, described the twenty-fifth batch of lysergic acid derivatives (hence the use of the term LSD-25) that he discovered as "a sacred drug." Hofmann conjectured that LSD excites brain synapses and somehow shifts the "wavelength setting of the receiving 'self.'" The implication was that we are surrounded by metaphysical realities that but await our discovery. LSD, by shifting awareness toward alternate states, "expose[s] a gleam of the transcendental reality, in which universe and self, sender and receiver, are one."[13] To this extent the experience afforded by LSD confirmed what Hofmann called the "heart of my Christian beliefs." His encounter with a sacred drug had illuminated the very words of Jesus recorded in John 14:20: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Hofmann's metaphysical illumination had not, however, helped him to embrace the institutionalized part of Christianity. He complained that ecclesiastical Christianity espoused a "nature-alienated religiosity" that corrupted the pure insights of the great Christian mystics such as Jakob Boehme, Meister Eckhart, Angelus Silesius, Thomas Traherne, William Blake, and others. For this reason he counseled fellow citizens of "Western industrial societies who are sickened by a one-sided, rational, materialistic world view" to look to Eastern religions such as Zen Buddhism.[14] Here persons will find emphasis upon the metaphysical dimension of the human mind through which we can come to know our unity with God. Hofmann hoped that one day we might learn to use LSD as an adjunct to daily periods of quiet meditation. Used as a material aid to meditation, LSD would reveal itself to be a sacred drug capable of eliciting the condition of cosmic consciousness.

It was, of course, the psychologist-turned-guru Timothy Leary's first experience with psilocybin mushrooms (*teonanacatl*, the "flesh of the gods") that most noticeably accelerated the Baby Boom generation's discovery of the religious significance of psychedelic experience. "The

journey lasted a little over four hours," Leary wrote. "Like almost everyone who had the veil drawn, I came back a changed man."[15] What distinguished Leary from other prophets of the psychedelic gospel was his conviction that it was his destiny to change others as well. Leary, along with his Harvard psychology colleague Richard Alpert, devoted a great deal of time and energy to the study of mind-manifesting drugs both before and after Harvard saw fit to relieve him of his faculty status. With the help of fellow proselytizers such as Alpert (a.k.a. Ram Dass), Huston Smith, Allen Ginsberg, and Alan Watts, Leary dedicated himself to the task of showing Baby Boomers how the metaphysical illuminations available through psychedelic drugs were destined to revolutionize their individual and collective destinies.

TURNING ON, TUNING IN, AND DROPPING OUT

Leary was able to condense the psychedelic gospel to a catchy slogan: "Turn on, tune in, and drop out." This single phrase managed to capture the various yearnings generated by the era's political, social, and religious unrest. It was a multivalent war cry, synthesizing the disparate impulses of the growing 1960s counterculture into a mantra of common aspiration.

Turning on was the fun part. Psilocybin, mescaline, LSD, methedrine, and later STP were the "major hallucinogens" of the hippie movement. Marijuana and alcohol were its "minor hallucinogens."[16] While the size of dosage, the particular setting in which the drug is taken, and the psychological set (i.e., expectations) of each individual greatly affect the phenomenology of psychedelic experience, there is nonetheless a fairly standard range of subjective effects caused by these substances. As David Wulff has so ably summarized, the phenomenology of psychedelic experience usually begins with a veritable "orgy" of vision:

> Light and color become greatly intensified, objects seem plastic or alive, and fantastic imagery swirls through the visual field. Dramatic scenes of mythic proportions may unfold in a profusion of eidetic images. Sensitivity to sounds, tastes, and odors may be increased . . . Time, the medium of these experiences, is also radically transformed. Intervals only minutes long are so full and rich that they seem almost of infinite duration. . . . More remarkable, perhaps, is the dissolution of the self, sometimes called depersonalization or derealization. . . . The awesome experience of union with the surrounding world, the sudden illumination of existence, the "sacramental vision of reality," in Huxley's phrase. . .[17]

While the official rhetoric was that psychedelic substances were simply *upaya* (the Sanskrit term for "skillful means" which Ram Dass used to explain the value of psychedelics for opening consciousness past the restrictive ego), most users were probably content with the emotional

rush. Yet for Leary, sense and sensuality have a sacramental quality to them. *Turning on* was thus a form of nature religion. Turning on was intended to celebrate the intrinsic delight to be found by becoming especially receptive to the sensations emanating from the pristine depths of nature. Much as earlier Americans such as Henry David Thoreau or John Muir had turned attention to the sacredness of forests, Leary was turning attention to the sacred sensations to be found in our own natural constitution.

Turning on also meant more than hedonistic pleasure. It had to do with ecstasy, with expanding consciousness. The Episcopal priest turned psychedelic messiah Alan Watts wrote that a major theme of the 1960s was the realization that "ecstasy is a legitimate human need—as essential for mental and physical health as proper nutrition, vitamins, rest, and recreation." Or, as Leary put it, ecstasy is a necessary step toward spiritual rebirth: "Listen! Wake up! You are God! You have the Divine plan engraved in cellular script within you. Listen! Take this sacrament! You'll see! You'll get the revelation! It will change your life! You'll be reborn!"[18]

Tuning in had a slightly more esoteric ring to it. When Albert Hofmann suggested that LSD adjusted the "wavelength setting" of the receiving self, he was arguing that there are realities which we can only receive through some kind of alteration in consciousness. Almost all psychedelic researchers agreed. It was argued that psychedelics do not distort reality, they disclose dimensions or levels of existence that are otherwise screened by the rational ego. This was the whole point of Leary's and Alpert/Dass's efforts to provide a cartography of the metaphysical realms accessible to all who circumvent the restrictive filters imposed upon the mind through social conditioning. Psychedelic researchers argued that "When we examine those psychedelic experiences which seem to be authentically religious, we find that during the session the subject has been *able to reach the deep integral level* wherein lies the possibility of confrontation with a Presence variously described as God, Spirit, Ground of Being, Mysterium, Noumen, Essence, and Ultimate or Fundamental Reality."[19]

No one exemplifies more clearly what "tuning in" was all about than Huston Smith. Smith was a philosophy professor at MIT when he visited Leary's home and accepted his host's kind invitation to try some mescaline. Smith's philosophical outlook on life was never the same. Free of the ego's restrictions, Smith was able to gaze deeply into the mysteries of the cosmos. He gained first-hand, experiential insight into "the metaphysical theory known as emanationism, in which, beginning with the clear, unbroken and infinite light of God or the Void, the light then breaks into forms and decreases in intensity as it diffuses through descending degrees of reality."[20] Light was in all, all was in light. In Smith's version of emanationist metaphysics, all levels of existence are connected

with one another. Furthermore, the "power" of being continuously flows from higher levels to lower ones. It follows that the key to a vibrant spiritual life is attaining states of consciousness that enhance our receptivity to this inflow of spiritual power.

Smith's metaphysical illuminations led him to write *The World's Religions*, which became a staple in college comparative religion courses, selling more than two million copies. His lectures, workshops, and subsequent writings all promoted the "perennial philosophy" that he was quite literally turned on to while visiting Timothy Leary. In *Forgotten Truth: The Common Vision of the World's Religions*, the book that most clearly summarizes his own world view, Smith appends a brief essay entitled "the psychedelic evidence."[21] Smith contends that the data collected by psychedelic researchers provide empirical evidence of the claims of the perennial philosophy: the self exists on many levels; the levels of self (or consciousness) correspond to levels of the cosmos that are ordinarily obscured from human view; and to circumvent the ego and have a direct experience of the deeper levels of the cosmos is to widen our knowledge of the world in which we live and have our being—it is to have enlightenment.

Even Huston Smith acknowledged that such metaphysical illuminations are probably not for the masses. The uninitiated must rely on the exoteric teachings of institutional religion. But for the initiated, the one who has turned on and tuned in, the esoteric teachings of the perennial philosophy were now being understood as objects of direct, immediate perception.

Dropping out also had multiple meanings. Some were political, others were social, and still others were religious. Common to these urges to drop out was a pervasive rejection of the philosophical and cultural outlook often referred to as modernism. Modernism is the intellectual and cultural expression of rationalistic science. Intellectually, modernism affirms the existence of singular universal truths that can be discerned through disciplined rational inquiry. Psychologically, modernism posits the unity of the self, asserting the existence of a true or essential self lurking behind the various identities that society imposes upon us. And, culturally, modernism believes in and yearns for the inevitability of material progress. In contrast, Leary's psychedelic gospel proclaimed many of the ideas that have subsequently been identified as the "postmodern" outlook.[22] While postmodernism means many different things to many different people, it is commonly understood as a philosophical outlook that distrusts the subject-object dichotomy of conventional rationality. It is skeptical of universal, general truths and believes instead in multiple perspectives and conversations. And if modernism emphasizes the "distance senses" such as viewing, reading, or hearing, postmodernism embraces the "proximity senses" of touching, tasting, or—in the words of the 1960s—just happening. Postmodernism

sees the self as plural, capable of being many identities without any conflict or necessary incompatibility. Almost all of these "postmodern" themes pervaded the psychedelic literature of the 1960s and 1970s. Introduction to the world of psychedelic experience was, for many, simultaneously an introduction to an entirely new intellectual and cultural stance that put them at odds with those representing the "modernist" establishments.

Modernism had tended to marginalize all forms of knowledge that did not fit neatly within its scientific strictures. For that matter, it also tended to marginalize all types of persons who did not conform neatly with social expectations. The use of psychedelics turned all of this upside down. For one, they exploded the pretensions of rationalistic science to understand the totality of existence. As James would have put it, they proved that normal rational consciousness is but one special type of consciousness. They also brought the proximity senses to the forefront of experience and discovery. Under the influence of mind-manifesting drugs, what is felt or experienced is valued more than rational abstractions. Psychedelic experience was primarily visual and focused upon immediate bodily sensations. The universe, it seemed, was no one, single thing but rather altered with changes in subjectivity and awareness. To this extent, then, the use of psychedelics initiated persons into a new stance toward the world; the psychedelic trip was a rite of passage into a distinct counterculture. For thousands of Americans, the use of psychedelic drugs was the first step toward dropping out of a worldview that had framed middle-class American life for decades.

Dropping out was thus a slogan for the era's reappraisal of middle class thought and values. It meant attempting to stand back and undo one's social conditioning and reassessing the value of almost everything that upwardly mobile members of America's middle class during the late 1950s and early 1960s thought they fully understood: the relative importance of such things as a job, sex, individuality, clothes, hair, technology, and church. Jay Stevens suggests that drugs provided the emerging counterculture with a "deconditioning agent." In a matter of seconds they quite literally dismantled the whole cognitive repertoire that society had programmed into their brains. And although the dismantling was only temporary, it gave vivid insight into how arbitrary the "normal waking state" actually is. In their foreword to Alan Watts's psychedelic masterpiece *The Joyous Cosmology*, Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert argued that the freedom to use drugs in order to liberate our minds from the tyranny of social conditioning is a basic American freedom:

> Thus appears the fifth freedom—freedom from the learned, cultural mind. The freedom to expand one's consciousness beyond artifactual cultural knowledge.

> The freedom to move from constant preoccupation with the verbal games—the social games, the game of self—to the joyous unity of what exists beyond.[23]

Not surprisingly, the principal theme of Carlos Castenada's popular works on drug-assisted paths to enlightenment was learning how to "stop the world." Readers turned to Castenada's books hoping to learn how they might disentangle themselves from—and evolve beyond—the seemingly oppressive nature of middle-class society. The allure of Don Juan's teachings was that some combination of psychedelics and Native American wisdom might prove helpful in the quest of "stopping" the power of social conditioning. A surprising number of Americans wanted to drop out of bourgeois culture. They implicitly accepted Leary's dictum that the best way to do so was to turn on and tune in.

Dropping out became ever more fashionable as the 1960s progressed. Clothing trends, hair length, music, and everyday jargon all reflected the implicit admiration of the hippie movement. By 1967 there may have been as many as 200,000 full-time hippies across the United States, let alone the multiples of that number who adopted elements of the hippie lifestyle. In his book *The Hippies and American Values*, Timothy Miller summarizes the counterculture's attitude toward religion by noting that

> the hippies tended to take unusual (by traditional American standards) approaches to religion, often emphasizing Eastern spiritual teachings, and they were often syncretistic, pursuing a sort of religiosity that combined elements ranging from Hindu mysticism to Neopaganism to Ouija boards. It's a fair guess that most hippies would not have been very welcome in most churches; for their part, the hippies were not interested in getting active in any conventional religious body.[24]

They were not, however, just dropping out of conventional religion. They were simultaneously affirming a new spiritual outlook that in many ways conformed to the phenomenological contours of drug experience.

MARIJUANA AND THE QUEST FOR EXPANDED INTERIORITY

During the 1960s marijuana was discovered by white, middle class Americans. By 1970, more than eight million Americans had smoked this intoxicating "weed."[25] By 1980, that figure had probably reached twenty million. Although marijuana lacks the hallucinatory or vision-giving powers of the major hallucinogens, it could be used more casually and more frequently. Marijuana heightens the senses and induces an almost childlike openness to inner sensations. It gives persons the impression that they are finally getting in touch with themselves and

with the deeper recesses of nature. The marijuana "high" floods the senses and deepens a person's appreciation of interiority. In this way marijuana facilitated the Baby Boomers' growing identification of religion as the inner-directed pursuit of personal, mystical experience. Its use also created unique social settings that allowed young cultural rebels to bond with a countercultural community centered around the spiritual goal of personal growth or individuation, even if at the expense of traditional cultural values. The cultural history of marijuana in the late twentieth century is thus very much the history of unchurched American spirituality.

The actual physiological effects of smoking a marijuana cigarette are poorly understood. It is generally thought that the psychoactive chemical called delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, is responsible for marijuana's intoxicating effects. Yet there is such great variation from subject to subject that the exact effects of THC upon the nervous system are still in dispute. In fact, the only two established facts concerning marijuana smoking are that it causes a mild reddening of the eyes and a temporary increase in heartbeat. The psychological effects vary from person to person, but a commission appointed to study marijuana use by the Canadian Government found that typical reports by users include:

> happiness, increased conviviality, a feeling of enhanced interpersonal rapport and communication, heightened sensitivity to humour, free play of the imagination, unusual cognitive and ideational associations, a sense of extraordinary reality, a tendency to notice aspects of the environment of which one is normally unaware, enhanced visual imagery, an altered sense of time in which minutes may seem like hours, enrichment of sensory experiences, increased personal understanding and religious insight, mild excitement and energy . . . .[26]

These psychological effects combine to give individuals a sense of having stepped beyond their ordinary limits. To paraphrase Emerson, it is as though they have momentarily established an "original relationship to the universe." Unleashing what the report calls "unusual cognitive and ideational associations," marijuana use imparts the subjective feel of creativity and aesthetic insight. THC has no chemical resemblance to other drugs associated with the 1960s counterculture such as LSD, mescaline, or psilocybin. As Johns Hopkins School of Medicine professor Solomon Snyder concludes, "the impression emerges from current research that marijuana is a mild intoxicant. Moderate users, when high, have rich fantasies and enhanced perception, but are generally in control of their thoughts and actions and can behave quite normally if the need arises."[27]

The effects of marijuana on a person's mental and social functioning hold important clues about its role in "bonding" individuals to alternative

religious beliefs and to small groups of fellow seekers. Charles Tart's intensive study of the experience of "being stoned" confirms Snyder's observation concerning marijuana's ability to incite rich fantasies and enhanced perception. Tart's subjects saw patterns and designs more sharply and noticed subtle differences in shades of color better than when they were "straight."[28] Subjects reported an enhanced sense of touch, finding tactile sensations to be more exciting. Marijuana subjects' sense of taste and smell were likewise more vivid and intense. Perhaps more importantly, Tart found that persons under the influence of marijuana appear to have an intensified awareness of their own thought processes. Being stoned tends to give persons the sense that their thoughts are more original, intuitive, and profound (although many researchers note that these same individuals often later think that marijuana only gave them the *feeling* of being more original). Tart concludes that, on the whole, "marijuana intoxication characteristically produces a childlike openness to experience and a sense of wonder and awe, in contrast to the usual businesslike manner in which we classify events and people strictly in terms of their importance to us." This childlike openness to experience opens the doors of aesthetic appreciation of life's intrinsic meaning and beauty. It expands a person's sense of interiority, helping him or her to feel connected to the what Emerson might call "the divinity that flows through all things."[29]

William Novak's study of the role that marijuana has played in the lives of Americans makes another telling point about the connection between drugs and alternative spirituality. Novak writes that, "for some, marijuana has served as a teacher whose principal lesson has been that life holds multiple forms of reality."[30] Marijuana, it seems, provided a psychopharmacological catalyst that moved thousands—perhaps millions—of Baby Boomers to shift away from the kinds of thinking associated with "modernism" to those commonly linked with "postmodernism." Much as the use of cocaine structured states of consciousness that were conducive to Freud's "discovery" of psychoanalysis, marijuana produces psychological states that favor pluralism, postmodernism, and a tendency to embrace some form of nature religion.[31] Marijuana affords its users a "pluralism of perspectives." In our normal waking state, we process sensory data by connecting "incoming information" with the most appropriate set of ideas or concepts. Marijuana users, however, report that they find themselves connecting the same sensory data to two or more different sets of concepts. This gives them the sensation that there is not just one reality, but several realities depending upon your current frame of mind. As one subject reported to Novak, "When I'm very stoned, I find myself switching constantly between two or more frames of mind."[32] Another subject commented that "When I'm high, the ideas keep on coming.

Sometimes I wonder whether marijuana actually creates these ideas—or whether, perhaps, it functions more like a magnet, drawing together the various iron filings of thought from different parts of my mind and bringing them together."[33] These multiple associations give experience a highly symbolic character. Marijuana users frequently conclude that life is multi-dimensional. While the waking state of consciousness attends to the "material" meaning of experience, there are nonetheless other levels of experience more capable of yielding insights about life's intrinsic beauty and spiritual purpose.

The "multiple perspectives" afforded by marijuana use helped newcomers to the religious counterculture bond with alternative myths and worldviews. Their pluralistic way of viewing experience turned them away from religious belief systems that proclaimed one, absolute truth. Instead, they naturally tended to see beliefs as relative and highly personal rather than descriptions of universal realities. Marijuana use predisposed persons to believe that the "real" truth of religion resides in the flood of sensations that pour into us if we but learn to become receptive to the deeper dimensions of experience. Things such as rituals, liturgy, and doctrine were thus secondary to the inner, experiential core of spiritual awakening. Smoking marijuana was in this sense a ritual that helped connect young seekers to the mystical philosophies of Alan Watts, Aldous Huxley, Carl Jung, Carlos Castenada, Zen Buddhism, and Vedanta Hinduism. These exotic forms of spirituality all suggested that the core of authentic spirituality is the inner experience of a sacred reality. And all suggested that the vast majority of America's churches had somehow lost touch with the experiential basis of genuine spirituality. As one user put it, "It's difficult to talk about marijuana and religion because I have a hard time separating them out. Authentic religion, when you sweep away all the extraneous stuff of politics and institutions, is about transcendence, heightened awareness, ecstasy, and goodness. Religion and marijuana both involve going beyond the rational, material, and normative concerns of existence. Religion is the original altered state of consciousness."[34]

Marijuana users understandably formed a distinct American subculture. They were more likely to be liberal in politics and less likely to be affiliated with a religious organization.[35] The longer and more often people smoked marijuana, the more likely they were to bond or connect with the eclectic cluster of metaphysical ideas underlying the era's "alternative spirituality" movement. In the 1960s and 1970s, the actual act of smoking marijuana was something like a rite of initiation into the religious underground. Persons who took their first "joint" were aware that they were thereby signifying their desire to join an elitist, clandestine, and self-consciously countercultural segment of American society. They knew that they were joining a community that valued nonconformity, peacefulness, and quiet introspection. By the late 1970s

and 80s, marijuana smoking had largely lost this countercultural element. As marijuana became more pervasive in American society, it lost any special significance and became just one more intoxicant alongside others. It no longer served to bond individuals into a distinct counterculture, and thus marijuana intoxication became less and less distinguishable from the rowdiness associated with adolescent beer drinking.

Marijuana was for the most part associated with a wholly informal, unchurched form of spirituality. Joints were passed around in small groups that gathered together in dormitory rooms or apartment living rooms. As the marijuana high began to "enhance visual imagery," "enrich sensory experience," and create "a free play of the imagination," these small groups made it possible for individuals to witness to their changing religious and philosophical beliefs. Informal gatherings of marijuana smokers provided a forum for the transmission of the various mystical philosophies that made up the era's alternative spirituality (and that were in large part to become the nucleus of the New Age spirituality of the 1980s and 1990s). The increased conviviality and feeling of enhanced interpersonal rapport and communication associated with marijuana use grounded these newly acquired beliefs in a sense of community and thus gave them greater credibility or support.

There were a few attempts to "institutionalize" the religious use of marijuana, resulting in the emergence of several "dope churches" in California during the 1960s.[36] Most were short-lived, their memberships rarely rising over a few dozen persons. In general, the twenty million members of the Baby Boom generation who tried marijuana saw no inherent connection between their sense of enhanced interiority and the creation of new religious institutions. Instead, they grew more confident in defining their spiritual pursuits in ways that bore less resemblance to the religious patterns of earlier generations. They came to see themselves as seekers more than joiners. Their spirituality would be self-consciously eclectic, seeking modes of spiritual expression that would conform to the patterns of "consciousness-expansion" that had become the bedrock of their personal pursuits of metaphysical illumination.

DRUG-INDUCED ECSTASY AND SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

By the early 1960s, it became abundantly clear that a significant "ideological reorientation" was beginning to take shape in American cultural and religious life. Robert Ellwood has suggested that among the most influential themes of this ideological reorientation were (1) a shift from mainline to nonconformist religion, (2) a rediscovery of natural rather than revealed religion, (3) a new appreciation for Eastern

religious thought, and (4) a new Romanticism that accords spiritual importance to certain nonrational modes of thought and perception.[37] In general, this represented a shift from seeking God in the church to seeking God in the depths of nature (including the depths of our own psychological nature). The spiritual awakening of the 1960s was committed to the belief that the sacred is already implanted in the human heart and the natural world. The essence of personal spirituality, in this view, was to seek out new avenues for discovering this immanent presence of the sacred. American authors such as Emerson, Whitman, and James surely provided clues. So, too, did the mystical writings of Hinduism and Buddhism. And not to be overlooked were the kinds of metaphysical illumination made possible with the help of mind-manifesting drugs.

Mind-altering drugs were, without doubt, an important factor in the spread of spiritual change in the 1960s and early 1970s. Baby Boomers used these substances in settings that implicitly connected them with the very themes Ellwood discerns in the spiritual unrest of the 1960s: the shift from mainline to nonconformist religion, the rediscovery of natural religion, a new appreciation for Eastern thought, and a new Romanticism. Drugs induced an experiential ecstasy that lent an aura of mystical authority to the changes taking place in the emerging "seeker" style of Baby Boomer spirituality. This was true not only for those who themselves ingested drugs, but also for a good many of those who never used them at all.

For those who used them, drugs provided an experience-based rite of passage to the "new Romanticism." They elicited an emotional ecstasy based not on the "distance senses" of reading and hearing, but rather on the "proximity senses" of touch, taste, and bodily sensation. Psychedelics and marijuana provided new configurations of the world based not upon reflective reason, but upon dreamlike free association and idiosyncratic impressions. Psychedelics deconstructed the world of waking rationality and temporarily transported the initiate into a whole new mode of thinking and feeling. This new mode was charged with excitement, mystery, and intrigue. And although this new mode of awareness gave rise to insights that were ineffable upon return to the normal waking state, they nonetheless left the lasting impression that our lives are surrounded by a higher order of being.

Drugs were a springboard to fascination with extraordinary states of consciousness of almost any kind. This, in turn, incited interest in Eastern religions whose meditation practices struck Americans as perfectly suited to their own new spiritual convictions. Psychedelics in particular were understood to be cleansing the very doors of perception opened through Hindu and Buddhist meditation systems. The role of psychedelics was so important to the growth of Americans' interest in Eastern religions that in the fall of 1996 *Tricycle*, a major Buddhist journal, devoted an entire issue to the topic. One American-born practitioner of Buddhism

noted that "many who took LSD, mushrooms, and other psychedelics, often along with reading from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* or some Zen texts, had the gates of wisdom opened to a certain extent." Opening these gates gave them vivid insight into the fact that "their limited consciousness was only one plane and that there were a thousand new things to discover about the mind."[38] For thousands of Americans, drugs and interest in Eastern religious practices went hand in hand. The statistics are staggering. A recent poll of over 1,300 Americans engaged in Buddhist practice showed that 83% had taken psychedelics.[39] Some, of course, had eventually decided that the two are incompatible. But 59% responded that psychedelics and Buddhism do mix, and 71% believed that psychedelics can provide a glimpse of the same reality to which Buddhist practice points. Ram Dass was interviewed in this issue and admitted that he still took drugs as a supplement to his other spiritual practices. He offered that "from my point of view, Buddhism is the closest to the psychedelic experience, at least in terms of LSD. LSD catapults you beyond conceptual structures. It extricates you. It overrides your habit of identifying with thought and puts you in a nonconceptual mode very fast."[40]

Drug-induced states thus appealed to many Baby Boomers who yearned for an experientially based spirituality. As one researcher puts it, psychedelics serve "as a kind of phase through which we pass when we're trying to become more truly who we are, more authentic, and more genuine."[41] The ecstatic nature of drug-induced states of consciousness lent charisma or authority to the claims made by psychedelic pundits. In this sense they legitimated the transition from "consensus" to "alternative" religion. Cultural anthropologist Marlene Dobkin de Rios points out that to the extent that firsthand experience is considered the true way to knowledge, drugs will be considered with awe and respect: "In those societies where plant hallucinogens play a central role, one learns that the drug user believes that he or she can see, feel, touch, and experience the unknown."[42] The growing "seeker" community among the Baby Boomers provided a context in which drug use was indeed thought to be a way to see, feel, and experience a metaphysical reality. There was, of course, a concurrent tendency for the "seekers" among the Baby Boomers to associate established religious institutions with a secondhand or less authentic form of spirituality. And thus the use of psychedelics and marijuana helped accelerate a shift away from mainline to nonconformist religion among those Baby Boomers who were most caught up in the "ideological revolution" of the 1960s and 1970s.

The psychedelic movement also influenced the spirituality of millions who never used drugs at all. Drugs were a cultural icon; they symbolized an orientation to the world that was embraced by those who never even saw a mushroom, joint, or tab of LSD. Books, rock music, clothing, and

even commercial advertising communicated various facets of the "drug experience" to virtually every member of the Baby Boom generation. Even those pursuing a scholarly approach to understanding religion were forced to consider the possibility that drugs constituted a legitimate and genuine path to metaphysical illumination. Huston Smith, for example, argued that psychedelics gave our scientifically oriented culture an "empirical metaphysics." Smith argued that the extensive data collected by psychedelic researchers such as Leary, Masters and Houston, and Grof provided impressive evidence in favor of a worldview that proclaims humanity's inner connection to a wider spiritual universe. Indeed, Smith and other advocates of the role of drugs in triggering metaphysical illumination maintained that we were on the verge of obtaining empirical evidence that would substantiate almost every point of the counterculture's manifesto. That is, psychedelic research seemed to lend empirical confirmation to the hippies' advocacy of individuality, nonrational modes of thinking, multisensory experiences, and the inner divinity of every person.

Of particular importance was the way in which psychedelic experiences helped put new understandings of God into popular circulation. Psychedelic literature hastened a trend away from identifying God solely in biblical terms and instead defined God in more monistic and even pantheistic ways. Beginning with Huxley, users of psychedelics attributed metaphysical importance to their visions of bright light, their feelings of vibrations, and their sense of being enveloped by an ineffable presence. Watts, for example, claimed that psychologists were "studying peculiar states of consciousness in which the individual discovers himself to be one continuous process with God, with the universe, with the Ground of Being, or whatever name he may use by cultural conditioning or personal preference for the ultimate reality."[43] Huston Smith, meanwhile, claimed that LSD research substantiates a very different view of God than is found in the Bible. As he put it, "the God who is almost invariably encountered [while under the influence of psychedelics] is so removed from anthropomorphism as to elicit, often, the pronoun 'it.'"[44] A theological student writing in the mid-1960s witnessed that under the influence of LSD he, as an individual, "ceased to exist, becoming immersed in the ground of Being, in Brahman, in God, in 'nothingness,' in Ultimate Reality."[45] The religious experiences born of psychedelics were powerful testimony to the era's yearning for a religious vocabulary befitting the unchurched segment of American religious life. And, again, even many of those Baby Boomers who never used psychedelics or marijuana were nonetheless confirmed in their growing predilection for a nonconformist religious vocabulary.

All in all, then, drugs led a good many Baby Boomers down the road toward a more Romantic, postmodern, and unchurched form of spiritual thinking. Even among those who did not use them, psychedelics were a

symbol of the metaphysical illumination available to all who venture past the narrow confines of consensus religion. They demonstrated in the most vivid of ways that normal waking consciousness is but one special type of consciousness, parted by the filmiest of screens from unsuspected other worlds of being. Psychedelics were thought to open the doors separating these otherwise discrete worlds of consciousness, allowing passage back and forth. The ecstatic adventure—even for those who only read about it—was nothing short of a metaphysical illumination. And that illumination provided key symbols and metaphors for a great deal of the unchurched spirituality that has flourished in the late twentieth century.

ENDNOTES

[1] Benjamin Paul Blood, *Pluriverse: An Essay in the Philosophy of Pluralism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1920), xxii.

[2] James's initial publication on nitrous oxide appeared in *Mind* 7 (1882): 186-208. It also appears in an abridged form as "Subjective Effects of Nitrous Oxide" in *Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Charles Tart (Garden City, NY: 1969), 367-70. More detailed discussions of the role that nitrous oxide-induced mystical experiences had in both Bloods' and James's philosophies can be found in Hal Bridges, *American Mysticism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 15-19, and Dmitri Tymoczko's "The Nitrous Oxide Philosopher," *The Atlantic Monthly* (May 1996): 93-101.

[3] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 307.

[4] Ibid., 308.

[5] Ibid., 408.

[6] William Clebsch, *American Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 171.

[7] Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 22.

[8] See Robert C. Fuller, *Religion and Wine: A Cultural History of Wine Drinking in the United States* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1996). The role of coffee and other drugs in American religious life are discussed in my *Stairways to Heaven: Drugs and American Religion* (Boulder: Westview Press, forthcoming in 2000).

[9] See Jay Stevens' *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

[10] Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1954).

[11] Ibid., 17.

[12] Ibid., 22.

[13] Jay Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 198.

[14] Albert Hoffmann, *LSD: My Problem Child* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 209.

[15] Timothy Leary, cited in Rick Fields, "A High History of Buddhism," *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* (Fall 1996), 47.

[16] See the distinction between "major psychedelic drugs" and "minor psychedelic drugs" in Charles Tart, ed., *Altered States of Consciousness* (Garden City, NJ: Anchor Books, 1972), 327-31, 385-89.

[17] David Wulff, *Psychology of Religion* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991), 85.
[18] Alan Watts, *Cloud-Hidden, Whereabouts Unknown* (New York: Random House, 1973), 35; Timothy Leary, *High Priest* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1968), 285.
[19] Robert Masters and Jean Houston, *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 266.
[20] Huston Smith, "Empirical Metaphysics," in *The Ecstatic Adventure*, ed. Ralph Metzner (New York: Macmillan Co., 1968), 72.
[21] Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth: The Common Vision of the World's Religions* (New York: HarperCollins, 1976).
[22] The terms "modernism" and "postmodernism" have been employed in a variety of academic discussions and their usage varies considerably from scholar to scholar. The use of the terms in this article is meant to connect with Robert Ellwood's discussion of these themes in recent American religious history in his *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 10-18.
[23] Richard Alpert and Timothy Leary, in the foreword to Alan Watts, *The Joyous Cosmology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), x.
[24] Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 19.
[25] William Novak, *High Culture: Marijuana in the Lives of Americans* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), xiv.
[26] Canadian Government's Commission of Inquiry, *The Non-Medical Use of Drugs* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971), 117.
[27] Ibid.; Solomon Snyder, *Uses of Marijuana* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 71.
[28] Charles Tart, *On Being Stoned: A Psychological Study of Marijuana Intoxication* (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1971).
[29] Ibid., 212; Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 14 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 7: 450.
[30] Novak, *High Culture*, 9.
[31] For a discussion of how a drug such as cocaine might influence an individual's intellectual grasp of life, see Robert C. Fuller, "Biographical Origins of Psychological Ideas: Freud's Cocaine Studies," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 32 (Summer 1992): 67-86. The reference to "nature religion" here is intended to draw attention to the many forms of unchurched spirituality in American history that have sought to locate the sacred within, not outside of, the most immediate forms of experiencing our natural universe. Although she offers no precise definition of the term, Catherine Albanese offers the best overview of this recurring pattern of American spirituality in *Nature Religion in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
[32] William Novak, *High Culture*, 12.
[33] Ibid., 124.
[34] Ibid., 155.
[35] See Bruce D. Johnson, *Marihuana Users and Drug Subcultures* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973).
[36] See the excellent discussion of "drug churches" in J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 3rd ed. (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Company, 1988), 120-21.
[37] See the concluding chapter of Robert Ellwood's *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening*, 326-36.
[38] Jack Kornfield, interview in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* (Fall 1996), 35.
[39] Magazine and Web poll, cited in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* (Fall 1996), 44.
[40] Ram Dass, interview in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* (Fall 1996), 102.
[41] Joan Halifax, interview in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* (Fall 1996), 102.
[42] Marlene Dobkin de Rios, *Hallucinogens: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 203.
[43] Alan Watts, "Psychedelics and Religious Experience, " in *Psychedelic*, eds. Bernard Aaronson and Humphry Osmond (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1970), 131.
[44] Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 168.
[45] John Robertson, "Uncontainable Joy," in *The Ecstatic Adventure*, ed. Ralph Metzner, 86.

New Religions in Latvia

Solveiga Krumina-Konkova

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Spiritual life in Latvia, at least during the last century, has been noteworthy for the existence of several strong religious traditions. For example, according to the census data from 1935 (five years before the Soviet occupation),[1] all the major Christian churches were active in Latvia:[2] the Evangelical Lutheran Church (55.15% of a total Latvian population of 1,950,502), the Roman Catholic Church (24.45%), the Orthodox Church (8.94%), and the Old Believers (5.50%).[3] Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Adventists, Bishop Methodists, and "other Protestants" together comprised 0.98%. In 1935, there were 4.79% Jews and a small fraction of Muslims (66 people) as well as Buddhists, Lamaists, and other followers of Eastern religions (70 people). 0.11% of Latvian inhabitants belonged to "unknown religions," and only 0.08% declared themselves staunch atheists (see Table 1). Although these data do not give us information about the actual religious convictions of people, they do indicate the existence of stable traditions and confirm that a favorable environment for religious coexistence was present in Latvia after the creation of an independent nation in 1918. A dynamic religious life in Latvia was apparent in the 1920s and in the beginning of the 1930s when, alongside the strengthening of the major traditional religions, the forms and types of religious expression diversified. Adherence of people to new religious creeds depended on their place in a complex social structure, their personal perceptions, and the stability of their cultural and religious traditions. Among those who turned to the new religious movements and tried to organize new religious groups were people who, for one reason or another, were dissatisfied with the major traditional religions. At the same time, they had authentic religious needs and strivings. In the middle of the 1930s, there were about 300 smaller religious sub-branches and groups in Latvia. A large number of religious organizations were registered as "societies."

TABLE 1

The division of Latvian inhabitants by religion in 1935

Religious Affiliation	Number	Percentage
Evangelical Lutherans	1,075,641	55.15
Baptists	13,368	0.7
Anglicans	19,146	0.98
Adventists	3,104	0.2
Other Protestants	1,568	0.08
Roman Catholics	472,963	24.45
Orthodox	174,389	8.94
Old-Believers	107,195	5.50
Other Christians	136	0.00
Judaic Believers	93,406	4.79
Muslims	66	0.00
Buddhists and Lamaists	35	0.00
Other Non-Christians	35	0.00
No religion	1,480	0.08
Unknown faiths	2,010	0.11
TOTAL:	1,950,502	100

However, after the political system changed from democracy to authoritarianism (the period following 15 May 1934), the number of registered religious confessions dwindled by a factor of ten due to the provisions of the new Law on Religious Congregation and Societies.[4]

As of 21 June 1935, the Spiritual Affairs Administration, using the powers of the Law on Religious Congregation and Societies, re-registered only twenty-seven of the smaller religious congregations, including the Salvation Army; the British Midmay Jews' Christian Mission; the Mennonite Parish of Kurzeme; the Evangelical congregations Succor, Salvation, and The Blue Cross; the First Church of Christ the Scientist; the Science Union of Christ; the Latvian Evangelical Brethren; the Bible Society of Baltic Women; and the Catholic Apostolic Parish.[5] Among the congregations which were not re-registered were the Watch-Tower Bible and Tract Society, Swedenborgs' Society New Church, the Whitsuntide Dawn Mission Society (Pentecostals), the English-American Mission Society, and the Riga Streets' Mission Society.

The Soviet occupation of 1940, the German occupation during World War II, and the ensuing years of the Soviet regime changed the

situation dramatically. Churches, monasteries, and religious educational institutions were closed, and the printing of any religious newspapers, journals, books (including the Bible), and even song sheets for religious services was forbidden. All religious organizations in Latvia were repressed and threatened with liquidation. It seemed that the plan of the atheist communist regime to impose a unified and single worldview would be fully implemented. Indeed, it has been repeatedly stated in Western reports of recent years that, under the conditions of the Soviet regime, national churches were unable to help people maintain their religious identities or to protect them against spiritual emptiness. As Eileen Barker has observed, "Not only have 40 or 70 years of communist rule revealed a gaping vacuum of religious and spiritual emptiness and hunger, but also (and possibly more tellingly) a host of other lacks. With the possible exception of the Polish Catholic Church, the national churches have little or no expertise as to how to provide spiritual or pastoral care to generations of people without any memory of shared religious experience or knowledge."[6]

Our analysis of the religious situation under the Soviet regime in Latvia rejects such conclusions. Rather, we suggest that in Latvia, during the fifty years of Soviet occupation, there was no significant rift in the continuity of people's spiritual lives. Both religious experience and the memories of earlier experiences were preserved. The proscription of one or more religion did not mean that religion ceased to exist; the closure of a church did not mean the end of the parish.

During this period in Latvia, there were not only purely religious movements active, but also certain religious-ethical and religious-philosophical movements, as well as some movements which were not regarded as religious at their inception. Thus, for example, at the end of the 1960s, the then Indian ambassador to the USSR acquainted the Latvian poetess Mirdza Kempe with the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. At the beginning of the 1970s, Kempe was invited to one of the meetings of this religious movement in India. The Soviet authorities did not allow her to go, but the ideas of this movement continued to spread in Latvia, especially among poets and artists. At the beginning of the 1980s, when it became possible to import literature from abroad, several groups were formed in which the Sai Baba movement's religious literature was studied and translated. These translations were secretly copied and distributed.[7]

As this and many other examples demonstrate, religious life under the Soviet regime, although repressed, continued to exist, and therefore suggestions of a long-standing spiritual vacuum in Latvia are unwarranted.

Religious life became especially vigorous during the period of political liberalization and democratization that started around 1985. Neither the Christian churches nor representatives of other religions

played a decisive role in these activities. Instead, those religious organizations which were active in Latvia at the time had to re-evaluate their position in relation to the communist regime, and the processes of liberalization and democratization in society at large were reflected in similar processes in the life of churches. These changes stimulated a new dynamism in Latvian religious life.[8]

CURRENT CHRISTIAN CONGREGATIONS IN LATVIA

First of all, it is useful to present some data about the state of the major religious organizations in Latvia. According to research conducted between 1997 and 1998, there were about 339,408 Evangelical Lutherans,[9] 500,000 Roman Catholics,[10] 300,000 Orthodox Believers,[11] 70,000 Old-Believers,[12] 6,147 Baptists,[13] 3,927 Seventh-day Adventists,[14] and 600 Methodists.[15] There was also the 5,576-strong Riga Jewish Religious Congregation.[16]

At the same time, new religions have entered Latvia. The current religious situation is significantly affected by the so-called "charismatic Christian congregations." We should especially mention such congregations as *Jauna Paaudze* [The New Generation], *Prieka Vests* [Message of Hope], *Dzivibas Vards* [The Word of Life], and other charismatic congregations of the "new wave." Their adherents believe that authentic Christianity must help people solve their real problems and that this is not possible without speaking in tongues, miraculous healings, and other gifts of the Holy Spirit. Two noteworthy characteristics of these congregations are strong leadership and a high percentage of young followers.

The Christian congregation *Jauna Paaudze* was formed in Riga in 1989. Initially, its core consisted of 200 people. At the present time, this movement is widespread throughout Latvia, especially in places with strong Russian-speaking communities. The influence of the movement is weaker in Kurzeme where the ethnic composition of people is different and the Baptist congregations are strong. According to approximate data, about 3,000 people were active in the movement in Riga at the beginning of 1997, and their current number is about 3,500. At the beginning of 1998, there were around 6,000 active members of this congregation in Latvia.[17] The year 1995 was critical in *Jauna Paaudze*'s development: the number of adherents doubled in Riga. In this city, for example, there are now around 850 "house groups" consisting of about 5 members. Throughout Latvia, there are approximately 1,000 such "cells." A more intense and independent religious life results from this type of organization. The growth of the *Jauna Paaudze* movement

has been determined, to a large extent, by the popularity of its leader, Alexei Lebedev. It should be noted that this is a purely Latvian movement, although it has connections with similar movements in Germany and Russia.[18]

Prieka Vests is a very similar Christian congregation. It was first registered on 1 February 1991 in Riga and re-registered on 28 February 1996. Its founders were once members of the Riga Baptist congregation *Golgata* [Calvary]. In 1991, the number of members of this congregation was between 150–200; in 1993, this total had grown to about 400, and at the end of 1996, to about 700 active members. At the beginning of 1998, there were about 2,000 active members in this congregation. Throughout Latvia, there are about 8,000 supporters of *Prieka Vests*.[19] The major difference between *Jauna Paaudze* and *Prieka Vests* is probably their respective ethnic compositions: *Prieka Vests* has a larger number of Latvians.

In its Sunday services, *Prieka Vests* deals with immediate problems. The members of the congregation sing hymns to God, dance, speak in tongues, and practice the laying on of hands. The everyday activities of *Prieka Vests* are also organized according to the principle of "house groups." There are several such groups in Riga. The congregation established a primary school in 1995 and organizes regular services for youth and adolescents. There is also a prayer group, *Latvijas berni Dievam* [Latvian Children for God], a businessmen's support group, a working group of the publishing house, an Israel group, an anti-abortion group (*Ja—dzivibai!* [Yes to Life!]), an anti-alcohol group, a group for evangelization, a dancing group, and a charity group. The tasks of the charity group include care for the sick and elderly, work with disabled people and orphans, and help for prisoners. The charity groups support the poor, buy products and audio cassettes for prisoners, and distribute donated money, clothes, and books to the sick. The congregation has its own book shop, where the magazine *Prieka Vests* is sold, and its own recording studio.

In 1986, a congregation in Kuldiga, *Dzivibas vards* [The Word of Life], started its development as a "family church." Gradually, people gathered around this small group—people "who had become aware of a God who can really answer prayers and can help in any situation of life."[20] Contacts were established with the congregations *Jauna Paaudze* and *Prieka Vests* and with other Christian congregations in the U.S., Sweden, and Denmark. In 1995–96, there were about 70–100 members in this congregation. Recently, *Dzivibas vards* has become active in other Latvian cities.

It is noteworthy that the new charismatic congregations are developing much faster than the older charismatic movements such as the Whitsuntide congregations or Pentecostals. The Whitsuntide

movement started in Latvia in 1927. Registration of its congregations was delayed for a long time in interwar Latvia; as a group, they were registered only in 1940. Before that, they were not regarded as a religious organization and therefore had to apply to authorities for each separate service as a civil public meeting. Under the Soviet occupation, the Whitsuntide congregations were severely repressed; however, the movement continued to exist. Their services were organized secretly, and their venues were often changed.

According to official statistics, there has been an increase in the number of Whitsuntide congregations, from 13 in 1991 to 30 in 1997. These congregations are members of the Latvian Association of Whitsuntide Congregations of the International God's Congregation and of the Latvian Whitsuntide Congregation's Center. There are 19 more Whitsuntide congregations which are not members of the association.[21]

The number of congregations has risen quickly since 1990. In 1989, there were about 200 Latvians and 300 Russians in the Whitsuntide congregations. In 1993, there were 640 Latvians and 1,000 Russians in the Association of Whitsuntide Congregations; by 1996 this number had increased to about 1,000 Latvians and 1,700 Russians, respectively. There are about 3,200 people active in the aforementioned independent congregations. Many of these charismatic congregants, however, migrate between congregations and therefore are counted in several churches at the same time. An important factor related to the increase in the number of the Whitsuntide congregations is that the congregations have divided according to ethnic affiliation. This process has been occurring since 1991. Another key factor is that the congregations are now established nearer the homes of believers, so the congregations become smaller while their number grows. In 1995, the Latvian Association of Whitsuntide Congregations decided to join the European Branch of the World Mission of Whitsuntide Congregations, with central offices in Germany. The Latvian Association was admitted in 1996, and this started a new stage in the history of Latvian Pentecostals.

The New Apostolic Church of North Rhine-Westphalia (of German origins) is also active in Latvia. The missionaries of this church appeared in Latvia at the beginning of the 1990s. According to available information, this church had about 800 followers in Latvia at the beginning of 1997. There are congregations of this church in Riga, Pelci, Jelgava, Sigulda, Upesciems, Jaunpils, Dobele, Tukums,[22] and probably elsewhere in Latvia. Unfortunately, we have no other data about the activities of the church's followers.

There is a religious minority that has had a peculiar place in the religious life of Latvia for more than seventy years—the Jehovah's Witnesses.[23] This millennial group has attracted a great deal of public attention during the past ten years. The church submitted its application

for registration as a religious society to the Religious Affairs Department of the Ministry of Justice in 1993. After extensive correspondence, the Ministry of Justice announced on 21 November 1994 that, in line with the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses was to be postponed for three years. In 1995, correspondence with the Religious Affairs Department was resumed in order to find out whether the Jehovah's Witnesses would be regarded as a new or an old religion in Latvia. This issue was brought before the Court of Zemgale Borough of Riga, which ruled on 26 May 1995 that "Jehovah's Witnesses started their activities in Latvia in 1933 under the name 'International Society of Bible Researchers.'"[24] However, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Latvia overruled the judgment of the Court of Zemgale Borough on 28 June 1995.[25] The next response from the Ministry of Justice regarding the refusal to register the Jehovah's Witnesses was dated 11 July 1996. The refusal was based on Clause 11, Paragraph 3, of the new Law on Religious Organizations, which provides that religious organizations shall not be registered "if their activities endanger the national security, public harmony and order as well as health and morals of other people, in case religious intolerance and hostility is propagated, or if otherwise such activities contradict the Republic of Latvia Satversme [Constitution] and legislation."[26] Significantly, Jehovah's Witnesses were allowed registration in Russia in March 1991, in Estonia in October 1991, and in Lithuania in July 1993. The Latvian Ministry of Justice finally granted a temporary registration to two Jehovah's Witnesses parishes in Riga on 12 October 1998. They must be re-registered every year for the next decade so that the Latvian State Bureau of Human Rights can monitor Witnesses' activities more closely.

In 1993, there were 423 Jehovah's Witnesses preachers in Latvia and 1,215 active supporters. By 1997, the number of preachers and supporters had grown to about 1,643 (it may have reached 1,681) and 3,956 respectively.[27] In 1997, 281 people were christened as Jehovah's Witnesses, and 372,706 religious lessons were given, including 1,597 Bible lessons.

Members of the public are often concerned about the attitude of Jehovah's Witnesses towards blood transfusion. These concerns are seen to be justified because one eighteen-year-old Jehovah's Witness died after she refused to undergo a medical blood transfusion. There was no public information available concerning the special views of Jehovah's Witnesses on these issues or on the alternative medical methods which could be used under such circumstances. In order to avoid a repeat of such situations, Jehovah's Witnesses in Latvia have established committees for communicating with hospitals.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, is a relatively new religion in Latvia.[28] The first four missionaries of this

church arrived in Latvia on 17 June 1992. They were accompanied by the president of the St. Petersburg's Mission and his wife. Their first service took place on 21 June. The missionaries continued their work, and there were twenty-two in attendance at the service on 5 July 1992. On 25 July 1992, the first new Latvian member of this church was christened. The first congregation of Mormons in Latvia, consisting of 48 members, was established on 30 May 1993, and a president of the congregation, two councillors, a secretary, and other officers were elected. The Baltic Mission was also established.

The church was split into two ethnic congregations in 1994, one Latvian, the other Russian. At the end of 1994, there were already 109 members (26 in the Latvian and 83 in the Russian congregation). By March 1997, there were about 245 members (65 in the Latvian and 180 in the Russian congregations).[29] The Latvian congregation added twenty new members by the end of 1997.[30] The Mormons publish three periodicals: the magazine *Liakhona* (in Russian), the children's magazine *Rostock* (also in Russian), and the magazine *Ensign* (in English).

The Holy Spirit Association for World-Wide Unification of Christianity, founded by Sun-Myung Moon, is also represented in Latvia. Its first missionaries arrived in 1991. Seminars dealing with moral, ethical, and educational issues were organized, and visits to Unification centers in the U.S. were arranged for artists, politicians, and students. Although this movement is not officially registered in Latvia as a religious organization, it carries out its activities through the mediation of different nongovernmental organizations. Thus, for example, *Sieviesu federacija par mieru visa pasaule* [Women's Federation for Peace World-Wide] was established in 1991. On 4 January 1996, the federation was officially registered as a nongovernmental organization. In November 1996, *Gimenu federacija par mieru visa pasaule* [Federation of Families for Peace World-Wide] was similarly established.

At present, the core of the Unification organization in Latvia consists of 55 persons, while the total membership is approximately 100.[31] On 17 March 1997, the movement organized the first "Family Festival" in Latvia, the central event of which was the ceremony for renewing marriage vows. Similar festivals were also organized on 27 April and 29 November in Riga. According to the movement's own data, ten such festivals have been held in Latvia altogether, during which 11,000 couples have renewed their marriages.[32]

In 1994, another Moon-sponsored initiative, the College Association for Research of Principles (CARP), was registered in Latvia as a nongovernmental and nonreligious organization. The association unites students who uphold Unificationist ideas. Its core in Latvia consists of about 40–50 people, while total membership stands at about 250 persons (including the so-called "friends" of the organization).

Beside the aforementioned organizations, there are several other more or less Christian-oriented groups active in Latvia. Thus, for example, *Kristus zinatnes draudze* [Christ's Science Congregation][33] and the so-called *Kristus otrreizejas atnaksanas draudze* [Christ's Second Coming's Congregation][34] are present in Riga, although details concerning membership totals are sketchy.

EASTERN RELIGIONS IN LATVIA

There are also a number of Eastern religions in Latvia as well as cultural centers and societies with an Asian orientation and religious interest. The Center for Eastern Culture URUSVATI,[35] for example, has existed in Latvia since 1992. This multiethnic center provides a common forum for more than fifteen different practicing Eastern religious movements.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) formally belongs to this center. At present, there are three ISKCON missions and temples located in Riga, Liepâja, and Daugavpils. These missions claim 200 consecrated adherents plus about 3,000 followers. The followers are people who study the group's teachings, visit its library, and take part in various festivities. Altogether, about 4,000 people are registered at these missions.[36] In March 1992, the international humanitarian program "Hare Krishna Food for Life" commenced operations in Latvia. Since that time, the program has distributed 1.5 million hot meals to four categories of needy people: disabled persons, pensioners, large families, and the unemployed. Initially, the attitude of the Latvian population towards the activities of this movement—the celebration of Jagannath, various marches along the city streets, and other events—was strictly negative. Currently, attitudes have become much more tolerant, although the dominant view among the public is that this religious movement is absolutely foreign and unacceptable for most people in Latvia.

The Sri Chinmoy movement is another member of the URUSVATI center. One of the aims of this movement is to promote international peace by sponsoring Peace Runs. It is noteworthy that one of the winners in these runs was Georgs Jermolajevs of Valmiera, a record holder in the super-marathon. The Sri Chinmoy Center has been officially registered with the Ministry of Justice since September 1994. The activities of the center are organized by nineteen people, and there are about 150–200 people throughout Latvia, aged 19–70, who assist at the center's various events, including lectures, concerts, poetry readings, exhibitions on spiritual issues, sports events, and peace campaigns.

Since 1993, the Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba movement has belonged to the URUSVATI Center.[37] At present, the membership of

this movement throughout Latvia is about 200 people.[38] The group claims that Sai Baba's doctrine is a religio-ethical and philosophical teaching rather than a pure religion and maintains strong ties with Indian spiritual movements related to Sai Baba. The Latvian Sai Baba organization now belongs to the so-called North-European region. The representative of this organization, Karina Keilisch from Bremen, said that the followers of Sai Baba in Latvia "feel much better than under the conditions of German clericalism. In Germany, it is unthinkable that Sai Baba's followers could speak on television or radio." The followers of Sai Baba in Latvia have ties with the Sai Baba movement in Russia (St. Petersburg) as well as with a similar movement in Lithuania.[39]

Among other spiritual and philosophical organizations with an Eastern orientation, we should mention the Rerikh's Society, established in 1930 by Felikss Lukins, and ten related groups.

The Bahai faith has also recently arrived in Latvia. The first events organized by the followers of this movement took place in Riga at the beginning of the 1990s. Initially, they attracted little notice, but gradually they became more popular, especially among artists. In 1995, the first congregation of Bahais was registered in Riga. The principal aim of Bahai-sponsored events is to acquaint would-be supporters with the history, teachings, and goals of the faith. Adjusting to the traditional attitudes of the Latvian population, Bahai believers emphasize that their major concern is with harmony in the family, country, and world.

Smaller groups belonging to the URUSVATI cultural center include the Sahaj Marg movement, with about one hundred practicing adherents, Agni Yoga, Aikido (Chinese medicine), Auro Soma, Babadzhi, Tao Cultural Society, and several other movements. The number of followers in these latter movements is less than one hundred.

Several other religious organizations of non-Western orientation exist in Latvia, including the Brahma Kumaris Spiritual University, the Riga Shintoist congregation *SINTO*, Sukyo Mahikari Latvian Center, Eckankar, and the Taoist congregation. All these organizations must be re-registered each year with the Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice.[40]

ECLECTIC GROUPS

There are also several eclectic religions active in Latvia. One of these is the Last Testament's Church or Vissarion's Congregation. This is a relatively new religious movement with the typical features of Russian messianism. It began on 18 August 1991 in the region of Krasnoyarsk.[41] There are elements of Christianity in Vissarion's (Sergei Torop) teaching, but Eastern religious themes dominate. Although Vissarion's

Congregation was officially registered in Riga in 1996, the beginnings of the movement were already present in 1992, when Vissarion visited Riga at the invitation of local ufologists. The teachings spread through video and audio recordings and through books and newspaper articles.

The movement's services are conducted only in Russian, emphasizing the special messianic role of Russia and of the Russian language in the unification of religions. As one might expect, the followers of Vissarion in Latvia are mainly from the Russian-speaking community. Although there are no precise data on the numbers of members, believers themselves maintain that about 700–1,000 people have accepted the teaching in Latvia.

Another unregistered group is the Church of Scientology, which exists covertly in Latvia. The ideas of this movement have become popular among certain physicians, especially psychiatrists. For the most part, however, these ideas are not perceived as a new religion but rather as a form of psychoanalysis. Officially, the Church of Scientology was registered in 1996 as the Humanitarian Center Dianetics. The center distributes L. Ron Hubbard's book, *Dianetics*, and organizes workshops, lectures, and courses. About 300 people completed the basic course of training in Dianetics in 1997.

THE LATVIAN NATIONAL RELIGION, *dievturîba*

This picture of modern religious life in Latvia would be incomplete if we bypassed a religion that claims most directly to represent and express the Latvian national identity. This is the Latvian national religion, *dievturîba.*

This religion emerged at the beginning of this century and acquired the status of a religious organization in 1926. In 1936, its status was changed to that of a public society (nongovernmental organization). The leader of *dievturi* (as the adherents of *dievturiba* are called), Ernests Brastins, was arrested in 1940 by the Soviet authorities and died in detention the same year. During the Soviet regime, *dievturîba* was maintained as a religion by exiled Latvians. The movement was restored in Latvia during the mid-1980s, and a national revival began.

Dievturi have no pastors or priests, and they do not have prayers. Instead of prayers, they have *svetrunas* [holy speeches] praising work, beauty, the homeland, and other sacred values. At the beginning of the 1990s, *dievturi* met for their holy praises every fortnight, but now the meetings are held infrequently. According to statistics, however, the number of *dievturi* and their congregations in Latvia are growing. Thus, the first *sadraudze* [community or congregation] of *dievturi* was officially registered in 1992.[42] In January 1998, 12 congregations with 448

members were in existence according to the data of the Department of Social and Religious Affairs.[43]

Dievturi also have a group of supporters whom they call *labveli* [well-wishers]. These are people, mostly in the countryside, who support the movement of *dievturi* while remaining members of Christian congregations. The number of these supporters could range from a couple of hundred to several thousand. *Dievturi* themselves say that "everybody who feels him- or herself Latvian is *dievturis*."[44] There is also *Latvju Dievturu Sadraudze* [the Community of Latvian *Dievturi*], which includes six congregations: one in Germany, one in England, two in the U.S., one in Canada, and one in Australia.

Relations between *dievturi* and Christians, especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church, have long been strained. *Dievturi* describe Christianity as a religious outlook that is foreign to Latvians[45] and which was forced upon them in the thirteenth century by German crusaders. For its part, the Christian church's position is articulated by Archbishop Jânis Vanags, who has maintained that *dievturiba* is not a religion

since it was established as a system by a certain group of people in 1920s. No religion is created in such manner; religions are not the result of intellectual endeavor. *Dievturiba* could at best be seen as an effort to reconstruct the religion of the Balts, and the probability [of similarity with the original version] is very doubtful. Sources are very scanty, and it is a very risky enterprise to try to build a religion on this base.[46]

Whatever its relations with traditional religions, this movement is close in spirit to the ideals of many nationalist-minded Latvians. The present government, respecting the fact that *dievturiba* upholds national traditions, has officially recognized it as a religious organization. *Dievturi* do not have the opportunity to teach their ideas at school in religious classes as the major Christian confessions do. Instead, children learn about many of these ideas in the so-called *Baltas sundas* [White lessons] when Latvian culture is studied. It is worth noting that many of those who initially turned to *dievturiba* looked for its connections with the original Baltic religions and the older Indo-European religions, and later joined other religious movements such as the Krishna Society.[47]

CONCLUSION

The various religious movements mentioned in this article do not, of course, reflect the whole spectrum of religious life in Latvia today. There are certainly many other organizations, societies, and groups about which there are no data available from official sources. Even so,

from this overview of new religions in Latvia it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

1. What is most noticeable is the steady entry of new religions into Latvia. The number of adherents to these religious movements is, however, proportionally rather small—about 1.5 percent of the number of total permanent inhabitants. Most popular among these new religions are the various Christian charismatic movements.

2. Typically, growth in NRMs occurs as a result of conversion among younger people. However, in Latvia and other Baltic and East-European countries, people from the middle and older generations also join these NRMs. These are people who, under the Communist regime, abandoned their religious beliefs and are now seeking to fulfil their religious needs. These older members give stability to their respective congregations, although this sometimes turns into conservatism.

3. One of the major reasons why people turn to new religions is their *search for identity*. If they fail to find their place in the current social order—which in Latvia includes, among other things, the idea of the realization of the nation-state—they look for their "niche" elsewhere, sometimes finding it in nontraditional religions.

4. Although the new religions in Latvia are multiethnic, the majority of people belonging to them are Russian-speaking. Other ethnic minorities join these movements as well as Latvians who do not speak Latvian. Not speaking the Latvian language makes it difficult for people to join some of the traditional Latvian religions (apart from the Orthodox Church, the Old-Believers, and the Russian congregations of Baptists and Adventists) because the services are held in Latvian and are shaped by a Latvian mentality that is not always comprehensible or attractive to people from other ethnic groups. At present, the services of many new religions are held in Russian, lessening the possibility of language and cultural barriers. Nevertheless, ethnic division is also taking place in some of the new religions. The Whitsuntide congregations, as has been mentioned, are splitting along ethnic lines.

5. The new religions emerging in Latvia have their own charismatic leaders, and the development and popularity of these religions depend to a large extent on the activities of these leaders. At the same time, there are almost no strong local leaders in those movements which have entered Latvia from abroad. In these cases, the original charismatic leaders of these movements, such as the Reverend Sun Myung Moon and Vissarion, are revered and sometimes made into god-like figures.

6. Since most of the new religions in Latvia are currently in their formative stages, they have a tendency to self-isolation. The fact that they are sometimes involved in public processes should not be regarded as indicating a conscious desire for integration into the local community

and culture. It is rather an adaptation dictated by a religious minority's survival instinct.

7. We can expect new religious movements to continue to enter the religious life of Latvia. Further developments in the religious situation will be determined by the ethnic, social, cultural, and psychological aspects of Latvian society, especially in the major cities. Pluralism in religious life is determined by the generally democratic development of society. The Latvian public must be prepared for increasing religious pluralism. Unfortunately, there are to date no public information services available in Latvia which could meet the challenges posed by the current proliferation of religious alternatives. Instead, the relations between NRM members and the rest of society at present are often based on mutual prejudice and hostility.

ENDNOTES

[1] *Ceturta tautas skaitisana Latvija 1935. gada* [The Fourth National Census in Latvia in 1935] (1936), 71-72, 80; N. Gills, *Ievads* [Introduction], in *Religija. Vesture. Dzive.* [Religion. History. Life.] (Riga: *Latvijas Zinatnu Akademija. Filozofijas un sociologijas instituts* [Latvian Academy of Science. Institute of Philosophy and Sociology], 1993), 6-8.

[2] According to the instructions of the census, the *formal affiliation* of people to one or another religious confession was to be registered. Oftentimes, such affiliation was marked by rituals such as baptism. Therefore the data did not reflect the inner religious convictions of people. Some of those registered as belonging to a certain church or confession could actually be outside any parish or congregation.

[3] Old Believers denotes members of sects founded by dissenters from the Russian Orthodox Church who opposed the liturgical reforms of Nikon in the seventeenth century.

[4] Valdibas Vestnesis, No. 290, 21 December 1934.

[5] LVVA [Latvian State History Archive], 1370-371, 1. par. 2552 l., 45.

[6] Eileen Barker, "New Religious Movements in Europe," in *Religion in Europe: Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Sean Gill, Gavin D'Costa, and Ursula King (Kampen, Netherlands: Kos Pharos Publishing House, 1994), 136.

[7] Maija Grotuse, interview with author, Riga, 25 February 1997. Grotuse was one of the earliest activists in this movement.

[8] The number of followers of one or another religious confession is, of course, an important indicator of the social dynamism of religion. For more information, see R. F. Goeckel, "Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic Lutheran Churches and Their Role in the Liberalization Process," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 1 (1993): 135-38.

[9] This number was mentioned in the information issued on 1 April 1997 by the Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Latvian Ministry of Justice (Riga: Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Latvian Ministry of Justice), 1.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] This number was mentioned by the Department of Social and Religious Affairs. The Old Believers themselves have not stated any concrete figures.

[13] Data on the Latvian Association of Baptist Parishes as of 1 January 1997, published by the Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Latvian Ministry of Justice, Riga.

[14] Data on the Latvian Association of Seventh-day Adventist Parishes as of 1 March 1998, published by the Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Latvian Ministry of Justice, Riga.

[15] Data on the Latvian United Methodist Church as of 1 March 1998, published by the Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Latvian Ministry of Justice, Riga.

[16] This number was mentioned in the information issued on 1 April 1997 by the Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Latvian Ministry of Justice, Riga.

[17] Those who take part at *Jauna Paaudze* events at least twice a week.

[18] In 1996, there were 118 similar charismatic congregations and 15 missions in Russia.

[19] Data given by the leader of the congregation, Vilnis Gleske, interview with author, Riga, February 1998.

[20] *Draudze "Dzivibas Vards" Kuldiga.* [The Congregation "Dzivibas vards" in Kuldiga], *Prieka Vests* 3 (1995): 8.

[21] "The Number of Religious Congregations Registered in the State," information published by the Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice, Riga, 10 February 1998.

[22] "The New Religious Organizations, the Registration or Re-Registration of which was refused in 1997," information published by the Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice, Riga, 1 January 1998.

[23] In July 1926, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, with its center in Brooklyn, N.Y., sent representatives to Latvia where they opened an office in Riga. Many representatives of this society in Latvia worked as book vendors, giving them a formal excuse to visit people at their homes. As they sold books, they also offered their religious literature and proselytized. Despite the official negative attitudes towards this society, it was registered in 1933. But it was closed after the coup on 15 May 1934 under the Law on Societies, Associations, and Political Organizations during the Emergency Rule. The Jehovah's Witnesses were also proscribed during the Nazi and Soviet occupation. In 1951, political cases were brought against the Jehovah's Witnesses, and many of them were deported to Northern and Eastern regions of the USSR.

[24] Judgment of the City of Riga Zemgale Borough Court, Case No. 2-2452, 26 May 1995.

[25] Decision of the Republic of Latvia Supreme Court's Board, Case No. CK-1429, 28 June 1995.

[26] The Law on Religious Organizations, Clause 11, Paragraph 3. *Zinotajs*, No. 21, 2 November 1995.

[27] These numbers are based upon those people who took part in the Jesus Christ's death commemoration.

[28] We will describe more closely the entry of this church into Latvia, since it reveals tendencies which are common for the entry of new religions in this country.

[29] According to the data provided by a member of the Church Velga Senkane, interview with author, Riga, 10 February 1998.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Data given by representatives of this organization in January 1998.

[32] In July 1997, the president of this organization, Ms. M. Hazane, said that there were about 10,000 Moonie couples in Latvia.

[33] "The New Religious Organizations, the Registration or Re-Registration of which was refused in 1997," information published by the Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice, Riga, 1 January 1998.

[34] Andris Bernats, *"Latvietis brauks meklet fermeri Jezu"* [Latvian will go to look for the Farmer Jesus], *ìVakara Zinasî*, 18 February 1998, 5.

[35] This center was established by several members of Rerikh's Society, and it was named therefore after the holy name of Helen Rerikh.

[36] Those registered at a mission have the right to receive food regularly.

[37] See above concerning the start of this movement in Latvia.

[38] There were about 150 active followers at the beginning of 1997.

[39] Maija Grotuse, interview with author, Riga, 25 February 1997. Grotuse is a member of the Sai Baba movement.

[40] "Religious Organizations Registered for One Year," information sheet of the Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice, 10 February 1998.

[41] There are about 50,000 followers of the Last Testament's Church in 83 places in Russia as well as in countries neighboring Russia. This church was registered in Russia in 1995. At the initiative of the followers of Vissarion, the construction of an ecologic *Home* was started in the Region of Krasnoyarsk, near Lake Tiberkul. The leader of the church is Vissarion himself. He selects and consecrates other spiritual workers of the church and members of the Council of the Church. These and other data are from *Religiozniye obyedinenia Rossiyskoi Federatsii. Spravochnik* [Religious Organizations of the Federation of Russia. Guidebook] (Moscow: Respublikai Publishing House, 1996), 228-30.

[42] See N. Gills, *Ievads* [Introduction], in *Religija. Vesture. Dzive.* [Religion. History. Life], 11.

[43] "The Number of Religious Congregations Registered in the State," information published by the Department of Social and Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice, Riga, January 1998.

[44] Aija Prince, interview with author, Riga, 6 March, 1997.

[45] For example, *dievturi* do not recognize the notion of sin (especially original sin) and the related sense of guilt and release from sins.

[46] "Dialogs ar biskapu" [Dialogue with the Bishop], *Rigas Balss* (newspaper), 4 March 1994, 4.

[47] Imants Gravelsins, interview with author, Riga, 24 February 1997. Gravelsins is the leader of ISKCON's foreign relations department.

Invented Culture/Invented Religion: The Fictional Origins of Contemporary Paganism

Michael York

ABSTRACT: Is the current milieu represented by Wicca, Goddess Spirituality, and reconstructed forms of Druidry, Celtic Mysteries, and Asatru, among others, a new religious culture? As part of the methodological examination of the question of culture creation, this paper compares the artificial origins of Shinto in Meiji Japan with today's Anglo-American pagan attempts toward resacralizing the natural world. Despite the increasingly multifaceted character of Western pagan sectarianism (chaos and thelemic magic, urban shamanism, Wicca, and even New Age), an emergent ecologically-based sacrality can be observed which cuts across these many divides. The so-called "eco-magick" movement known as Dragon in the United Kingdom and abroad is one recent quasi-institutionalized example. Dragon's involvement with the protest against the Newbury bypass indicates the kind of conflict possible with a dissenting religio-cultural identity based on nontraditional understandings of the sacred.

As Margot Adler's book, *Drawing Down the Moon* (1986), makes clear, contemporary Western paganism owes much of its current impetus to the modern religion of Wicca or Witchcraft—a religious movement that appears to have been inspired by Gerald Gardner in Britain during the 1930s and 1940s. Gardner, in turn, had been heavily influenced by the Egyptologist and anthropologist Margaret Murray, who argued that the medieval witch-hunt represented the culmination of Christian persecutions against a Paleolithic religion centered on a god of the hunt and a goddess of fertility. Although Wiccans and most other Neo-pagans are predominantly focused upon the Goddess and the God, current thought within this movement tends to dismiss Gardner's claims that he had been initiated into a coven surviving from the underground fertility religion described by Murray.

In the words of Aidan Kelly, Gardner simply "instituted a major religious reform,"[1] while Tanya Luhrmann recognizes Gardner as the "inventor" of modern Witchcraft.[2]

The fictional origins of contemporary paganism as an invented religion or culture may be compared to the alleged invention of modern Shinto in Japan. Although both religions make claims to being ancient, they are in fact relatively contemporary fabrications. While I do not personally subscribe to the thesis which contends that Japanese Shinto is an artificial religion, there is a school of thought (that includes Brian Bocking, Basil Hall Chamberlain, Allan Grapard, Kuroda Toshio, Murakami Shigeyoshi, Michael Pye, and Sakurai Haruo, among others) which contends that Shinto, as essentially a state-sponsored creation under the Meiji government, successfully created a false sense of Japanese religious history in Japan's national culture. While each of the above-named "members" of this school enunciate this contention in varying degrees, in the argument which follows I have drawn largely from Grapard. My ultimate interest is in the continued evolution of Neo-paganism as a sectarian movement which (despite its origins) conforms in essential pattern to the initial trajectories of other new religions.

THE SHINTO ARGUMENT

Allan Grapard of Honolulu's East-West Center refers to the development of cultic centers in Japan as a fundamental aspect of Japanese religions and culture. In 1868, the ideologues of the Meiji Restoration undid all associations between Shinto and Buddhist divinities:

> . . . the dissociations ordered by the Meiji government were destructive moves aimed at [the cultic] centers, but they were, first and foremost, attempts at modifying religious consciousness. That could not be done without an ideology . . . that, while attempting to take the guise of a rediscovery of history, was in fact the institutionalization of cultural lies.[3]

For Grapard, the government "pretended" to be returning to the real source of Japanese identity and religious consciousness, but what it was really doing "was creating from bits and pieces a 'religion' that was to become no more than a tool for coercion dedicated to the support of 'structure.'"[4] In effect, according to Grapard, the Meiji ideologues formulated a new Shinto. As Kuroda Toshio puts it, to "regard Shinto as a unique religion existing independently throughout history . . . is not only an incorrect perception of the facts but also a one-sided

interpretation of Japanese history and culture . . . [b]efore modern times Shinto did not exist as an independent religion."[5] For Kuroda, though the concept first developed with political reforms at the beginning of the ninth century and was furthered with the rise of Yoshida Shinto (the Shinto-only school) at the end of the fifteenth century, "the notion of Shinto as Japan's indigenous religion finally emerged complete both in name and in fact with the rise of modern nationalism . . . ."[6]

By focusing on the history of the Tônomine cultic center, Grapard is able to show that the cult was probably Buddhist to start with and nothing else. In fact, the deification of great political figures and deceased leaders in Japan invariably "began as a Buddhist cult, became syncretic during the medieval period, and finally became 'Shinto' only in 1868."[7] With the *shimbutsu bunri* or dissociation of Shinto and Buddhist divinities, Buddhist elements which had been structurally significant and present since the beginning were removed from such cults in 1868. In that year,

> Tônomine received . . . specific orders from the government: (1) all monks must return immediately to lay life; (2) all Buddhist representations, buildings, and objects of the cult must be removed; and (3) all divinities bearing syncretic names must be renamed.[8]

By continuing to specialize in either Buddhist or Shinto studies, the modern student is thereby "throwing most of Japanese culture out the window."[9] The contention here is that the separation of academic focus to either Buddhism or Shinto is artificial and misses therefore the religious unity of Japanese culture. Concerning the Meiji creation or invention of modern Shinto, Grapard can conclude that "the destruction of [the] syncretic art and treatises [of Japan] is beyond imagination."[10] He also categorically affirms that "the usual arguments of modernization, urbanization, industrialization, and secularization advanced by scholars who project European and American models do not, in fact, stand for Japan."[11] As Basil Hall Chamberlain declared in 1912, "religions are sometimes manufactured for a special end—to subserve practical worldly purposes."[12]

WESTERN NEO-PAGANISM

Given the possibility that Meiji ideologues constructed a religion and falsified the past, I wish to examine the contemporary development of Neo-paganism and Goddess Spirituality to discern what, if any, parallels might exist between the two movements. In what ways can the

emergent paganism of the West be seen as an invented religion? Finally, I wish to reflect upon the validity of religious expression regardless of whether it is new and innovative or old and traditional.

To begin with, let me state from the beginning that there is little or no evidence that modern earth spiritualities and related traditions in the West are anything but contemporary creations. Instead, the modern Neo-pagan movement deriving from Gardner, Murray, Charles G. Leland, Robert Graves, and Doreen Valiente can be seen as a multiple conflation of numerous traditions or sources, many of which were patently contrived or even erroneous. Part of the impetus of modern witchcraft stems from the nineteenth-century ideas proposed or imagined by two German scholars, Karl Ernest Jarcke and Franz Joseph Mone, and the French historian Jules Michelet. These writers alleged that the victims of the "witchcraft" persecutions during the Middle Ages were the survivors of the pre-Christian religion of Europe.

Subsequently, in his book, *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches* (1899), the American Charles G. Leland drew on Michelet's 1862 *La Sorcière* and termed this reputed faith the "Old Religion," alleging that it had survived in secret. Its adherents were said to conduct their ceremonies unclothed. Ronald Hutton advises that, since Leland's is largely "an original composition," it represents more of a forgery than a plagiarism.[13] The "classic" formulation of the Great Witch Hunt thesis, however, was developed by the Egyptologist Margaret Alice Murray. She contended that the witch persecutions represented the extermination of the remnants of European paganism and arranged her evidence accordingly—ignoring whatever contradicted her position. Murray published *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* in 1921 and (influenced by Sir James Frazer's flawed compendium, *The Golden Bough*) *The God of the Witches* in 1933 and *The Divine King in England* in 1954.[14] Confusing the recorded parodies of Christian ceremonies as the original rituals of Leland's "Old Religion," she developed the notion of the Horned God and the Goddess and confabulated the Celtic quarter days as the tradition's main celebrations or *sabats* ("sabbaths"). Murray also argued that the witches were organized into covens whose prime concern was fertility.[15]

Also influenced by Frazer, Robert Graves, in his fictional work *The White Goddess* (1944), turned the alleged Corn Maiden into the Triple Goddess of virgin, matron, and hag. Many of Graves' ideas can be viewed as reworkings of Lady Charlotte Guest's *The Mabinogion* (1849). This book unfortunately and unwittingly included several of the forged texts added by Edward Williams to his *Canu Taliesin* ("Song of Taliesin"), which Hutton proposes was first developed by the Gogynfeirdd (*c.*1080–*c.*1350) as a new Welsh mythology incorporating supernatural figures created by these "fairly early poets."[16] Hutton contends that "pseudo-

Celticism," like the Old Religion, is not continuous with pre-Christian paganism. This early pagan tradition had ceased to exist with the conversion of Europe to Christianity save for its absorption into Christianity itself, its transformation into magic, its artistic legacy, and its various survivals in superstition and folk culture.[17] Where the modern Neo-pagan movement does reveal an ancient continuity (at least to Hellenistic Egypt) is in the magic tradition, which can be traced subsequently through the medieval grimoires, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, the Templars, the works of Eliphas Levi and S. L. MacGregor Mathers, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, and Aleister Crowley.[18]

This tradition of magical practices, along with various English folk customs and ideas from Margaret Murray and Charles Leland, became synthesized in the 1940s by Gerald Brosseau Gardner (1884–1964), a retired English colonial civil servant, who appears almost single-handedly to have fashioned the contemporary Wiccan movement.[19] Before the British repeal of the Witchcraft Act in 1951, Gardner published two novels, *A Goddess Arrives* (1941) and *High Magic's Aid* (1949). In 1954, he released *Witchcraft Today* (with a preface by Murray), followed by *The Meaning of Witchcraft.* It was Gardner, moreover, who added the solstices and equinoxes to Murray's major witch festivals, creating the present Wiccan calendar of eight *sabats.*

In Gardner's wake, a host of competing Wiccan sub-traditions have emerged drawing from the "earth mysteries," Celtic "revivalism," Native American religions, Eastern—chiefly Hindu—concepts, radical feminism, and an alleged "oral tradition" (e.g., via Victor Anderson and Starhawk's Fairy Tradition). Unlike pre-Christian paganism with its polytheism, practice of worship, temples, permanent shrines, and preoccupation with welfare or prosperity, Wicca and Neo-paganism in general are bi-theistic and magic oriented (in which deities or "powers" are conjured to serve the celebrant). Ceremonial expression typically occurs through an *ad hoc* ritual circle, and currently the movement maintains a predominant concern with environmental protection.

Consequently, modern witchcraft or Wicca owes its essential origins, via Gardner, to the Murray thesis of a fertility cult worshipping a god and goddess, celebrating the Celtic quarter festivals, and organized into covens. The once popular argument, that the victims of the medieval Inquisition were the remnants of an earlier fertility religion who had survived despite the advent and success of the Roman Catholic Church, has now been exposed as a conscious selection, repression, and manipulation of evidence.[20] In other words, it is a patent forgery and becomes an invented base for a religion which differs little in essentials from what Grapard, Chamberlain, Kuroda, Murakami, and Bocking allege to be the fabricated foundation for modern Shinto.

RONALD HUTTON'S "POLITICS OF THE GREAT GODDESS"

In a startling paper delivered by Ronald Hutton at the Lancaster University's "Nature Religion Today" conference held in 1996, the issue of the "politics of the Great Goddess" and the conflict between professional British and American archaeology was raised. In his talk, Hutton interpreted the development of the modern concept of the Great Goddess as largely a Romantic creation, concluding that the archaeological reality of a universal veneration of the Goddess throughout the Neolithic southeast and megalithic northwest of Europe is once again an open question. Hutton emphasized the role of Jacquetta Hawkes as a best-selling author and respected scholar who doubtlessly influenced three major British archaeologists (Gordon Childe, O. G. S. Crawford, and Glyn Daniel) "to declare in the mid-1950s that Neolithic and Chalcolithic Europe had been devoted to the worship of the Great Goddess."[21] Hutton points out that Jacquetta Hawkes belonged to the same romanticized conservative tradition as did the life-long Tory Jane Harrison:

> She [Hawkes] idealized a woman-centered Neolithic because she believed that women were the great forces for conservatism in the world. Her two great hatreds were science and socialism, and her favorite period was the eighteenth century, when the aristocracy lorded it over the land in beautiful houses and gardens and everything was kept in order.[22]

When the "New Archaeology" of the 1960s sought to challenge the presuppositions held by Childe, Harrison, and their contemporaries, "Nobody fought it more bitterly than Hawkes, who became the loudest voice of reactionary prehistory in the British scholarly community."[23]

From the point of view of the Tory "Old Guard," the Neolithic Great Goddess opposed the messy and insecure contaminations represented by science, technology, and socialism. The rising generation of British scholars between 1965 and 1975, then, were glad to see the Goddess "toppled from her throne" along with the idealization of "Nature," essentialist notions of gender, and the sexist stereotypes that masqueraded in Erich Neumann's work as natural archetypes. According to Hutton, "to many British historians, therefore, it was shock and a surprise when the old images and the old ideas came back to Britain from America in the late 1970s and 1980s, but this time as part of a radical discourse."[24] Mary Daly, Susan Griffin, Adrienne Rich, and Marija Gimbutas had continued the old notion of an essential female nature but attached to it a liberationist agenda rather than a conservative reactionary one. The British and American positions were incompatible, however, and, according to Hutton, "British archaeologists and historians of my generation had built up a whole series of excellent arguments for not believing in the Great Goddess of the conservatives" which were

not easily dismissed though the American representation associated them with a new political position.[25]

As the modern paradigm of science and technology has come to be questioned increasingly and the resultant environmental costs have become more apparent, writers like Gimbutas or Michael Dames who could reach a mass audience have been able to diffuse the American ideas rapidly amongst the British radical subculture. This subculture includes the Neo-paganism of Britain along with its similar expressions in North America, Western Europe, and Oceania.

EVALUATING NEO-PAGANISM

In their initial phase, founded religions appear as expressions of marginal subcultures. In today's understanding, nascent Christianity would itself be assessed as a "cult." Contemporary Western paganism appears to be no exception to this general pattern, and here the seminal leaders, organizers, or creators include Aleister Crowley, Gerald Gardner, Doreen Valiente, Alexander Sanders, Zsuzsanna Budapest, and Starhawk (Miriam Simos), among others. Unlike mainstream Christianity and Judaism and traditional forms of Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, and more like such movements as Scientology, ISKCON, and the Unification Church, it is simply a new religion, one without a long continuity or fully developed history.[26] As a disparate but interconnected network, Neo-paganism often seeks validation through linking itself to a pre-Christian legacy—whether Greek, Celtic, Nordic, Egyptian, or Neolithic Goddess worship. Despite these attempts at historical validation, Neo-paganism falls short: either its theology, organization, or practice are radically different from earlier traditions or its understandings of these early traditions is unfounded or archaeologically/anthropologically erroneous. Although New Age religion, with which Neo-paganism is often compared, makes little or no attempt to identify with earlier forms of spirituality,[27] it, like contemporary paganism, generally stresses a radical individual exegesis that endorses personalized shopping and unhindered selection from within the emergent spiritual supermarket.

NEO-PAGANISM AND MEIJI SHINTO

As both the development of Meiji Shinto and Goddess-centered Neo-paganism indicate, political factors may play a role in the development of a new religion, whether for purposes of control or of protest. Modern paganisms are frequently termed reconstructed religions and, with regard to their reinvention of their pasts, may be seen to parallel the

Meiji creation of a Shinto identity. Indeed, both religious orientations could be viewed as deliberate and conscious constructions. The major difference between this new understanding of Western paganism as the ancient, indigenous, and pure religion of Europe and that of Shinto in post-Meiji Restoration Japan is that the one was a state-sponsored governmental initiative and the other a subcultural protest. To date, Neo-paganism has no official sanction or corporate backing and remains essentially covert and marginal. In Britain, its religious appeal appears limited to the media-dubbed "New Age Travelers" on one hand and to computer programmers and higher education academics on the other. The movement's nonconformist orientation along with its intense valorization of the natural remains paramount. At the present time, both the Pagan Federation and the Pagan Hospice and Funeral Trust are engaged in protracted negotiations with the British Charity Commission for acceptance or preservation of trust status. The Charity Commission, however, contends that, since there is no generally accepted definition of the term, paganism is not a recognized or official religion. It is therefore ineligible in its bid to be a legal charity. In a move to counter the process now underway to strip the Pagan Hospice and Funeral Trust of its current position as a charity, the organization has renamed itself the Voyager Trust.

Also in contrast to the reputed governmental invention of Japanese Shinto,[28] Western paganism is largely a spontaneous and unorganized response from a more "grass-roots" level, one that conforms to Gerlach and Hine's SPIN or segmented-polycentric-integrated-network model for survival in a nonsupportive or hostile environment.[29] In other words, the key difference is one in which a network is to be contrasted to an organized institution. The search for meaning through the varieties of individual religious experience available in Neo-paganism appears to be a counterbalancing response to what sociologists recognize as an increase of secularization in Western cultures.[30] This is not to say that the increase in numbers attracted to new religious movements (and to renewal movements such as the charismatic movement within mainstream Christianity) offsets the numbers lost by mainstream churches, but that the turn to alternate forms of religiosity may be a mitigating factor with regard to secularizing trends. Following Felicitas Goodman's assertion that "in the long run . . . humans cannot tolerate ecstasy deprivation," the increasing appeal of what the Church of England condemns as popular superstitious behavior may constitute culturally inspired reactions to secular dominance in the West.[31] Nonrational conduct connected with the Toronto Blessing and other charismatic phenomena, with New Age forms of the paranormal, and with Neo-pagan rituals may develop from the human need to "slip" on occasion into an ecstatic experience shaped by an individually-oriented religious alternative.

INTERPRETING CONTEMPORARY PAGANISM

The emergence of "complexity theory" as a means to understand progress and evolution carries with it a series of political implications that can play a role in religious reflection and socio-political positioning. The theology of re-enchantment typical of the new paganism corresponds in essence to what complexity theorist Brian Arthur refers to as the complex approach of Taoism. He contrasts this approach with the standard but waning Protestant belief that "if we act as individuals in our own right, if we pursue our own righteous self-interest and work hard, and don't bother other people, then the natural equilibrium of the world will assert itself . . . [and] we get the best of all possible worlds—the one we deserve."[32] In Arthur's Taoism and in an increasingly modern and postmodern secularist perception, there is no inherent order to the world: the universe is understood as vast, amorphous, and ever-changing, with patterns repeating although never exactly. In contrast to the traditional Protestant outlook in the West, Arthur concludes that "if you quietly observe the flow, realizing that you're part of it, realizing that the flow is ever-changing and always leading to new complexities, then every so often you can stick an oar into the river and punt yourself from one eddy to another."[33] This general "going-with-the-flow" attitude is typical of contemporary paganism in which, on occasion, the practitioner resorts to a ceremonial rite to effect change in accordance with will and to move "from one eddy to another."

If paganism in the West has largely fictional origins and comprises a polyphony of consciously invented or reconstructed religions, it nevertheless is not only growing through such pan-national organizations as Circle, the Pagan Spirit Alliance, EarthSpirit, the Pagan Federation, and the Fellowship of Isis and in such diffusions as small household gatherings meeting to celebrate the pagan sabats or festivals; it is also emerging into new forms which become, *à la* "complexity theory," something greater than simply the sum of its sectarian parts. The British-based and London-headquartered Dragon Environmental Group and the Dongas Tribe (who protest new road building) are among the foremost expressions of this new pagan spirituality.[34] Typically, Dragon and Dongas employ a combination of "eco-magickal" practices and environmental campaigns. These last include the cleaning up of a holy well in North Penwith; protesting the proposed road bypasses in Lancaster, Blackburn, and Newbury; campaigning against the Criminal Justice Bill; and supporting such organizations as the Wildlife Trust and the Freedom Network. Both groups emphasize the use of ritual ceremony based on ancient myth or what has been criticized as an "atavistic taste for supernaturalism."[35] In these ways, a dissenting theological identity finds that "going with the flow" leads to political conflict.

Consequently, another form of moving "from one eddy to another" is exemplified by these more activist enterprises of which the road protest activities are typical. These actions "go with the flow" in the sense that the participants frequently know from the start that their efforts are ultimately doomed. In the final analysis, the protests amount to publicity statements as well as prolonged delaying tactics, augmented by magical rites, which have little chance of success against state-backed opposition. Nevertheless, the magical protest efforts remain justified to the protester through his or her perception of an immanent sacrality within nature that is unaffected by the lack of any inherent order to the world. In this sense, complexity theory and a theology of re-enchantment combine to legitimate the participation of growing numbers of people in Neo-paganism and its emergent confrontation with urbanization.

While it cannot be doubted that Western paganism is a new and recently invented religion, it still increasingly exhibits the ceremonial, social, quasi-political, and mystical behaviors characteristic of religion in general. It may, in fact, be compared to the general trajectories of other religions, including that of Meiji Shinto, which have to one degree or another been formulated or constructed by founders, councils, and participants. In the case of Neo-paganism, it appears to be a new religion that is increasingly finding its own niche in contemporary society. However, without the official endorsement that Shinto received under Meiji Japan, the prospects of the modern pagan movement becoming something more than a grass-roots religiosity and subcultural ecological protest movement are dubious at best.

ENDNOTES

[1] Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 81.

[2] Tanya M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 3.

[3] Allan G. Grapard, "Japan's Ignored Cultural Revolution: The Separation of Shinto and Buddhist Divinities in Meiji (*shimbutsu bunri*) and a Case Study: Tônomine," *History of Religions* (1984): 245.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Toshio Kuroda, "Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 7 (1981): 3, 6. Kuroda explains that "Based on recent studies, it is clear that Shinto was another term for Taoism in China in the same period [the 8th century A.D.]." He continues that in view of the possibility that there was an attempt to establish a Taoist tradition in Japan, "Japan's ancient popular beliefs were not so much an indigenous religion but merely a local brand of Taoism . . . ." See further, Murakami Shigeyoshi, *Japanese Religion in the Modern Century* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1980).

[6] Ibid. A further instance of governmental manipulation in the invention and structuring of Shinto might be seen in the implementation of *jinja gappei* or "shrine merger" which occurred in the late Meiji era, reaching its peak in the years 1906–1910. This policy of shrine consolidation was part of a Japanese government program to reconstruct state finances. See Sakurai Haruo, "Tradition and Change in Local Community Shrines," *Acta Asiatica: Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture* 51 (Studies on Shinto) (Tokyo: The Tôhô Gakkai, 1987). See further, Brian Bocking, "Fundamental Rites? Religion, State, Education and the Invention of Sacred Heritage in post-Christian Britain and pre-War Japan," *Religion* 25 (1995): 228–31.

[7] Grapard, "Japan's Ignored Cultural Revolution," 259.

[8] Ibid., 263.

[9] Ibid., 242.

[10] Ibid., 245.

[11] Ibid., 265.

[12] Basil Hall Chamberlain, Appendix: "The Invention of a New Religion," *Japanese Things* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1912), 531.

[13] Ronald Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 301.

[14] The paperback edition of *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* was issued by Oxford University Press in 1962. A copy of this text casually displayed in a California home during the 1960s often became the means by which many Neo-pagans first made mutual recognition and contact. San Francisco's Strawberry Hill Coven was one group which came together this way in the late sixties. Presumably, this was a factor in the formation of Starhawk's (Miriam Simos') coven at this time as well.

[15] Hutton, *Pagan Religions,* 301–06. See also Michael York's *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-pagan Movements* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 102, 119.

[16] Hutton, *Pagan Religions,* 322.

[17] Ibid., 139 ff., 320–23.

[18] York, *The Emerging Network,* 305–06; Hutton, *Pagan Religions,* 337.

[19] York, *The Emerging Network,* 306.

[20] Ibid., 102–03, 396–97; Hutton, *Pagan Religions,* 301–07. See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 514–19; Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 102–25; and Jacqueline Simpson, "Margaret Murray: Who Believed Her, and Why?," *Folklore* 105 (1994): 89–96, concerning the shortcomings of Margaret Murray's work on the Great Witch Hunt. I am indebted to Professor Hutton for these references.

[21] Ronald Hutton, "The Discovery of the Modern Goddess," paper delivered to the conference, "Nature Religion Today: Western Paganism, Shamanism, and Esotericism in the 1990s," Lancaster University Lake District campus, 11 April 1996.

[22] Ibid. Hutton cites Jacquetta Hawkes' *A Land* (New York: Random House, 1952), 143–201; *Man on Earth* (New York: Random House, 1955); and *Man and the Sun* (New York: Random House, 1962), 212–41; and Jacquetta Hawkes and J. B. Priestley, *Journey Down A Rainbow* (London: Heinemann-Cresset, 1955), 277.

[23] Ibid., 14–15.

[24] Ibid., 17.

[25] Ibid., 18.

[26] Despite its claim to be a continuation of the Hindu tradition in the West, ISKCON represents a new religious movement both through its constituency and vis-à-vis its host community. I am also well aware that labeling Scientology a "new religion" is highly contentious. I not only employ a comprehensive definition of religion (*vide* Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient*

Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century (London: Thorsons, 1995), 158–59, but also follow contemporary sociological and phenomenological practice. For a recent presentation of this, see Ninian Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Qualification to be a religion is not dependent on whether we like or dislike the movement or organization in question.

[27] New Age and Neo-paganism are often identified as part of the same religious movement. With no standard doctrines for either religious persuasion, there is no clear or fixed identity concerning what constitutes either a New Ager or a Neo-pagan. There is, however, a *tendency* for New Age to view the godhead as transcendental and nature as an illusion, while modern paganism sees deity as immanent and nature as real. While it may be argued that some New Age traditions seek to rework ancient traditions, the standard criticism of the New Age movement is the largely superficial nature of its "pick-and-mix" spiritual assembling. New Age argues that the esoteric, occult, or wisdom tradition is now freely available and not the exclusive domain of an elite (see York, *Emerging Network*, 89–90). When, however, New Age and Neo-paganism are compared, the latter delves more deeply *into* the past. New Age, by contrast, is more oriented toward simply *using* ideas and spiritualities *from* the past.

[28] Although I have followed Grapard, Kuroda, et al.'s arguments concerning the artificial creation of Shinto, it is an argument with which I am not fully in accord. While religious studies departments in several British universities and colleges of higher education struggle to distance themselves from more traditional theologically oriented departments, there appears as an accidental by-product of this process a neglect of theological considerations in current phenomenological descriptions of religions. When, however, the distinct theologies of Shinto and Buddhism as, respectively, this-worldly and other-worldly forms of religiosity are appraised, it becomes clear that the folk religious origins of Shinto were operative independent of imported Buddhist concepts and Meiji reformulations. To the extent that Meiji Shinto represents a restructuring of earlier understandings, it may be considered as a manufactured religion and in this sense similar to Neo-paganism, but a totally invented religion Shinto is not.

[29] York, *The Emerging Network*, 324–29.

[30] See Amy Simes, "Contemporary Paganism in the East Midlands" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nottingham, 1995), 515.

[31] Felicitas D. Goodman, *Ecstasy, Ritual, and Alternative Reality: Religion in a Pluralistic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 171.

[32] M. Mitchell Waldrop, *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 330.

[33] Ibid., 330–31.

[34] For the Dongas Tribe which formed spontaneously in 1992, see George McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties* (London: Verso, 1996), 127–58. As McKay explains, "The very term Dongas Tribe derives from the landscape the tribe came together at the camp to preserve, Dongas being a Matebele name originally adopted in the nineteenth century by Winchester College teachers for the medieval pathways that crisscross the Downs."

[35] Ibid., 147.

Mircea Eliade and the Sacred Tradition (A Personal Account)

William W. Quinn, Jr.

It is doubtless safe to assume that many, if not most, readers of this journal know who Mircea Eliade was and what the sacred Tradition is. However, for those who do not, a brief introductory statement will be useful before proceeding to the heart of the matter. Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) was a Romanian scholar and savant who as a young man earned his Ph.D. from the University of Bucharest and spent the last several decades of his life as a professor at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. In addition to producing a tremendous corpus of published material, he was instrumental in the development of the discipline of the history of religions, an inclusive and nondogmatic approach to the study of religion. But Eliade was much more than an academic: he was also an author, linguist, poet, philosopher, and esotericist.

As to the sacred Tradition, for those familiar with the works of Ananda Coomaraswamy, René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, and the writers associated with them, no explanation is necessary. For those unfamiliar with the term, briefly stated, it is the belief in the existence of an esoteric, primordial Tradition based upon a set of *a priori* and immutable first principles, metaphysical in nature, true now as always, which in all places and in all times have had expositors. In many cases, but not in all, these expositors are believed to have been the revealers of new religions. Alternatively, they have used existing religious symbols and metaphors as heuristic devices to elucidate these first principles which inhere in all the world's religions and premodern philosophies. Of particular interest within the present context, these first principles can be identified as the bases, in one form or another, of many of the new religious movements that have appeared since the mid 1960s.

The issue to be discussed here is the understanding Mircea Eliade had of the Tradition as found in the sacred texts of the world's religions and as elucidated by Coomaraswamy, Guénon, and their associates. What follows is a personal account based upon a very close association I had with Eliade during the four-year period in which I was his student at the

University of Chicago. This account is first-hand and heretofore has never been disclosed in print for reasons which I will more fully explain.

The story begins in the early winter of 1977 upon my being accepted in the Master of Arts in Religious Studies program at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. I began as a part-time student with a full-time job, commuting to the university's downtown campus in Hyde Park from the Chicago suburb of Wheaton, the bucolic site of the national headquarters of the Theosophical Society in America. By the fall of 1977, I had left my employment as both managing editor of *The American Theosophist* magazine and associate editor of the Theosophical Publishing House, in which capacities I had served for five years. I moved to Hyde Park to become a full-time student and there rented a rather weathered studio apartment in which I lived for over four years.

Initially, my relationship with Eliade was thoroughly bound up with my relationship to the Divinity School. By June of 1978, when I was awarded the Master of Arts in Religious Studies from the Divinity School, Eliade had become something like a mentor to me in the philosophy of the sacred Tradition. As to my relationship with the Divinity School, things were much different. Since I had first met Eliade in the autumn quarter of 1977, when I enrolled in "Classics in the History of Religions" which he taught with Frank Reynolds, he had directed me to the study of the works of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, whose *philosophia perennis* was the subject of my master's thesis.[1] Coomaraswamy and the sacred Tradition, together with esotericism generally, were the subject areas I subsequently sought to pursue as a candidate for the Ph.D. in the Divinity School.

But that was not to be. Apparently (and ironically) the *philosophia perennis* was not considered sufficiently religious or sacred—or whatever the criteria were—for consideration as a subject of doctoral-level scholarly inquiry at the Divinity School. And this, quite frankly, irritated Eliade, who had sponsored my proposal and had met with me and then dean of the Divinity School Joseph Kitagawa to discuss the idea. Rejected by the Divinity School, Eliade almost single-handedly arranged that my proposal be considered by the Committee on the History of Culture in the Division of Humanities. It was accepted there, and I had the exceptional good fortune to work under the tutelage of Karl Wientraub, Chair of that Committee, with my three Ph.D. program, and later dissertation, advisors—Eliade, Martin Marty, and Wendy Doniger. In 1981, many courses, exams, languages, and one dissertation later, I was awarded the Ph.D. from the Committee on the History of Culture, Division of Humanities, University of Chicago. The title of my dissertation was "The Only Tradition: *Philosophia Perennis* and Culture in the Writings of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and René Guénon."[2]

The title of the dissertation fairly reflects its content. But it was more than an indispensable requirement for the Ph.D. It also reflects my

own views on the subject, consistent with a concept found in St. Augustine and cited more than once by Coomaraswamy, the first half of which is *crede ut intelligas* ("believe in order to understand"). *A fortiori*, the dissertation further reflects to a considerable extent Eliade's views on the *philosophia perennis*. I am perfectly aware, given the focus of recent and multiple scholarly studies on the oeuvre of Eliade,[3] that the preceding statement is likely to generate some controversy, the more so in light of the recent release of *The Only Tradition*, my revised and updated dissertation in book form published by SUNY Press in its Western Esoteric Traditions series. Creating controversy is not my intention in making the statement, however. Rather, my intention here is to recount a personal experience that I deemed was best left untold until now. To continue, then, the story of my association with Eliade is as follows.

In the autumn of 1977, upon enrolling in the "Classics in the History of Religions" course, a small seminar group of around twenty graduate students, I went to see Eliade by appointment in his third-floor office at the Lombard-Meadville Unitarian Seminary. We were to discuss paper topics and seminar presentations. For me, that first meeting was perhaps the most memorable. There was an instantaneous and mutual understanding of the qualitative type that needs no further explication to the intuitive. He asked about my background and my interests in the field of religious studies and listened politely and attentively as I told him of my theosophical perspectives and experience. It was during this first meeting that, in retrospect, I can say without exaggeration he changed the course of my life. In what I now perceive to be instruction, as against suggestion, he directed me to the works of Ananda Coomaraswamy and, with somewhat more caution, René Guénon. He further instructed me to minimize my use of the principal figures and literature of modern theosophy during my tenure as a student. Throughout the following years, I assiduously heeded this advice, which proved to be very sound. The effect of this advice was more like a sublimation than a repudiation of my views, and my ultimate success at the university as an intellectual cenobite and solitary advocate of the *philosophia perennis* was the proof of its wisdom.

During the course of the next four years, Eliade and I had many long and equally memorable discussions in his office at the seminary, virtually all of which involved the sacred Tradition and related areas. These discussions occurred within the context of the six regular courses and two individual reading courses I formally took with him as a matriculating student. In addition, we had other discussions, as needed, pertaining to issues that involved my master's thesis and doctoral dissertation, both of which he supervised. He spent his winters in Chicago, teaching at the university, and his summers in Paris, teaching *inter alia* at L'Ecole des Haute Etudes. This schedule conveniently

provided me with the time during the summer months to digest the insights gained during our winter discussions. I do not know if Eliade had any students in France who, like me, concentrated almost exclusively on the esoteric approach to religion and the *philosophia perennis*. But, notwithstanding the later arrival of Ioan Couliano at the Divinity School, I believe I was the only student at Chicago who could be so categorized, at least during the later years of Eliade's life. It is possibly for this reason, together with the fact that none of this has ever before been disclosed, that one sees so little in recent works about Eliade that examines the centrality of the *philosophia perennis* in his major works, lying there just under the surface, and described by him in terms such as "archaic ontology."

Eliade's familiarity with the sacred Tradition was both professional and scholarly, on the one hand, and personal—for lack of a better term—on the other hand. It became clear during our discussions that this familiarity developed early in his life. Based on his own writings, this familiarity accelerated during the time he spent as a graduate student in India during the 1920s studying Sanskrit and practicing the disciplines of yoga. In this latter effort he was supervised by Surendranath Dasgupta, whom he referred to as his "master" (*maître*) and "guru."[4] Upon his return to Romania from India in 1931, Eliade was for a time attracted to the views and program of the Legion of St. Michael, a nationalistic reform organization which espoused elements of certain esoteric principles, but he never became a member.[5]

Eliade's initial venture into the scholarly discourse of the *philosophia perennis* arguably began in the years immediately preceding the genesis of *Zalmoxis*, his Romanian journal on the history of religions begun in 1939. It was around this time that he encountered the works of Ananda Coomaraswamy and began a correspondence with him. His principal statement about the significance of Coomaraswamy and the superlative quality of the latter's work appeared in an article titled simply "Ananda Coomaraswamy," first written for *Revista fundatiilor regale* and later reprinted in *Insula lui Euthananius* (Bucharest, 1943). He stated there that Coomaraswamy's value was in "demonstrating the coincidence of doctrines, not only in the case of Shankara and Eckardt, but also of all the 'bearers of the word' of Eastern and Western metaphysical traditions." In the following paragraph, he continues,

> Few are the modern writers who have cited with so much erudition and sympathy the texts of St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, Meister Eckardt—or Vedic texts and Buddhist scriptures—as Ananda Coomaraswamy. The knowledge of the Christian Middle Ages is, in the case of this Indian scholar, more accurate and more deep than that of many European savants.[6]

Elsewhere in the article he refers to Coomaraswamy as "one of the greatest savants of our time," an "exceptional thinker," and describes

his works as reflecting an "intense erudition and deep understanding." The article is as instructive of his own views as it is about those of Coomaraswamy; Professor Eliade, in lamenting that the academic study of Eastern traditions had fallen to "philologists and specialized scholars," states, "However, due to the structure of their mentality and to the positivistic, anti-metaphysical bias of the nineteenth century, they ignored precisely that which was most valuable in the cultures they were investigating: the *metaphysical tradition*" (emphasis added).[7]

Eliade and Coomaraswamy maintained a correspondence until 1947, the year of Coomaraswamy's death. In the summer of that year, Eliade was seeking a teaching position in the United States and solicited Coomaraswamy's help. In Volume 2 of his *Autobiography*, Eliade makes reference to a letter Coomaraswamy wrote to him in August, informing him of a position teaching French in a "new college soon to be established." Eliade, reminiscing further, declares, "I had dreamed of a trip to the United States especially to meet Ananda Coomaraswamy, to talk with him at length about his latest exegeses based on the *philosophia perennis*."[8] In what is likely the actual response to Coomaraswamy, Eliade replied in a letter to him dated August 26, 1947. There Eliade stated—no doubt with reference to the essay "Symplegades," Coomaraswamy's latest such exegesis—that "You have admirably and greatly enhanced [in "Symplegades"] the multivalence of the myth, and its ultimate analysis—breaking out of the human condition by means of passing through all polarities in the instantaneousness of the *nunc*—is worthy of a 'master.'"[9] This compliment is consistent, first, with the way in which Eliade begins the letter by addressing Coomaraswamy as "Cher Maître," clearly in the same sense as he referred to Dasgupta as a "master" and guru. Second, it is consistent with the way in which he closes the letter by conveying his "feelings of admiration and gratitude" for Coomaraswamy.

One will find references to esotericism and the sacred Tradition scattered throughout Eliade's huge corpus of published works, whether in formal journals[10] or pedagogic disquisitions. This includes a paper titled "The Occult and the Modern World" published in 1974 in which he outlines the beginnings of the period's new religious movements. But perhaps the least ambiguous, if not most explicit, formal statement made by Eliade on the sacred Tradition was in a 1979 review article on Princeton University Press's three-volume set by and about Coomaraswamy. Released by the press in 1977 as part of the Bollingen Series, this set contains a biography of Coomaraswamy by Roger Lipsey and two volumes of collected articles and essays by Coomaraswamy on "Metaphysics" and "Traditional Art and Symbolism." Eliade's review article, "Some Notes on *Theosophia Perennis:* Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Henry Corbin," contains both an encomium of Coomaraswamy and more of his own views on the sacred Tradition. Just as he had more

than forty years earlier, Eliade describes Coomaraswamy in this article in these terms: "There is no doubt that Ananda Coomaraswamy was one of the most learned and creative scholars of the century."[11]

As to his own views on the sacred Tradition and its significance, these are also expressly set forth in this review article. "The goal of the university," wrote Eliade, "is the restoration and the revivification of the study of traditional sciences [i.e., *theosophia perennis*] in the West." Moreover, indicating the role that might be played by the history of religions in the realization of this goal, he wrote that "What interests the historian of religion the most is the resurgence of a certain esoteric tradition among a number of European scholars and thinkers who represent many illustrious universities."[12] As I was there at the time and similarly interested in the scholarly pursuit of the Tradition, I was privileged to have been able to discuss with Eliade the ideas and subject matter that went into this review article. For this reason, I can affirm—and confirm—the primacy of the sacred Tradition in Eliade's perspective on religions. He believed that the Tradition constitutes what is "religious about religions," and he himself described it in this review article as "the *philosophia perennis*, the primordial and universal tradition present in every authentic nonacculturated [non-despiritualized] civilization."[13]

This review article, his piece on Coomaraswamy, and certain segments of *Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashion* are as close to an explicit profession of the sacred Tradition as Eliade ever made. Though we never discussed this rather sensitive topic, I have drawn conclusions concerning his reluctance to be more explicit in his writings about the sacred Tradition. My opinion is that to remain in the fray, so to speak, Eliade had to constrain or at least minimize explicit exposition of these views. This was necessary in order not to be categorically labeled an esotericist or some similar description and consequently drowned out by the *consensus omnium* of academia and others in the field of the history of religions who failed or refused to acknowledge the probity of the *philosophia perennis* and the validity of intellection as a mode of apperception.

For precisely the same reasons, I never considered memorializing or publishing either my account of this relationship or my opinion prior to his death. So, to finish my opinion now, in terms as succinct as I can, I believe Eliade wisely decided not to risk his considerable stature in the area of religious studies by becoming an overt spokesman for the sacred Tradition, but rather to remain in the fray and seek to convince others of its truth not by leading but by pointing the way. In this occupation, he was, in my view, entirely successful.

ENDNOTES

[1] William W. Quinn, "Ananda K. Coomaraswamy on the Philosophia Perennis," *Re-Vision* 2, no. 2 (1979): 18-27.

[2] The dissertation has been revised, substantially updated, and recently published as *The Only Tradition* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).

[3] The principal ones are David Cave, *Mircea Eliade's Vision for a New Humanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), and Bryan S. Rennie, *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996). See also Harry Oldmeadow, "Mircea Eliade and Carl Jung: 'Priests Without Surplices?'" *Studies in Western Traditions*, Occasional Papers, no. 1 (Bendigo, Australia: LaTrobe University, 1995). One must necessarily include here the work in progress by Mac Linscott Ricketts, which is a biography of Eliade for the years 1945-1986 and a sequel to his two-volume *Mircea Eliade: The Romanian Roots, 1907-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

[4] Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). See page xxii: "As to Surendranath Dasgupta . . . for three years he was our professor of Sanskrit, our master, and our *guru*."

[5] The Legion of St. Michael, its relationship to the militant Iron Guard, and the whole pre-World War II political milieu of Romania is thoroughly treated by Mac Linscott Ricketts in *Romanian Roots,* cited above in note 3. Those with an irrepressible proclivity to see fascist conspiracies everywhere have occasionally sought to lump Eliade into this worldview. This is poor history and worse analysis. Eliade's attraction to the Legion was marginal and was only pursued to the extent that the Legion, in its formative stages, reflected certain esoteric principles which might have been beneficial to establishment of a different polity in Romania at the time.

[6] Mircea Eliade, "Ananda Coomaraswamy," *Revista fundatiilor regale* 4 (1937): 183-89, unpublished translation courtesy of Mac Linscott Ricketts. See also *Insula lui Euthananius* (Bucharest: 1943).

[7] Ibid.

[8] Mircea Eliade, *Autobiography, Volume II: Exile Odyssey, 1937-1960,* trans. Mac Linscott Ricketts (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 118.

[9] Mircea Eliade, letter to Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, dated 26 August 1947, Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Translated from the French by William W. Quinn.

[10] In his best-known journal, *No Souvenirs* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), Eliade made a rather controversial (to Traditionalists) remark about the views of René Guénon, whom he regarded as a "pessimist" owing to Guénon's belief in not a virtual but an actual destruction of the world at the end of the present cycle. It was principally this aspect of Guénon's views that Eliade did not share. Eliade in fact respected Guénon's metaphysical acuity, stating elsewhere that Guénon's "doctrine is considerably more rigorous and more cogent than that of the occultists and hermeticists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (*Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976], 127).

[11] Mircea Eliade, "Some Notes on *Theosophia Perennis:* Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Henry Corbin," *History of Religions* 19, no. 2 (1979): 167-76, 171.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 176.

Field Notes: The Raelian Religion—Achieving Human Immortality Through Cloning

John M. Bozeman

William Sims Bainbridge, in his provocative essay "New Religions, Science, and Secularization," points out that progress in science and technology has tended to weaken traditional faiths in two ways. First, scientific developments have yielded new discoveries that threaten traditional ways of understanding the world. Darwinism, for example, could undercut the intellectual credibility of belief in a personal God who would intervene in the course of nature on a regular basis. Secondly, rational secular institutions have taken over many basic social services, such as education and charitable work, traditionally dominated by religious organizations; as a result, religious institutions are less prevalent in the day-to-day lives of many people. Yet these intellectual and social developments have not changed the fundamental human need for meaning, belonging, and purpose. Bainbridge thus suggests that at some point in the future, a new religion might emerge which could exist in a mutually supportive, rather than antagonistic, relationship with science.

Such a new faith may now exist. The Raelian religion is based on the belief that some 25,000 years ago the earth, then without life, was visited by a race of benevolent space aliens, the *Elohim.* These aliens began a vast terraforming project in which all life on earth, from bacteria to humans, was created using highly advanced DNA technology. The scriptures of the world's religions are believed by Raelians to document the aliens' ongoing activities. The expulsion from the Garden of Eden, for example, records humanity's transfer from the comfort of the alien laboratories to the harsh existence of self-sufficient agrarian life, while the resurrection of Jesus is thought to have been accomplished through his being cloned by the Elohim. From time to time the aliens have revisited the earth to provide more direct moral guidance by inspiring (and perhaps genetically enhancing) prophets such as Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, and Joseph Smith. The group's founder, French-born

journalist and racing car driver Rael (born Claude Vorilhon), is believed to be the last in the prophetic line.

Rael teaches that with the discovery of atomic power and genetic engineering, humanity entered into the dangerous but exciting "Age of Apocalypse," a time period in which humans will either transcend their violent tendencies or destroy themselves. If humans do indeed survive the present age, they will achieve a peaceful, happy, democratic, tolerant, self-affirming, and sexually liberated civilization with great technological and scientific power. Eventually humans, like their alien forebears, will be able to journey between the stars, creating life in their own image and planting civilizations on other worlds. Furthermore, humans will also achieve a form of personal immortality through cloning. Indeed, recent surprising breakthroughs in cloning, in particular the cloning of Dolly the sheep, are viewed within the Raelian faith as confirmation of the fundamental truth of Rael's message.

Many of the doctrines and precepts found in the Raelian faith are not unique; they can be found in a variety of New Age religions, as well as in secular works ranging from Erich Von Daniken's *Chariots of the Gods?* (1969) to *Star Trek*. Two things set the Raelians apart, however: first, with some 35,000 members, they are probably the largest UFO-oriented religion in existence. Secondly, the group has recently begun serious work on cloning. In February of 1997, Rael and a group of investors founded a biotechnology start-up company named Clonaid, the first company in the world dedicated to the goal of human cloning. While the ultimate hope of the company is to produce adult human clones into which the original person's memories might be transferred, the company has set a number of nearer-term goals that are expected to be easier to accomplish. The company is currently offering a service called "Insuraclone," where for $50,000 a person may have a sample of cells cryogenically preserved for future use. These cells, according to Clonaid advertising, could be useful in the future as a "genetic repair kit" for cloning stem cells, or perhaps even entire organs, once the technology advances sufficiently. Other services that the company plans to offer in the future include Clonapet, for the creation of genetic duplicates of beloved pets or prize race horses, and the signature Clonaid human cloning service (estimated price: $200,000) to be offered to homosexual and sterile heterosexual couples unable to have children through other means. Clonaid's scientific director is Brigitte Boisselier, who possesses a Ph.D. in physical and biomolecular chemistry and who is also a bishop in the Raelian church.

Several well-known biotechnology firms are conducting research on human cloning techniques. However, these firms appear to be focusing exclusively on therapeutic rather than reproductive uses for the new science. This general hesitancy to delve into reproductive cloning seems to come from a widespread sense of ethical uncertainty, based in part

on feelings that human reproductive cloning would be "playing God" or that somehow cloning would undermine human uniqueness. There is also fear that the science is simply too dangerous; some, for example, are afraid that cloning could be used to try to create a race of supermen. Others are uncomfortable with the possible wastage of large numbers of human embryos that cloning could entail. This uncertainty has caused nineteen European nations and several U.S. states to pass laws prohibiting reproductive cloning, at least for the time being. Concern has been echoed by many traditional churches and denominations, who have called for either a moratorium or outright ban on human cloning. Many "mainstream" scientists and reproductive specialists have similarly shunned human reproductive cloning efforts, saying that the science is not yet ready to be commercialized. So far, the main person to express public support for the Raelian venture has been Richard Seed, a retired Harvard physicist and self-taught reproductive scientist. Known both for his brilliance and for his bombastic eccentricity, Seed has expressed a desire to open a human cloning clinic in the Chicago region sometime in the next few years. Seed has also stated that he has received hundreds of calls from people interested in the procedure.

It will be interesting to see how the Raelians and their cloning venture fare over time. From the outset, Rael and his faith have attempted to fuse anti-evolutionism and Biblical literalism with progressive morals and a completely materialistic worldview. Now the Raelians, with their active promotion of human cloning, have set themselves even farther apart from mainstream religious bodies. While other individuals and groups exist that view cloning as a morally positive way to transcend human limitations, at present only the Raelians have made it a religious imperative as well; the Raelians feel that we humans must clone ourselves in order to follow in the footsteps of our creators, the Elohim, and all the alien races who came before them. In short, to the Raelians, cloning is built into our human nature and destiny.

BRIEFLY NOTED:

UNIFICATION CHURCH WINS RUSSIAN COURT CASE: The Unification Church reports that it won a significant court victory in Russia. This past March the City Court of Moscow dismissed a case in which seven parents sued the Unification Church in Russia over their adult children's involvement with the church. The suit claimed that the children's involvement with the Unification Church violated the parents' right to be close to their children as well as Russian national traditions; at an earlier court hearing, the parents had also suggested that the members

had been brainwashed into joining the group. The parents, members of an anti-cult organization named the Interregional Committee for Salvation from Totalitarian Cults, had requested two billion rubles ($82,236,000) apiece in compensatory damages.

NYPD GETS FIRST MUSLIM CHAPLAIN: Izak-El Mu'eed Pasha was recently appointed the first Muslim chaplain of the New York City Police Department. He will be joining the department's six other Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish chaplains. Pasha is the imam of the Malcolm Shabazz Mosque in Harlem, the same mosque over which Malcolm X once presided. Known for his involvement with both the Muslim and general local community, the imam is particularly well-known for his encouragement of locally owned business ventures. He has also been involved with a project to build a Muslim community college in Virginia.

SHOOTING MAY BE CONNECTED TO CHURCH: As *Nova Religio* goes to press, we have received reports of a series of shootings in Illinois and Indiana over the recent Fourth of July weekend. Twenty-one-year-old Benjamin Nathaniel Smith allegedly went on a drive-by shooting spree that left three dead and several more wounded. Smith allegedly targeted minorities: victims of the shootings include two African-Americans, six Orthodox Jews, and two Asian-Americans. The suspect then shot himself fatally while attempting to escape from police.

Smith had been affiliated with a religious group named the World Church of the Creator, an organization claiming 3,000 members. The group espouses white supremacy and a racial holy war against Jews and persons of color; it is also explicitly anti-Christian. At the time of the shootings, Smith's membership with the church had recently lapsed. However the group's leader, Matthew Hale, told CNN in an interview that he felt that Smith's rampage may have been triggered by Hale's recent failure to obtain a law license in the state of Illinois. Hale alleges that he was denied membership in the state bar association because of his views on race and that Smith had been "very passionate" about Hale getting the law license.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES:

American Academy of Religion (AAR)—18–21 November 1999. Hynes Convention Center and Sheraton Boston Hotel and Towers, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A. General questions can be sent to Tammy Adams, Annual Meeting Coordinator, 825 Houston Mill Road NE, Suite 300, Atlanta, GA 30329-4211. Phone: (404) 727-7920. E-mail: aar@emory.org. More information can also be found at the AAR website at <http://

www.aar-site.org>. The AAR's annual meeting in the year 2000 will be held in Nashville, Tennessee, November 18–21.

Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR)—11–13 August 2000. Omni Shoreham, Washington, D.C. This year's topic will be "Religion and Global Civil Society." Peter Berger will deliver the Paul Hanley Furfey Lecture. Persons wishing to organize a session, present a paper, or volunteer as a convener or discussant should contact the program chair, Randal L. Hepner, at the Department of Anthropology, 354 Baker Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48224-1118, or via e-mail at hepnerr@pilot.msu.edu. Information can also be found at the ASR website at <http://www.sociologyofreligion.com>.

Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University—7–9 November 1999. Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts. The Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University and the American Studies Department at Brandeis University are hosting the conference "New World Orders: Millennialism in the Western Hemisphere." This will be an interdisciplinary inquiry examining the wide range of millennial movements in the Americas, including their origins, traditions, interpretations, and consequences. Movements examined will be both religious and secular and include elite, popular, and countercultural movements. For more information contact Beth Forrest, Center for Millennial Studies, at Boston University, 704 Commonwealth Ave., Suite 205, Boston, MA 02215. E-mail: cms@mille.org. Details can also be found at <http://www.mille.org>. The center is in the process of planning its year 2000 conference; the theme will be "Peace Movements, Revivalism, and Social Transformation." Current plans are for this to occur in Rome, Italy, the week after Easter of the Jubilee 2000.

Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR)—29–31 August 2000. Riga, Latvia. Organized jointly with the University of Latvia's Institute of Philosophy and Sociology/Academic Center for the Study of Religions, this will be a multidisciplinary conference in the human and social sciences. The focus will be "New Religiosity in the 21st Century." Papers will be accepted in sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, law, and theology, preferably on the topics of new religious movements, esotericism, and New Age groups in the new millennium; established and mainline religions' reactions to new religious movements; 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. Papers will be accepted in English, French, Russian, or Latvian. Oral presentations will be 20 minutes in length. For more information contact CESNUR, Via Juvarra

20, 10122 Torino, Italy. Phone: 011-39-541950 (Monday to Friday, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.); fax: 011-39-541905. E-mail: cesnurto@tin.it. Website: <http://www.cesnur.org>.

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion/Religious Research Association (SSSR/RRA) Joint Meeting—5–7 November 1999. Swisshotel, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A. The SSSR program's guiding theme this year will be "The Sacred in the Secular: Finding 'Religious' Dimensions in the World Beyond Religion." The meeting theme for the RRA this year will be "What Do We Know About Religious Institutions? And How Have We Come to Know It?" This meeting marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the SSSR; papers charting the SSSR's development over the past 50 years, along with its joint history with the RRA, will also be presented. The SSSR has also issued its call for papers for next year's conference, which will take place 19–22 October 2000 at the Houston, Texas, Doubletree Hotel. The theme will be "Religion and Transnationalism: Challenges of the 21st Century." Session and paper proposals may be sent to Peter Beyer, Department of Classics and Religious Studies, University of Ottawa, 70 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5, Canada. Telephone: (613) 562-5800, ext. 1178. Fax: (613) 562-5991. E-mail: Pbeyer@uottawa.ca. Session proposals are due 15 January 2000; paper proposals are due 15 March with completed papers due by 15 September. For more information see the website at <http://fhss.byu.edu/soc/sssr/index.html>.

The Society for Utopian Studies—11–14 November 1999. San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A. The Society is an international, multidisciplinary organization dedicated to the scholarly study of both literary and experimental utopias. For more information about the conference see the website at <http://www.utoronto.ca/utopia> or contact Peter Fitting, 73 Delaware Ave., Toronto M6H 2S9, Canada. Phone: (416) 531-8593. Fax: (416) 531-4157. E-mail: fitting@chass.utoronto.ca.

Book Reviews

[**Editor's note:** On occasion, a text will appear that raises questions the importance of which transcends the question of the book's academic quality. Such a text was *Heaven's Harlots: My Fifteen Years as a Sacred Prostitute in the Children of God Cult* by Miriam Williams. Thus, in keeping with *Nova Religio's* policy of presenting debates on cutting edge issues, two very contrasting views of *Heaven's Harlots* are offered through a joint review by Massimo Introvigne and J. Gordon Melton, and a review by Stephen Kent.]

Heaven's Harlots: My Fifteen Years as a Sacred Prostitute in the Children of God Cult. By Miriam Williams. William Morrow and Company, 1998. 297 pages. $23.00 cloth.

Considerable research exists about "apostates" and the role of their narratives in shaping the public image of new religious movements (A good summary of current scholarship is *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements*, edited by David Bromley in 1998.) This literature suggests that apostates, former members who turn into militant opponents of the movement they have left, are not the majority of ex-members. Many of the latter have mixed feelings about their former affiliation and are not interested in joining anti-cult crusades. On the other hand, apostates are often the most visible ex-members and the only ex-members that controversy-oriented news media are interested in. Although some apostates resent the label as offensive, it is not intended to be derogatory. It simply distinguishes a specific group among the larger category of ex-members.

Not all apostates are created equal. As evidenced in the book edited by Bromley, some are simply interested in slandering their former movements. Others want to sell books no matter what, occasionally by exaggerating the extent of their affiliation with a controversial movement. Bryan Wilson and Jean Duhaime have insisted on the role of ghostwriters and editors in shaping alleged "first-hand" apostate accounts. While almost no scholar has suggested that apostate accounts should simply be ignored, apostate literature has normally been approached carefully by scholars and has remained controversial (perhaps as it was always intended to be). Additionally, apostate stories have been increasingly tested in courts of law in recent years. While

some stories have been found to be accurate, others have been dismissed as grossly exaggerated. Some have been simply declared false. These incidents further warned scholars against the uncritical acceptance of apostate accounts. Occasionally, however, some apostate books are freer than others from anti-cult stereotypes, as authors honestly attempt to come to terms with an experience they now regard as bad or wrong without entirely disregarding their former feelings as true believers. Miriam Williams' account of her fifteen years in and out of the Children of God (the movement known today as The Family) takes this route, but does not follow it to the end.

Williams joined The Family in late 1971. She left first in 1980, only to rejoin in mid-1981, then left again and rejoined again until a final break in 1986. For three years, from 1977 to 1980, she practiced flirty-fishing. This notorious outreach method was used by the Children of God between 1977 and 1987. In flirty-fishing, female Children of God members "proved" God's love to men outside the movement by showing their own love: Such demonstrations included physical manifestations of sexuality. Flirty-fishing played a key role in making the Children of God a highly controversial new religious movement. In some countries courts regarded flirty-fishing as equivalent to prostitution, though there were exceptions: In 1991, the Justice Court of Rome concluded that flirty-fishing was not prostitution since it was not primarily motivated by greed but by a "paradoxical form of humanitarianism." Members of The Family today have mixed feelings about the practice. It was abandoned in 1987, and although Williams claims that former members have told her it still continues secretly, courts of law in several countries have found otherwise.

Williams' account of her three years of flirty-fishing (the reference in the title to her "fifteen years as a sacred prostitute" is misleading) confirms the findings of a number of scholars who have interviewed both members and former members of The Family. Whatever her opinions today, it is clear that when she was in the Children of God Williams was not motivated by greed or lust. In fact, she writes, during her flirty-fishing experiences she felt towards her male "fishes" "like a true angel of mercy, bringing their wasted and thirsty souls the water of life" (p. 157). "Hopefully, by the end of the evening, the man had heard the full salvation message, which is basically the same simple message taught by the evangelical Christian faith: Believe that you are a sinner, that Jesus died for your sins, and that he can give you salvation" (p. 116). These men, she felt, "needed the intimacy that a sexual relationship provides in order to open up to the message of Jesus' Love" (p. 173). Williams also believes she was often successful: "I would venture to say that more than a half of the thousands of men we talked to in clubs asked Jesus into their hearts," although "whether they really meant anything by repeating this simple prayer is open to debate" (p. 116).

Williams' accounts of how she felt during flirty-fishing and why she practiced it at all are the best parts of the book. They are also entertaining, as the reader watches Miriam "evangelizing" in the French Riviera and elsewhere among the likes of Adnan Kashoggi and Ringo Starr. Flirty-fishing, however, commands so much attention in the book that everything else in the Children of God is downplayed. Williams, for instance, suggests that marriages were normally arranged in the Children of God and people rarely had a personal choice. If the founding prophet's instructions were taken seriously at all, this should have happened only occasionally after November 1971. At that date, founder David Berg (1919–1994) noted that some local leaders were choosing mates for local members and declared the practice strictly forbidden. More generally, there is almost no discussion of the relationship between Berg and the local leaders, and of such crucial events in the Children of God's history as the 1978 Reorganization Nationalization Revolution (RNR). RNR in fact destructured the movement's leadership until the subsequent Fellowship Revolution of 1981.

According to Williams, the risk of sexual abuse of children was a factor in her decision to leave the Children of God. However, about the actual occurrence of "any type of sex with children" she writes, "In all my travels, I never met a family that actually did this and I enquired everywhere I went to see what the others thought about the Family's child-sex education. No one ever admitted to pedophilia." Only after she left The Family did she hear "tearful confessions from ex-Family members," who acknowledged that they had "molested children" (p. 221). The Family's present leadership has admitted that tragic incidents of sexual abuse of children did occur in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The fact that Williams, who claims to have visited many homes of The Family in a number of countries, never actually encountered personally such incidents confirm that they were not happening everywhere. As was suggested in the findings of the British court case, Williams also confirms that what the founder suggested in his policy ("MO") letters "in the area of sex" was not necessarily followed in all homes: "Some women in The Family never shared sexually with anyone but their husbands, while some husbands forced their women to do so. I heard stories of wives being physically punished for disobedience, but I never saw this with my own eyes" (p. 220).

"Stories" by other persons are precisely the point where Williams' account becomes less personal and candid and starts relying on hearsay. Readers familiar with the anti-cult subculture will easily distinguish between Williams' personal experiences and areas where she simply collects information or rumors from the existing anti-Family literature. But this is in turn a fascinating tale on its own merits. In the last part of the book we follow Williams as she is socialized into the anti-cult

subculture. She becomes a career apostate, establishes an organization for "former cult members," and reinterprets her story with the help of opponents of The Family such as Canadian scholar Stephen Kent (no doubt the same person first referred to as "cult expert doctor Steve Dent" in the Introduction, page xiv). After this socialization, she ends up with a post-charismatic reinterpretation of all her experience through the lenses of the anti-cult movement. She also tolerates the sensationalizing of her story and its packaging by the publisher with a title such as "Heaven's Harlots" and a titillating subtitle mentioning "sacred prostitutes." This is somewhat unfortunate, since the book is otherwise useful for anybody interested in the paradoxical history of flirty-fishing. In this respect, Williams' account confirms that in this most bizarre of the evangelization strategies, sheer manipulation of women by irresponsible leaders coexisted with spiritual experiences regarded at the time as genuine by many of those who were involved.

Massimo Introvigne, Center for Studies of New Religions, Torino, Italy, and J. Gordon Melton, Institute for the Study of American Religion, Santa Barbara, California

Heaven's Harlots: My Fifteen Years as a Sacred Prostitute in the Children of God Cult. By Miriam Williams. William Morrow and Company, 1998. 297 pages. $23.00 cloth.

Former Children of God (COG) member Miriam Williams has gained considerable media and popular attention with her autobiographical account, *Heaven's Harlots*, but I was surprised to receive an invitation to review the book for an academic journal. *Nova Religio's* book editor extended that invitation after receiving an unsolicited, lengthy review of it by two prominent scholars who have the reputation of being favorably disposed toward the COG/The Family. Having the reputation as a critic of the group, I was a logical choice to be an additional reviewer in an attempt to provide a balanced appraisal to readers of this journal. Indeed, the portrayal that Williams provides about her life in the group renews debates about religious patriarchalism, sexual abuse, corporal punishment, child abuse, and personal versus organizational responsibility that continue to plague this group and its history.

This book is the first study by a former member since the advent of the Internet and has resulted in the creation of a website, <excognet.com>, that must be causing The Family no end of grief. (It certainly is providing readers with eye-opening information.)

Born in June 1953 to a fundamentalist Christian-German mother who passively facilitated her father's abusive patriarchalism and alcoholism,

Williams participated in Vietnam War protests while in high school. Like so many others, she experimented with sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll. Growing interest, however, in Christianity and the Jesus People, along with the favorable first television documentary on the Children of God, made Williams receptive to the discussion that she had during a chance encounter with two COG members in Greenwich Village in December 1971. Within days of that meeting, she visited a COG camp in upstate New York and relinquished all of her belongings in order to become a revolutionary in an army for God.

Her leader (whom she never met) was David Berg, who also went by the names Moses David and Mo. Berg wrote what were called Mo Letters that "gave us the hope that we would change the world. However, the big difference was—our leader heard straight from God, and God was still speaking!" (p. 36). Among other assignments, Williams began working in the understaffed nursery and married another member in the summer of 1972. As expected from Berg's prohibitions against birth control, she soon got pregnant and delivered her first child (four more were to be born in the years to come) in a COG home with the help of a COG-trained (not professionally trained) midwife who had to call for assistance when the birth became complicated. In typical COG style, the first midwife blamed Williams' difficult delivery on some alleged shortcoming with the Lord.

In the fall of 1973, Williams' young family flew to Europe, and after a brief period in Germany they transferred to Paris and worked with a special Family musical group formed around former Fleetwood Mac member Jeremy Spencer. She became a dancer with the group and continued her work in child care, sometimes working in "deplorable conditions." While there, COG leadership introduced the "colony" to Berg's teachings about sexual sharing among members and using sex as a means to recruit new members ("flirty-fishing"). Later, Berg would instruct the flirty-fishers to get paid for their sexual services. Her first extramarital partner was a leader; her next partner was a financial supporter of the group. As flirty-fishing expanded, her husband, functionally, became her pimp.

Some time after June 1975, the Williams family moved to Nice, and soon Williams became involved in the lucrative flirty-fishing operation in Monte Carlo where she and other COG women moved in social circles with a jet-set crowd that included painter Andy Warhol, actress Catherine Deneuve, musician Ringo Starr, and billionaire financiers like Adnan Kashoggi. At some point, her husband took a second wife, and when he moved away with her son she began a quest to be near her firstborn child that continued for over a decade.

By January 1980, Monaco police had ordered Williams out of the city, and she moved in with a man who would become her second

husband—a handsome but depressed Italian man living in a village. At the end of that year, they traveled back to the Williams' home country, the United States, where they lived in difficult, impoverished conditions before journeying to Puerto Rico. Around January 1982, however, she returned to Europe after her first husband (who by now had left the group) kidnapped their son from her and returned to France.

Her attachment to COG had waned over the years, but she renounced the group completely after she found sketches that a preadolescent daughter of a leader had done of a penis "at different stages of erection" (p. 233). This event precipitated Williams' realization that COG publications "about having sex with underage teens" had real consequences, and she "realized with a gasp how foolish and blinded I had been" about the issue of adult/child (and teen) sex (p. 234).

Williams and her second husband stayed for a while longer in Italy, but apparently returned to the U.S. in 1991 and eventually separated. Williams combined her family responsibilities with work and college classes and was completing her Master's degree in sociology as she finished this book. In 1993, she helped organize a reunion of former COG members in Atlanta.

As a COG biography goes, Williams' account is fluidly written but unremarkable in content (except for her flirty-fishing activities among the Monte Carlo elite). Her activities in Europe kept her away from COG's activities in Asia and Latin America, so she missed seeing the widespread adult-child sex that occurred in those areas. Nonetheless, she is insistent that this kind of inappropriate sex occurred and counts herself among many who left "when sexual abuse of children became an undeniable reality" (p. 273).

This claim—presented cogently and based upon her own deductions that she reached through knowledge of the group's internal documents and "hundreds of stories from adults and children who have left in the past ten years" (p.273)—makes her a formidable critic. Williams provides a remarkable description of an organization in which pedophiles (including those in highest leadership) could flourish. Let us review her evidence.

Williams describes a group whose members believed that their reclusive leader received God's word on all matters, including directives about undergoing sexual revolutions. The secrecy around his whereabouts placed him outside normal boundaries of social accountability, and the group participated in a blurring of conventional sexual boundaries between adults. Berg produced letters that "were explicit" about adults having sex with teens (p. 229), and Williams read the Davidito Series, which "explained how parents themselves, or nursery workers, should teach children about sex" (p. 220). Moreover, while still a member she also read the *Heaven's Girl* publication, which

leaders hailed as a COG model for female teen behavior in anticipation of the predicted rule of the Anti-Christ's forces prior to the return of Jesus at Armageddon. As Williams concluded,

> In these illustrated letters the young teen has multiple sexual relationships with men of all ages. With each new letter that arrived, I became more worried. Heaven's Girl became a sex fanatic. Then a new series titled *Heaven's Girl* was sent out with an artist's depiction of [Berg] in bed with a teenager. I confronted our new leaders immediately on their opinions of these letters. They were conveniently vague. (p. 230)

These and other publications reveal that the written and pictorial material (which the organization's highest leaders either wrote or approved) eroticized and encouraged adults' sexual contact with children and teens.

More evidence about child abuse in the group appears in Williams' book. Berg's loyal daughter, for example, wrote a tract in which she said "daddy made me feel good all over . . . I don't think it perverted me . . . but it sure converted me to His call" (p. 278). Direct evidence of incestuous abuse appeared in a newsletter article that one of Berg's granddaughters wrote, in which she indicated "that she endured dozens of intrusive sexual encounters with her grandfather, the first before she was twelve years old" (p. 274).

Complementing these statements, the social structures in which COG members lived put children at unusual risk of becoming sexual targets. Berg's theology of sexual sharing and flirty-fishing sexualized the cultural environment of the COG organization, and many unregulated adults had contact with children as members moved among various COG homes and bedrooms. Moreover, few members knew the real names of others, and some members even changed their COG names from time to time. Finally, the adults and children frequently changed both countries and local houses within countries, making the investigation of child abuse and prosecution of perpetrators exceedingly difficult. Combining all of these factors, it is hard to imagine a more structurally facilitating or theologically encouraging environment in which child (and teen) sex abuse could abound.

As a consequence of having been sexual targets, many of the now young adults have entered the sex trade. Williams only mentions one former child who likely turned to stripping, but I have spoken to nearly a dozen young women and two young men who have traded sex for money at one time or another following their departure from the group.

Defenders of COG/The Family likely will attempt to marginalize Williams' lucid account as just another attack from an unreliable apostate. They also likely will dismiss her allusions to the accounts of abuse that other former members have told her simply as

unsubstantiated hearsay from equally unreliable disgruntled members. Thoughtful readers, however, will marvel at the social controls and personal blinders that hindered Williams so long from seeing the obvious. They also may wonder why a few academics continue to downplay the abusive aspects of COG's history.

Stephen A. Kent, University of Alberta

The Division of Consciousness: The Secret Afterlife of the Human Psyche. By Peter Novak. Hampton Roads Publishing Company, 1997. 258 pages. $14.95 paper.

In *The Division of Consciousness*, Peter Novak undertakes the daunting task of explaining the truth about the post-mortem fate of the human soul. Novak begins by presenting a historical-comparative analysis that identifies two major interpretations of the afterlife: the Eastern reincarnation model and the Western heaven/hell model. Arguing that empirical evidence from near-death experiences supports the Western model while regression analysis research supports the reincarnationist position, Novak claims to have discovered the truth about the nature of the human psyche that reconciles these apparently contradictory positions.

Specifically, Novak presents his "Division Theory" of the human psyche. According to this model, the human psyche is composed of two parts: the conscious spirit and the unconscious soul. At death, the spirit and soul both survive the death of the physical body but separate from each other. The soul, detached from the consciousness of spirit, becomes entrapped in its own content of memories, in effect creating a self-made heaven or hell, depending on the nature of the memories. The spirit, detached from the memories lodged in the soul from which it has separated, forgets its earlier identity and somehow becomes attached to a new body, in effect reincarnated as a new being without memory of its former existence.

Novak explains the eventual reunion of soul and spirit through a rather peculiar Christology according to which the spirit of Jesus enters the realm of the Primordial Soul (a sort of repository of all of the individual personal souls that have ever existed), thereby freeing the personal souls to reunite with their spirits.

Novak makes some rather extravagant claims for Division Theory, suggesting that it provides the key to reconciling the different perspectives on the afterlife found in the world's many religious traditions. However, his interpretation of non-Western beliefs is

sometimes inaccurate, and his extensive use of scriptural passages to support his theory is marred by the overuse of Biblical passages and minimal use and frequent misinterpretation of passages from Eastern traditions.

Readers should note that this is a straight theological/philosophical treatise which does not deal with new religious movements in any direct manner.

George Adams, Susquehanna University

Encyclopedia of Religion and Society. Edited by William H. Swatos, Jr. Altamira Press, 1998. 590 pages. $125.00 cloth.

This comprehensive reference work on the social-scientific study of religion will be of interest to all students of new religious movements. With Peter Kivisto as an associate editor, Barbara J. Denison and James McClenon as assistant editors, and a roster of eminent sociologists of religion as contributors, it can fairly be taken to represent the state of the art in this field. There are specific entries on a number of well-known new religious movements as well as on major denominations and religions, describing them from a social-scientific perspective and making references to recent studies. Of particular interest are the many articles on leading sociologists of religion, including contemporaries—some of them also contributors to this work—that outline the scholar's career, work, and theoretical position. Helpful pieces are also to be found on important topics of sociological research (such as "New Religious Movements," "Mainline Denominations," and "Fundamentalism"), on theoretical constructs (such as "Functionalism" and "Deprivation Theory"), and on the sociological positioning of emergent issues in religion (such as "Abortion" and "Gender").

Inevitably, a multi-authored encyclopedic work like this will contain some entries that are less adequate than others as well as some that, in a rapidly changing field like American religion, are already dated by the time of publication. Generally, though, the quality is high. This is a reference work which, despite the price, many readers of *Nova Religio* will want to have at hand. At the least, they will want to make sure their institutional library obtains the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society* for the benefit of students and other researchers.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

Wisdom of the Zen Masters: The Quest for Enlightenment. Adapted and illustrated by Tsai Chih Chung. Translated by Brian Bruya. Anchor Books, 1998. 121 pages. $11.95 paper.

When assessing any book on Zen, the following question needs to be addressed: how can a primarily linguistic medium do justice to a spiritual practice which does not worship any sacred text and which precisely defies the discursive consciousness of the ego conditioned by the language chain and linear thought? Just as Zen masters and practitioners have resorted to the art forms of their time to go beyond the mere written word and embodied the Zen consciousness in pottery, painting, and flower arrangement, turning to the cartoon image and the popular culture pictorial register can be seen as a legitimate way of trying to convey a life philosophy that does not hinge on abstraction and conceptual understanding.

In this respect, Tsai Chih Chung's cartoon book manages to capture in part the ever self-renewing freshness of the "beginner's mind" central to Zen. The Taiwanese cartoonist and popularizer of Chinese philosophy illustrates key sections of classic Chinese Zen teachings such as the Platform Sutra, the Transmission of the Lamp, the Gateless Gate, and the Blue Cliffe Road. The book thereby summarizes the history of Chinese Zen: Tsai Chih Chung's selection gives an adequate overview of the striking episodes that punctuated the tradition and of the major patriarchs whose deeds and teachings have been pivotal to it.

The drawing technique also subtly renders each patriarch's individual character together with his distinctive personal blend of poise, benevolence, and energy. If one can regret that it totally leaves out the Japanese patriarchs and their vital contribution to the later development of Zen, this work nevertheless provides a useful first factual introduction for the newcomer to this pragmatic philosophy. As far as the academic expert or the well-read Zen practitioner are concerned, the book will certainly not add to their erudition. However, its modesty and accessibility might put them in touch again with the simplicity and basic "flavor" of Zen, which tend to disappear when erudition becomes the dominant approach. In any event, both the lay person and the erudite are exposed to the humor of the tradition and are not allowed to forget that in Zen, exacting austerity is counterbalanced by laughter, humor being considered as good a tool of awakening as any other. By making it fit so effortlessly into a contemporary mold, Tsai Chih Chung moreover gives a concrete illustration of how adaptable and up-to-date Zen can be.

Yet, in spite of these undeniable qualities, the book fails to distance itself sufficiently from straight narrative and conventional cartoon drawing to explore fully the possibilities for nonlinear thought that the medium could yield and to render less superficially the paradoxical

quality of the Zen meditative experience. One wishes that Tsai Chih Chung would at times experiment further with the cartoon technique so as to make his work become a more living embodiment of the Zen mind. Therefore, if the book offers a good introduction to the uninitiated and a refreshing approach to a more advanced public, it is nevertheless doubtful that it will have the power to induce its reader to step into a *dojo* to practice Zen; and, as the legacy of the patriarchs tells us, without practice there is ultimately no Zen . . .

Franca Bellarsi, Universitè Libre de Bruxelles

Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader. Edited by Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane. Temple University Press, 1998. 416 pages. $69.95 cloth, $23.95 paper.

Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader addresses a comprehensive range of questions about the Rastafari movement. This is no mean task, for Rastafari is an incredibly diverse and free-wheeling movement; its membership ranges from lone individuals, unattached to any formal organization, who are moved by their own interpretations of the liberating message and spirit of reggae rhythms, to formally organized camps of Rastafari brethren and sistren following strictly prescribed rules and believing carefully constructed doctrinal formulations.

Given this task it is understandable why *Chanting Down Babylon* is so long. Nonetheless, I suspect that along with Barry Chevannes' *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*(1995), *Chanting Down Babylon* will be required reading for all courses on Rastafarianism and could equally be used in any class on New World syncretism or new religious movements in general.

The strengths of *Chanting Down Babylon* are the descriptions it provides of Rastafari and the questions it raises about where the movement is headed. For example, Ennis Edmonds' first chapter is as fine an overview of the movement as one will find in a single chapter anywhere. Barry Chevannes' chapter raises the compelling thesis that Rastafari have been the main cause of changing racial consciousness in Jamaica. Similarly, Adrian McFarlane links Rastafarian argot to the attempt to overturn the epistemology at the foundation of Jamaican stereotypes.

Other chapters present fascinating historical and ethnographic information. The interview with Leonard Barrett and G. E. Simpson's reflections on his field research among Rastafari in the early 1950s

show us how much the movement has changed in the last 45 years. And the reprint of "The Promised Key," an early document written by one of the founders of the movement, Leonard Howell, affords us an excellent view into one of the prophetic visions instrumental to the foundation of the movement. William Spencer's commentary on "The Promised Key" is superb.

Other chapters deserve mention for their usefulness to scholars in the field. Samuel Murrell's comprehensive overview of "Who is Who in the Rasta Academy" will be the standard bibliography for scholars in the field for years. Both Maureen Rowe and Imani M. Tafari-Ama provide a rather personal account of the changing position of women in Rastafari, and though it would have been useful to have a more detailed analysis of why and how women's positions are changing, these articles should be praised for addressing an under-examined issue. Articles by Frank Jan Van Dijk and Randal Hepner provide useful accounts of the spread of Rastafari around the world, though we are left wondering why this expansion has occurred and why the meaning of Rastafari has been renegotiated in particular ways as it has spread.

On the other hand, with the exception of Verena Reckord's excellent chapter on the evolution of Rastafari music, I found the chapters on the Rastafari connection to popular culture disappointing. Too often these chapters merely catalogue Rastafari-influenced performers. Also, though the chapters on Rastafarian hermeneutics were comprehensive and well reasoned, in the end they seemed motivated mostly by a desire to constructively bridge the Christian-Rastafari chasm and perhaps would have fit better in another volume.

One fault of the book is its tendency to assume that what constitutes Rastafari is self-evident. Yet, pace a short segment in Murrell's introduction, scholars rarely agree on what Rastafari is. Moreover, some authors in this anthology wax eloquent on the movement, belying the assumptions they make about what Rastafari is. All of this also combines with a tendency to be "Jamaicocentric" and to treat as normative Rastafari who emphasize the divinity of Haile Selassie.

The other general weakness of the book is that the editors seem to have opted for descriptive material at the expense of in-depth analysis. There are few explanations in this volume, though it raises many questions. On the other hand, in the right setting this might be an advantageous attribute of the book, for these articles provide information and raise questions that can be discussed fruitfully throughout a semester.

Chanting Down Babylon will be a valuable source for scholars of Rastafari, but more importantly it is an excellent text for introducing

students to the complexities and questions raised in studying this new religious movement.

Richard C. Salter, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

The Emergence of a Euro-America Radical Right. By Jeffrey Kaplan and Leonard Weinberg. Rutgers University Press, 1998. 238 pages. $22.00 paper.

This book deals with various regional and national groups of the extreme right, the ties between them, the special relationship between the Europeans and Americans belonging to this camp, and their communal dreams. The authors believe that in an age of globalization and computer technology a cyber community of racialists and supremacists is developing and that Gary Lauck and William Pierce (of *The Turner Diaries* fame) exert at least as much influence in Europe as their European counterparts in America. Of particular interest are the section on Einar Åberg, one of the principal figures in keeping the neo-Nazi flag high in Sweden in the post war period, and Tommy Rydén, a much younger racial supremacist in the same country. At present neither the extreme left nor the extreme right have attracted much interest in the media or in academe, and the information gathered in this volume is therefore of considerable interest.

The authors of this painstaking, reliable study believe that these groups have recently developed a common identity based more on racial solidarity than on national identity. But this is not entirely new; it can be traced back to Hitler's attempts during the last years of World War II to establish a common European defense against Bolshevism and to Oswald Mosley's abortive "European" plans during the 1950s. It is true that groups on the extreme right have been experimenting along these lines, but it is not yet clear whether this is from their point of view a promising strategy.

With all the common patterns among the extreme right, trends greatly vary from country to country; in Italy and partly in France (Megret) the extreme right has tried to move towards respectability, whereas in Germany it has not. It is next to impossible to draw a clear dividing line between the major political groups on the extreme right and the sectarian fringe in which the authors are primarily interested. At present the sectarian fringe has not been able to break out of its marginal ghetto. But this could change at a time of social, political, and economic upheaval, and for this reason, if no other, attention paid to its ideas and activities should be welcome.

Walter Laqueur

Wolves Within the Fold: Religious Leadership and Abuses of Power. Edited by Anson Shupe. Rutgers University Press, 1998. 245 pages. $50.00 cloth, $20.00 paper.

"Clergy Malfeasance" is an area of social deviance in which Anson Shupe, the author of *In the Name of All That's Holy: A Theory of Clergy Malfeasance* (Praeger, 1995), is the preeminent and pioneering sociological authority. Many of the contributions to Shupe's new collection seek to apply, modify, or comment on the theoretical framework which the editor developed in his earlier groundbreaking study.

Shupe's approach, which is briefly summarized in his introductory piece, has been strongly influenced by the long-established study of "white collar crime." He adapts the concept of elite deviance (generally applied to crimes by corporate leaders and politicians) of which clergy malfeasance is said to be a subset. The singularity of clergy malfeasance is that clerical financial scandals and child abuse, unlike corporate price fixing or political fund raising scandals, are not considered to contribute to the welfare and corporate needs of the organization (although the same cannot be said of the concealment of malfeasance): "Clergy malfeasance is almost always inspired by lust, greed, and personal problems, rarely by concern for the organization" (p. 4). Shupe does not fully acknowledge that, given "messianic" leadership of a "cult," the distinction between the needs of the organization and the personal needs of the leader(s) becomes more tenuous.

Churches are said to be particularly prone to concealment of elite deviance because, to a greater extent than military or governmental bureaucracies, they represent trusted hierarchies in which all participants have faith in the unselfish benevolence of those at the top. Three subtypes of clergy malfeasance are identified: sexual peccadilloes, financial irregularities, and "authoritative malfeasance." The latter entails excessive control exerted over members by greedy or power-hungry leaders. But how much control is "excessive"?

In one of the most theoretical contributions, Peter Ladicola extrapolates Shupe's theories but also criticizes the narrowness of Shupe's focus. Ladicola notes both the support of revolutionary violence by some liberationist clerics and the more common support of authoritarian and bloodthirsty reactionary regimes by conservative clerics. Although the reference here is mainly to Latin America, it is worth remembering that some right-wing priests enthusiastically supported Nazi anti-Semitic persecutions in Eastern Europe and later helped fascist war criminals escape apprehension. Father Charles Coughlin's anti-Semitic tirades broadcast over American radio are another case in point. How do these examples fit into Shupe's model?

There are three chapters that deal with relatively less institutionalized alternative religions or "cults." E. Burke Rochford, Jr., the leading

sociological authority on Hare Krishna, analyzes how scandals among the regional gurus, who claimed to be worthy of worship as the collective successors to the movement's revered founder, undercut their sovereignty and thus enabled the movement to regain its unity. Robert Kisala discusses the evolution of Aum Shinrikyo and critically evaluates two common explanations for the emergence of an extreme, violence-prone apocalypticism: mind control and tensions with outsiders. A seminal paper by Robert Balch and Stephen Langdon critically explores a study of the Church Universal and Triumphant which appears to have been designed to protect the movement from stigma and to attest to its presumed lack of serious deviance.

All three papers are good and illustrate what Shupe calls the "ecumenical" nature of clergy malfeasance. Nevertheless, the reviewer has the impression that Shupe's theoretical framework more or less subsumes any distinction between alternative religions and reputable groups under the duality of congregational vs. hierarchical groups: the latter can more easily conceal deviance while the former are better able to "normalize" deviance through supportive beliefs. But marginal sects can also afford to support deviant beliefs simply because they are not trying to become (or remain) mainstream. David Koresh justified his sexual liaisons in terms of "spreading the seed of the Messiah," but a fornicating pope such as Alexander VI could hardly prate about "spreading the seed of St. Peter." One can also question whether Shupe's approach, so influenced by the study of white collar crime, is all that relevant to marginal, non-institutionalized groups. How helpful will it be to label Charles Manson an "elite deviant"?

It is slightly disconcerting to recall that in Shupe's earlier work with David Bromley on the "anticult" movement, parents, concerned citizens, and other crusaders against cultic deviance were sometimes depicted as overheated "vigilantes." In the present volume, anti-malfeasance activists are treated as courageous heroes who can practically do no wrong. The possibility of false accusations is somewhat downplayed.

These criticisms notwithstanding, Shupe's collection is a vital and insightful exploration of an area in which the editor has been a real pioneer.

Thomas Robbins, Rochester, Minnesota

Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia. By Lynne Hume. Melbourne University Press, 1997. 272 pages. $29.95 paper.

"What would it really feel like to be a witch and to engage in the practices of witchcraft" (p. 15)? Drawing upon her five years of fieldwork with the Pagan community in Australia, Lynne Hume provides us with a

detailed answer to this question. Her research included her participation in Pagan rituals, workshops, and festivals, the use of interviews and a questionnaire, as well as the acquisition of more personal skills when she learned to read tarot cards and "to do spells" (p. 14). Whilst she expresses a deep interest in Pagan spirituality and alerts us to the fact that "much of my social life is occupied with Pagan activities" (p. 14), she does not actually attest to being a practicing Pagan. Discussing her methodology in chapter one, she stresses that to engage in such participatory research requires a constant reflection upon "one's own process of observing . . . being conscious of the effect of subject on object, and object on subject" (p. 10).

Chapter two offers us a readable history of contemporary Paganism, from its roots in the nineteenth-century British occult revival to its transmission to Australia and the setting up of the Pan Pagan Pacific Alliance. The following chapters move on to describe, largely from a Wiccan point of view, the organization and structure of Paganism, its ritual, and the performance of magic, as well as the experiential and emotional dimensions of the craft. In particular, the discussion in chapter three on the implications of homosexuality and transsexuality for Wicca begins to draw our critical attention to crucial philosophical, ethical, and practical issues.

Hume makes little reference to specifically Australian features of the Paganism she is describing. The closest hint at this is the discussion in chapter five which looks at the adaptation of seasonal festivals to suit the southern hemisphere. In several places she mentions features of the aboriginal culture, but there is little indication that Australian Pagans consider this as particularly significant, either in terms of inspiration or cultural affiliation.

It is not until chapter eight that she focuses upon key issues such as the popular association of Paganism with child abuse or Satanism, and not until chapter nine that she engages with feminism and ecology. Whilst this book is not an apology for Paganism, it tends to be descriptive rather than discursive and is more likely to appeal to those who are interested in an overview of contemporary Pagan belief and practice than those who wish to explore its wider political or social implications.

Emma Tomalin, Lancaster University

Lost Daughters: Recovered Memory Therapy and the People It Hurts. By Reinder Van Til. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997. 286 pages. $18.00 paper.

Debate regarding the veracity of memories of child sexual abuse recovered via therapy has become increasingly contentious and bitter among mental health professionals during the last decade—in particular

in cases of alleged Satanic ritual abuse. Proponents of recovered memory therapy (RMT) insist that children who are repeatedly sexually abused may repress memories of the abuse as a coping mechanism. Though the trauma disappears from consciousness, they suggest, it interferes with normal functioning of the individual, creating problems such as eating disorders, depression, or substance abuse until it is uncovered in therapy and addressed. To date no replicable evidence of recovered memory of ongoing sexual abuse has been uncovered, and critics contend that a growing body of research indicates that the therapeutic methods used to "recover" memories in fact facilitate construction of false memories by therapists who, consciously or unconsciously, implant and reinforce memories of abuse that never occurred.

Given the serious implications of possible false accusations of sexual abuse and the lack of evidence of efficacy of recovered memory therapy, criticism of the approach is warranted. Van Til's critique of the phenomenon, however, fails to add new substantive information to the existing debate. Interspersing accounts by those claiming to have been harmed by recovered memory therapy with chapters linking RMT with feminism, psychology, religion, and child welfare advocacy, Van Til undermines his argument by casting blame for harm wrought by RMT too widely. In his discussion of the "radical feminist influence" on recovered memory therapy, for example, Van Til cites questionable evidence in order to contend that incidence of rape, sexual abuse, and domestic violence is vastly overstated. In a later chapter on "changing perceptions of the child abuse problem," Van Til focuses on a few cases involving questionable accusations of child abuse to support his contention that legislation enacted to protect children from abuse has resulted in "overreactions to suspicions of child abuse . . . at all levels of our society" (p. 148).

Van Til has created a readable book that will likely find a large popular audience. For those interested in serious discussion of recovered memory syndrome, though, a body of academic research exists which provides a more empirical, less emotive review of the evidence (see, for example, *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memories and Allegations of Sexual Abuse*, Elizabeth Loftus and Katherine Ketcham, 1994; and *The Recovered Memory/False Memory Debate*, eds. Kathy Pezdek and William P. Banks, 1996).

Laura L. Vance, Georgia Southwestern State University

The Evangelical Left: Encountering Postconservative Evangelical Theology. By Millard J. Erickson. Baker Books, 1997. 152 pages. $14.00 paper.

There used to be a significant minority of evangelicals who located themselves on the left politically. One of them, Clark Pinnock, figures

prominently in this book, but not for this reason. Pinnock did indeed experiment with "a fusion of Anabaptist hermeneutics and new left political orientation" in the 1970s and even voted for a communist candidate in Vancouver. But Erickson, a theologian whose systematic theology is used in many evangelical seminaries today, is not concerned here with politics of this sort. He is sounding the alarm (though he calls his book "alertist" rather than "alarmist" in the Preface) that important theological barriers are being tested by some older evangelicals like Pinnock and many younger ones within the Evangelical Theology Group of the American Academy of Religion (and even some in the Evangelical Theological Society).

Erickson is especially concerned with how these evangelicals do theology, their doctrine of scripture, a possible slide into process theology, an attraction to narrative theology, and a softening position on who is headed for hell. He wonders aloud how far they can drift before surrendering the right to be called "evangelical."

This slim volume is probably best understood as a warning shot over the bow to stay within already charted and well traveled channels. Erickson is correct that there is a loosely defined group of evangelicals who have been called "postconservative." But to understand them on their own terms and to explore how they are trying to avoid being defined by new versions of the fundamentalist-modernist debate while dialoguing with non-evangelicals, other sources should be consulted. On the other hand, to view these "postconservatives" through the eyes of a prominent evangelical theologian who perceives a threat and is attempting to sound a warning and to build a hedge around traditional evangelicalism, proceed.

Douglas Milford, Wheaton College

Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground. By Michael Moynihan and Didrik Søderlind. Feral House, 1998. $15.95 paper.

Rumors abound about a relationship between heavy metal music and its macabre kin, black metal and death metal, with Satanism. Now here is a book that looks behind the scenes and claims to uncover at least some of the reality. Though more journalistic than scholarly in format, the authors of *Lords of Chaos* clearly know the international metal/Satanism picture and, largely through interviews, have brought information to light of which religion scholars as well as the general public ought to be aware. The focus of the book is primarily on Europe, above all Norway, where the expertise of the Norwegian co-author Didrik Søderlind was clearly invaluable.

The book begins with a rather perfunctory survey of American heavy metal music and Satanism; here one gets a sense of little more than fading 1970s nihilism and adolescent posturing combined with a canny sense of the commercial value of shock and controversy in this milieu. Moving on to Norway, though, the skies darken. This country of only four-and-a-half million souls appears to be something of a cynosure of musical diabolism, Neo-Nazism, and the darker forms of Neo-Paganism. A particularly disturbing manifestation of that connection has been a series of recent burnings of no less than forty-five Norwegian churches, including a number of the priceless medieval staves churches. Many if not most of the arson has been linked to persons in the black metal world who in interviews or in court have hinted or boasted that the fires were Odin's, or Satan's, or Hitler's revenge on Christianity. Reasons offered for the existence of this gruesome underground in that beautiful Scandinavian country range from the effects of Norway's midwinter darkness, to reaction against the pampered, sanitized, but secularized life of the country's well-off citizens, to the heritage of its troll- and goblin-laden folklore.

Lords of Chaos glances more briefly at the situation in Sweden, Germany, Russia, and elsewhere, including the allegedly Satanic school killings in Pearl, Mississippi. The book may tell more than all but the most hard core fans need to know about the bizarre lives and sometimes no less exotic deaths of obscure figures in black metal's semi-underground planet. Many of the interviews, which tend to say the same thing over and over in slightly different words, could profitably have been summarized. But for anyone with an interest in the bypaths of contemporary youth culture or the contemporary life of Satanism and Nazi-style Paganism, *Lords of Chaos* is highly recommended.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

Struggle of the Magicians: Exploring the Teacher-Student Relationship. By William Patrick Patterson. Arete Communications, 1996. 312 pages. $19.95 paper.

William Patrick Patterson has produced a highly readable account of the history of George Gurdjieff's Fourth Way Movement, from its founding in Russia through Gurdjieff's death in France in 1949. As a follower of the Fourth Way, Patterson writes from a devotee's point of view, and the extensive use of sources close to Gurdjieff and within the movement gives the book even more of an insider's perspective.

The focus of *Struggle of the Magicians* is less on facts, places, and other objective aspects of the formative years of the movement, and more on the fascinating and often turbulent relationships and interpersonal

dynamics that existed between the unusual cast of characters who followed Gurdjieff and his teaching. Indeed, the main focus of the book is the relationships between Gurdjieff and his leading followers—primarily P. D. Uspenskii (Patterson's preferred spelling over the more commonly seen "Ouspensky"), and to a lesser extent the likes of J. G. Bennett, Alfred Orage, and others.

Patterson uses a diary form to tell the story of Gurdjieff and his followers, using dated entries written in the present tense. This format gives the book an almost novel-like quality which puts the reader inside the movement and communicates the flavor of the spirit of the movement, including its ebb and flow over a span of four decades. Between entries on the Fourth Way, Patterson also occasionally inserts brief entries on political and cultural developments of the time (particularly the Russian revolution and the rise of Hitler), situating the movement in a larger context.

The relationship between Gurdjieff and his more renowned followers was often tumultuous, and Patterson does not hesitate to present their criticisms of Gurdjieff. But his belief in Gurdjieff's role as a true enlightened Master comes through in his repeated attempts to rationalize even the most flagrant examples of rude, excessive, and self-indulgent behavior by Gurdjieff. Similarly, complaints about Gurdjieff's behavior lodged by his followers are explained away as indicative of their lack of spiritual development and understanding of the Work. Uspenskii, in particular, is portrayed as one who understood the external aspects of the Fourth Way but lacked the spiritual depth to achieve the inner transformation needed to understand the true intent behind Gurdjieff's "crazy wisdom."

Overall, *Struggle of the Magicians* is both an entertaining and informative work, intended primarily for those already familiar with Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way tradition.

George Adams, Susquehanna University

Reclaiming the Spirit: Gay Men and Lesbians Come to Terms with Religion. By David Shallenberger. Rutgers University Press, 1998. 304 pages. $26.00 cloth.

David Shallenberger presents a diverse collection of personal belief narratives by lesbians and gay men. His introduction and brief discussions of each narrative reveal his sensitivity and openness to the spiritual life stories he records. By presenting the narratives rather than synopses he allows the reader to interact with the spiritual seekers whose words are written in these pages.

In the introduction, Shallenberger outlines the similarities he encounters in these narratives. The spiritual aspects are interwoven with elements typically found in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people's life histories, including the sense of alienation and/or difference and the pain and difficulties of the coming out process. Almost all of these men and women embarked upon a search for a belief system that was self-affirming, as many "could not merely adopt the tradition that had been handed down to them, for in most cases it rejected a core aspect of who they were: their homosexuality, and for women, their gender" (p. 12). This search resulted in a reclaiming of spirituality by asserting their "right to a self-as-spiritual that was being denied by much of the traditional religious establishment" (p. 4). For these people religion is personal, though the outlet for their spirituality is sometimes within a traditional religious establishment or a gay-focused group based on a traditional model such as the Metropolitan Community Church or Dignity.

Shallenberger arranges the narratives in relation to the patterns he sees within the accounts, focusing on the questioning of self and spirituality, the search for community, leaving mainstream religions, and the development of a ministry. He introduces each section with a brief description of the concepts he finds important in the stories that are included. Within these sections the reader finds spiritual explorations by pagans and Taoists, along with Catholics and fundamentalist Christians. The focus on the diversity within lesbian and gay religious expression keeps this collection from being biased towards either the traditional or nontraditional.

The book ends with a chapter on methodology in which Shallenberger outlines his intent to "understand these individuals as they understand themselves within their life contexts" (p. 275). This approach to ethnography resulted in a caring examination of individuals seeking to live their lives as spiritual people despite the anti-homosexual stance of many religious traditions. This text is accessible for all audiences and is potentially useful for anyone interested in lesbian and gay spirituality.

Elizabeth Currans, University of Oregon

Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History. By Deborah Vansau McCauley. University of Illinois Press, 1995. 551 pages. $24.95 paper.

In her richly detailed and sweeping work, *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History*, Deborah Vansau McCauley takes the reader through a fascinating journey into a little understood subculture, but one which makes up one of the richest parts of the mosaic of American religious traditions. Her work is a thorough snapshot of a tradition which has

been given short shrift by historians of American religion. McCauley's goal is twofold: to fill the scholarly gap on Appalachian mountain religion and to set forth why the Appalachian mountain subculture has been the victim of so many stereotypes. What emerges is a portrait of a complex and multifaceted religious tradition as well as a seething indictment of mainstream American Protestantism, which McCauley holds largely responsible for the stereotyped images of emotionally overwrought mountain preachers and snake handlers.

McCauley cites four major formative influences on the creation of a unique Appalachian mountain religious subculture. Tracing the influences of pietism, sacramental revivalism, the revival traditions of the Baptists, and plain-folk camp meeting religion from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century, McCauley asserts that by the late 1820s a fully developed mountain religious tradition had emerged distinguished chiefly from the rest of American Protestantism by its independent, decentralized, nondenominational nature. This decentralized religious structure is also characterized by ecstatic worship services, a church polity in which the pastor is not the central figure and in which both men and women are recognized as spiritual leaders, and an emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing about both the conversion experience and spiritual ecstasy. Within the broader framework of Appalachian mountain religion there are, as McCauley points out, "subregionally and doctrinally diverse traditions" (p. 17).

The underlying theme of McCauley's book, even as she develops the doctrines and the diversity of mountain religion, is the running conflict between mountain religion and the rest of American Protestantism. McCauley views the conflict as rooted in the nondenominational nature of mountain religion and in its rejection of the idea that human effort, rather than God's grace completely mediated through the Holy Spirit, could bring about either personal or social conversion. This dichotomy, completed by the end of the 1820s and personified in the divergent ministries of Charles Finney and Daniel Nash, was exacerbated in the late nineteenth century as organized Protestantism, now in its cultural heyday, set out to build a Christian America and reform those who stood in the way of this objective. Protestant missionaries, fanning out over the Appalachian region, painted a portrait of poor, stupid, and simple folk whose religion centered around intense emotion and sometimes serpent-holding. These portraits, recorded in the denominational missionary periodicals of the period, provided the basis for a lasting impression among lay people and scholars alike of mountain religion. Holding American Protestantism accountable for this simplistic stereotype provides much of the passion that runs throughout this book.

Central to the understanding of why this looms as such an issue for McCauley is the fact that she was raised in one of the mountain religious traditions. This "insider status" enables McCauley to understand the

nuances, language, and doctrine of the mountain religion, and most importantly it gives her an intimacy with what is largely a religion of oral traditions where others have had to rely on written and, in McCauley's view, skewed portraits of mountain religion. Yet this personal knowledge proves a double-edged sword in the book. McCauley clearly has an ax to grind and at one point calls upon American Protestantism "to [seek] God's face and [hear] God's voice in the mountains" (p. 463). She also castigates some scholarship on mountain religion as attempting to "control and dominate . . . a subject the scholar finds personally threatening" (p. 465).

This kind of rhetoric is out of step with the rest of this otherwise well written work. This is not a work for those seeking an introduction to the subject. McCauley clearly assumes her readers have significant prior knowledge. It is easy to become turned around navigating through detailed discussions of Old School Baptists, Free Will Baptists, and United Baptists. The book's incredible detail owes much to McCauley's familiarity with oral tradition, and she has performed an invaluable service for future historians in unearthing and printing much of that tradition. The book is not only a treasure trove of primary sources, it is also a wealth of well-organized secondary sources. McCauley provides an opening synopsis for each of the book's four sections, and this proves very helpful in grasping the book's major themes. It is clear that McCauley's work fills a significant gap in the historical scholarship on American religion, and it helps rescue a proud and rich part of American religious life from a provincial and anti-intellectual stereotype.

Mark Taylor Dalhouse, Washington and Lee University

Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures from Outerspace to Cyberspace. By Jodi Dean. Cornell University Press, 1998. 242 pages. $39.95 cloth, $15.95 paper.

What is going on in a society in which, according to some polls, there are five times as many believers in UFOs as there are fundamentalist Christians, twice as many as Roman Catholics, not to mention far more believers than scientific or academic skeptics, and yet in which the subject is ridiculed or ignored by virtually all "serious" media, as well as by a government which otherwise bends to the political winds generated by all sorts of beliefs?

This is the conundrum that social scientist Jodi Dean seeks to explore, and a fascinating exploration it is. She looks at the social dynamics of UFOs, abduction accounts, the space program as popular culture, UFOs and conspiracy paranoia, the popularity of *The X-Files*,

and much else. In brief, she views the UFO popular culture phenomenon as a sort of fallout from the techno-information revolution in which the overwhelming volume of information generated vastly exceeds the ability of the culture to reduce it all to an accepted "public" consensus about truth.

The residue is, as it were, available for processing into alternative truth systems. These have appeal because "public" truth is hardly able to keep up with information overload, and in any case many people feel little obligation to its official academic and political custodians. With the Internet, the situation is only going to get worse (or better, depending on one's point of view) as more and more unorthodox worldviews are able to bypass the public square entirely and still reach millions of prospective believers complete with the high-tech aura that comes as part of the message of this particular medium. Of all this the UFO/abductee/conspiracy syndrome is an excellent test case, as Dean illustrates. One is led to envision similar "alternatives" in religion, medicine, and worldviews burgeoning as what is left of the "modern" consensus on what is rational, scientific truth continues to disintegrate and (paradoxically) the new technologies that are one of its legacies continue to flourish.

Although sometimes rambling and too breezy for a university press publication, *Aliens in America* is an important book. It deserves a place in all private and library collections interested in popular culture and UFO phenomena.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

Religion and the Culture Wars: Dispatches from the Front. By John C. Green, James L. Guth, Corwin E. Smidt, and Lyman A. Kellstedt. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1996. 369 pages. $69.50 cloth, $26.95 paper.

In sixteen essays (nine of which have previously been published) and an introduction the authors aim to demonstrate, primarily for other political scientists and for journalists covering politics, the nuanced ways in which religion does matter in politics. Among the topics they cover are Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, political activism among Southern Baptist Clergy from 1980 to 1992, the neglected roles of Pentecostals and charismatics in American politics, the nature of "evangelical Protestantism," and the implications of the 1992 elections. Several contributions focus on the impact of the new Christian Right in presidential elections and give particular attention to Pat Robertson's 1988 campaign. In general, the essays subject a rich body of survey evidence to various statistical analyses that give very specific meanings

to such broad notions as "culture wars," "fundamentalism," and the "new Christian Right" itself.

The authors argue that "the 'evangelical revival' is mostly 'homegrown'" and that there has not been a significant realignment from liberal denominations to conservative ones (p. 10), and they see the growth of the Christian Right as a self-limiting phenomenon that has its greatest appeal to the first generation of traditional believers who are caught in the transition to urban life. They propose that rather than a revival of religious activism, a transformation of political alignments is taking place, with "traditionally religious" people moving to the political right and less traditionally religious and secular people moving to the political left. As a result, "the new role of evangelicals and seculars as the cultural cores of the Republican and Democratic parties, respectively, puts them in key positions to shape the ideological contours of those parties" (p. 286).

These essays achieve their general goal of showing how religion matters in contemporary politics, and they successfully develop a detailed picture of the new Christian right. At times they don't wholly escape the repetition and overlap that seems endemic to collections of previously published essays, and they would have benefited from the addition of a concluding synthesis that emphasized the general trends and conclusions that are suggested by the title and intimated by the individual chapters. Nonetheless, this collection should be a very useful guide to the multiple roles of the Christian right in contemporary American politics.

Eugene V. Gallagher, Connecticut College

Ritual Magic of the Golden Dawn: Works by S. L. MacGregor Mathers and Others. Edited by Francis King. Inner Traditions, 1997. 288 pages. $14.95 paper.

Completists will want this expanded version of Francis King's 1971 *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic and Alchemy.* The present work contains more newly-discovered Golden Dawn texts found neither in the earlier book, nor in Israel Regardie's magisterial four-volume *Golden Dawn* (1937–40) nor in the several collections of more advanced Golden Dawn rituals published by Patrick Zalewski. In the new preface King states that finally "it would seem probable that all the Golden Dawn instructional documents, on which the Order's magical workings were based, are now available in printed form" (p. 9). It may be, then, that this volume with its long and interesting introduction by King, together with the fine general histories of the celebrated and influential 1890s magical order by King, Ellic Howe, and R. A. Gilbert, means that the diligent

student can know as much as can be known about the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and its offshoots.

In any case, the present book, largely made up of "Flying Rolls" or short instructional documents by various Golden Dawn teachers, will of itself provide the curious with a good sense of the content and flavor of G. D. approaches to such matters as astral projection, the Rosicrucian heritage, the Kabbala, and alchemy. An important asset is the inclusion of several pages of texts from the Cromlech Temple, a later group heavily influenced by the Golden Dawn but composed largely of Anglican clergymen and dedicated to "Christian Occultism." *Ritual Magic of the Golden Dawn* is highly recommended to serious students of that magical activity and its progeny.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

The Salem Witchcraft Trials: A Legal History. By Peter Charles Hoffer. University Press of Kansas, 1997. 165 pages. $10.95 paper.

Hundreds of books and articles have been written on the Salem witchcraft trials. No other witch craze in history has been as exhaustively studied, making it difficult for a work to stand out from the crowd. Fortunately, *The Salem Witchcraft Trials* succeeds in doing this, not by covering some new, obscure angle, but rather by doing what the others have done and doing it notably better.

The Salem Witchcraft Trials is an introduction to America's sole witchcraft panic, which hit Salem, Massachusetts in 1692 and 1693. One hundred and fifty-six people were accused of witchcraft. Thirty were convicted, nineteen were executed. Hoffer begins his account with a description of the social setting of the trials, the village tensions, and the history that gave rise to the accusations. He then covers the chronology of the craze, giving succinct descriptions of the major cases.

There are many such surveys, of course. What sets *The Salem Witchcraft Trials* apart is Hoffer's ability to summarize complex social, legal, and religious issues with admirable clarity. A bewildering array of factors impacted the trials, among the more important of which were the religious composition of early New England, the history of English witchcraft laws, and the court system in colonial Massachusetts. Most texts assume that their readers are already familiar with these issues. Hoffer does not. In fact, he does not even assume that his readers know what a "Puritan" is. Instead, he sprinkles his trial narrative with paragraphs explaining various aspects of colonial life and law—what "spectral evidence" was, and why most courts refused to allow it; how the physical setting of the court crippled the defendants' ability to

defend themselves; and what Puritans taught about possession and the "proper" way for a Christian to protect himself from witchcraft.

Entire books have been written about these subjects yet Hoffer manages to give pithy, detailed summaries, usually in no more than a paragraph or two. And these expansions are woven into the main text with consummate skill. *The Salem Witchcraft Trials* never gets side-tracked into lengthy asides, never gets derailed into peripheral issues. The added benefit of this is that the asides never become tedious to readers who are already familiar with the issues they address.

For nonspecialists, this is perhaps the finest survey of the Salem witch trials available. No other text sets out Salem's social context with such clarity and detail. Those looking for an in-depth study may be disappointed; Hoffer touches upon most aspects of current research, but in a book this size he cannot go into great depth. However, even experts will find this to be a cogent and pleasant review of the essential information on Salem.

Jenny Gibbons, Newark, California

Mormon Passage: A Missionary Chronicle. By Gary Shepherd and Gordon Shepherd. University of Illinois Press, 1998. 454 pages. $49.95 cloth, $24.95 paper.

The Gordon brothers have contributed yet another significant book to the study of the Latter-day Saints as part of the Mormon Studies series published by the University of Illinois Press. This time their purpose is to chronicle their missionary activity in Mexico in the mid-1960s. With the exception of the Introduction and the last section—which, by offering a historical analysis of the Mormon missionary enterprise with predictions for the future, provide a sociological framework for the book and place the authors' missionary activity presented in the main chapters into a personal, institutional, and historical continuum—the book comprises a collection of primary sources. These include journal entries written and letters received by the authors during their period of service. In order to make these writings thoroughly understandable to outsiders, they introduce each chapter with a discussion of various institutional (Mormon) practices and personal insights relevant to the content of that chapter.

With this publication the authors' attempt to fill a void so often commented on in Mormon scholarship—the lack of studies devoted to the missionary experience so essential to the community of the Latter-day Saints. In order to achieve this, they offer a case study of themselves. The original written sources are embedded in, though at the same time

textually clearly separated from, their sociological analysis. An endeavor of this sort is truly unique, but it also immediately alarms the reader and raises certain questions such as: For what purpose were these journals written and how honest are these accounts? What motivated and guided the authors in their selection of the texts? How detached could they really become so as to reveal as well as analyze themselves? What audience was this work really written for and with what bias?

Having read this book, I can assure you that you may set aside all these doubts. The authors are at their best in attempting to present an authentic picture of their rite of passage by sharing their innermost feelings, thoughts, doubts, views, and opinions. Their narrative is not only an account of events and a list of places visited, but a complex travelogue of their spiritual and intellectual journey to adulthood in every sense of the word. It may be a bottomless well for all kinds of readers, both Latter-day Saints and gentiles, preparing and encouraging future missionaries and uniting and strengthening former ones, while enlightening and educating the general public not only on Mormonism, but also on missionary life in general. All this is done in a critical tone, including some constructive and valid critical comments on the Mormon faith and community. Scholars from a variety of fields, including sociology, cultural anthropology, psychology, linguistics, and religious studies, may also find it a rich source for future studies and analysis. All in all, this is a fine book which will be frequently perused and enjoyed.

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Sects in the Islamic World[1]

Mark Sedgwick

According to Islamic tradition, the Prophet Muhammad predicted that, just as the Jews and Christians had, the Muslims would split into a number of *firqas* (sects).[2] This prediction is reported in various versions, usually giving the number of sects into which Islam would divide as seventy-three, and usually consigning all save one to the fires of hell.[3] Since this prediction, various Muslim writers have compiled accounts of sects, sometimes called heresiographies by Western scholars.[4] The earliest known such work dates from the ninth century A.D.; Islamic heresiographies in more or less the classic format continue to appear today, and examples can also be found on the internet.[5] Following the prediction of the Prophet, many Muslim heresiographers have devoted considerable ingenuity to ensuring that the sects they deal with number seventy-two (the seventy-third normally being the author's own), evidently on two mistaken assumptions: that the number seventy-three should be taken literally,[6] and that no further sects would arise after the heresiographer's own time.

In fact, new religious movements, sects, and cults continue to arise in the Islamic world, as everywhere else. An immediate problem for their student, however, is one of definition. Although *firqa* is commonly translated into English as "sect," the word generally used today to translate "sect" into Arabic is not *firqa* but *ta'ifa*. In fact, neither word really means "sect," as we will see. This is hardly surprising: exact correspondences between words in English and Arabic are far less frequent than between English and, say, French, and there are significant differences between the nature and organization of Islam and of Christianity. Despite this, this article argues that religious bodies in the Islamic world can be analyzed using the standard sociological terms and concepts already established in Western contexts, albeit with some slight modifications. A "standard" classification of the main types of religious bodies in the Islamic world is established below on this basis. It is hoped that this classification will in the future make possible more productive comparisons with bodies and processes observed elsewhere.

As well as examining the legal status of sects in principle, this article looks at examples which show how sects in the Islamic world generally either move towards some form of Islamic "orthodoxy" (real or pretended) or else risk persecution, not so much because of the law as because of the attitudes of Muslim societies. These examples suggest that in practice there is more religious tolerance in the Islamic world than the legal status of sects in principle would suggest. A few examples cannot in any sense constitute a final word on the subject, but it is clear (as so often) that what happens in practice is different from what might be expected, and it is also clear that we should rethink the common characterization of Muslim societies as unusually and uniformly intolerant.

The tripartite classification of religious bodies into "church," "sect" and "cult" was established in a Western context, and although the more recent classification of "new religious movement" is less culturally specific, few terms can be more overtly Christian than "church." "Church" and "sect" were used in writing about Islam in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, but generally created confusion and have since almost wholly disappeared from serious literature on Islam.[7] In his recent *Social Dimensions of Sectarianism*, Bryan Wilson warned against applying the conclusions of observations made in one culture to another culture, emphasizing that "it is important not to project onto bodies outside the Christian ambit characteristics that are part of the cultural baggage of Christian religiosity."[8] A recent debate on whether or not there was an "eighteenth-century enlightenment" in the Islamic world has once again made clear the distaste of most Islamologists for culturally alien terms, even of ones such as "enlightenment."[9] And yet unless attempts are made to place Islamic phenomena within some sort of common scientific terminology, Islamic studies are doomed to continued isolation.

CONCEPTS

As long ago as 1911, Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) hypothesized that the sect-type/church-type division was probably a general one in monotheistic religions and speculated that "it may well be supposed that similar phenomena occur within Islam."[10] As we will see, Troeltsch was right, at least in terms of his own definition: "If objections are raised to the terms 'Church' and 'Sect,'" wrote Troeltsch, "we would then have to make the distinction between institutional churches and voluntary churches."[11] His idea of a "voluntary church" has a major problem, which was pointed out by H. Richard Niebuhr in 1929 ("by its very nature, the sectarian type of organization is valid only for one generation. The children born to the voluntary members of the first generation begin to

make the sect a church"),[12] by Joachim Wach in 1947 ("it cannot be denied that people join a church and are born into a sect")[13] and again by Bryan Wilson in 1990 ("in all growing movements, there are always some new . . . members").[14] The fact that no religious body can remain entirely voluntary indefinitely does not, however, invalidate Troeltsch's distinction between voluntarism and institutionalism. As we will see, religious bodies in the Islamic world do follow this basic distinction, as in the West.

It is easier to identify "voluntary" bodies or groups in the Islamic world than it is to identify the "institutional church" with which they may be contrasted. This is not a unique problem, for neither is there an established institutional church in the United States, and the use of "denomination" to replace "church" in response to this unusual feature of American religious life is of considerable assistance in applying Troeltsch's dichotomy to the Islamic world.[15] Beyond this, the increasing marginalization of institutional churches in the West has led Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge to define a sect in terms of "the degree to which a religious group is in a state of tension with its surrounding sociocultural environment"[16] rather than with denominations or established churches. For Bryan Wilson "the challenge [of the sect] is not to conventional religious beliefs so much as to the general, secularized social mores."[17] Although there is no real "established church" in Islam, then, there are general *mores* and there is a general sociocultural environment; there is also an established body of doctrine, which might be defined as those points on which most Muslims in most places at most times have agreed. This established body of doctrine is, as we will see, largely under the control of bodies which may be termed denominations.

Troeltsch identified two further characteristics of the sect: that it be organized and that it be oriented towards a "fellowship-principle," i.e. that the members of a sect "aim at a direct personal fellowship" unavailable in the institutional church.[18] The fellowship-principle is distinct from voluntarism. A voluntary body need not necessarily be oriented inwardly, towards direct personal fellowship; as we will see below, it may also be outward-oriented, concentrating more on its mission to those outside than on its own fellowship. Similarly, "organization" is not the same as "institutional." When Troeltsch used the word "institutional," he did not mean so much "organized as an institution" as "not voluntary; part of the established framework." A religious body may be highly organized, loosely organized, or barely organized; these possibilities are all independent of the other characteristics of a sect. For Troeltsch, degree of organization was the basis of the distinction between sect and cult. He distinguished the sect from "epidemic infections which are based upon the transference of strong passions from one person to another" and from mysticism, "a purely individualistic emphasis upon direct

communion with God, which . . . in itself feels no need of fellowship." However, whilst "in itself mysticism has no fellowship-principle at all; its only idea of fellowship is intercourse between like-minded souls," "as soon as [mystics] wish to organize themselves into a community they follow the example of the sect-type."[19] To paraphrase, a cult becomes a sect when it ceases to be barely organized.

The prime characteristics of a sect, then, are: (1) its voluntary nature; (2) its orientation towards the "fellowship-principle"; (3) its coherent organization; and (4) its tension with the sociocultural environment.

Expanding slightly on the first and last of these four characteristics, Bryan Wilson identifies five "specific sociological indicia of the sect." According to Wilson, a sect: (1) is "exclusivistic" in relation to the prevailing norm; (2) "maintains a degree of tension with the world"; (3) is a voluntary body; (4) has a possibility of "discipline . . . even expulsion"; and (5) is for its members a "primary source of social identity."[20]

Two of the three "indicia" which Wilson has added are in effect articulations of voluntarism. Voluntarism implies exclusivity, and (for obvious reasons) expulsion from a voluntary body is easier than expulsion from an institutional body. Wilson's third new characteristic, a sect's primary role as a source of social identity, is both a result of voluntarism and tension, and a means of sustaining tension. It might in some ways be equated to commitment.

It is not clear why Wilson does not include among his "indicia" either Troeltsch's fellowship-principle or his requirement for a minimal degree of organization. Since my analysis of sects in the Islamic world indicates that both are needed, we will add these two characteristics back to Wilson's five "indicia," making seven "specific characteristics of the sect" for use below (see figure 1). The two characteristics found both in Troeltsch and in Wilson (voluntarism and tension) are by common

I	Voluntarism
II	Exclusivism
III	Fellowship-principle
IV	"Primary source of social identity"
V	Organization
VI	Discipline
VII	Tension

Figure 1 Specific characteristics of the sect

consent the most important. They will, therefore, be the basis of the two continua which will be our principal test of sectarianism.

One possible characteristic which will not be used is that implied in the term which is coming to replace "sect" and "cult" in much scientific usage, new religious movement or "NRM." "New" is in a sense shorthand for "voluntary and in tension," since membership of a new body can only be voluntary, and since novelty is associated with, and is sometimes a source of, tension. In the West, sects are generally new and in a state of tension with their environment, while denominations are generally older and noncontroversial. As we will see, this is not always the case in the Islamic world, where some religious bodies are in a state of tension with their environment despite being old and institutional, and where new and voluntary bodies may be noncontroversial. What matters is not novelty in itself, but voluntarism and tension. Novelty, then, will not be treated as a "specific characteristic" of the sect (though it will be used to distinguish between two forms of one particular type of sect).

Before we proceed to our classification we will turn briefly to the relationship between sect and denomination. In the view of Wilson, "the evolution of religious movements—often represented as 'from sect to church'—is a social process that has suffered . . . theoretical over-generalization." Wilson is here referring primarily to "denomination-alization,"[21] usually ascribed to H. Richard Niebuhr's 1929 *The Social Sources of Denominationalism.* Wilson stresses that "there is . . . no normal or typical pattern of sectarian or denominational development," and comments that "Niebuhr overlooked the uniqueness of American history."[22] Wilson's warning against assuming an invariable pattern is timely, but his criticism of Niebuhr is less well founded, since Niebuhr in fact saw the highly specific environment of the American western frontier as the defining characteristic of American religious history. His central thesis is not that sects are destined to be transformed into denominations, but that "doctrines and practice change with the mutation of social structure, not vice versa." As the frontier disappeared, "the frontier sect becomes a rural church"—a rural church which continued to differ in important ways from the long-established urban churches of the East coast, thus giving rise to the *problem* of denominationalism which caused Niebuhr to write his book in the first place.[23]

Although partly based on a misreading of Niebuhr's work,[24] the concept of "denominationalization" is well-known and useful, especially when applied to the reduction of tensions between a sect and its environment, as for example by Ronald Lawson in his recent study of Seventh-day Adventist responses to the Waco siege.[25] Similar reductions of tension can frequently be observed in the history of sects in the Islamic world, as will be seen below. Movement in other directions, including from one type of sect to another, will also be observed.

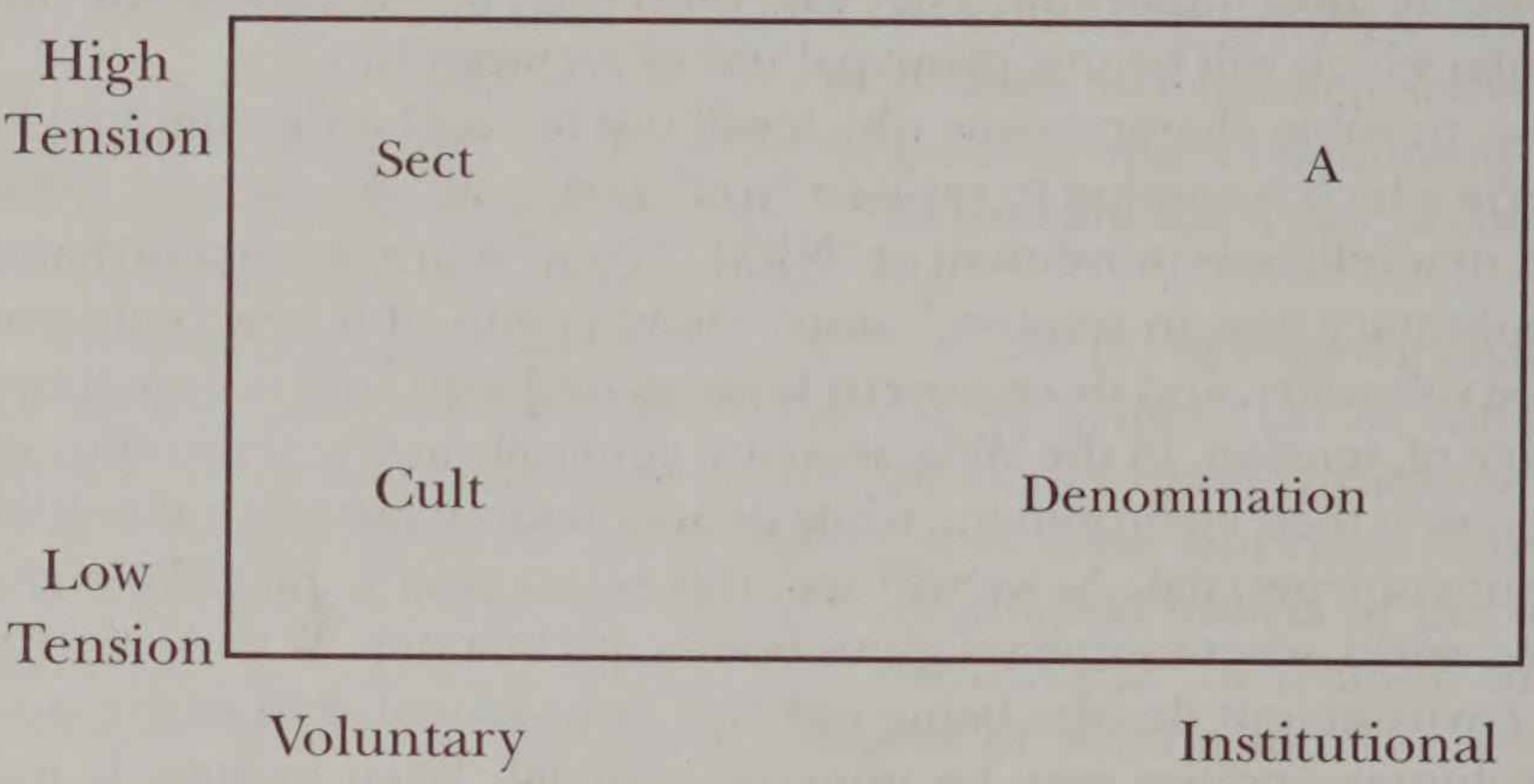


Figure 2 Main types of religious body

CLASSIFICATION

Religious bodies in the Islamic world, as elsewhere, may be divided into denominations, sects, and cults. The relationship between these categories and our two most important variables is shown in Figure 2. The locations of denominations, sects and cults in this figure follow from the definitions already examined, except that cults are here classified as low tension. This does not follow logically from our definitions, but in practice it usually seems to be the case, certainly in the Islamic world. The reasons for this fall beyond the scope of the current article, but may be that some degree of visible distinctness (and thus organization) is required before there can be tension between a body and its environment. If a body is barely organized, as, for example, with individual elements of the contemporary Western "cultic milieu,"[26] tension tends not to arise.

One type of body above, labeled "A," lacks a name. "A" is an institutional religious body in a state of high tension with its environment, such as the Jews in parts of medieval Europe or the [Qadiyani] Ahmadis in contemporary Pakistan (to whom we will return). Bodies such as these will be referred to below as a religious "minority."[27] Of course, a body which is a minority in one context may be what Joachim Wach would call a "founded religion,"[28] or a denomination, in another context. In a U. S. context, for example, Islam is arguably closer to being a minority, while Reformed Judaism is closer to being a denomination. In Iran the Shi'a (discussed further below) are a denomination, and in Iraq a politically weak majority.

Denominations in the Islamic World

In practice, there are two major denominations within Islam, the Sunnis and the Shi'a. Historically, the Shi'a originated as a sect (as we will see), but the split between them and the Sunnis occurred so long ago that for almost all purposes the Shi'a can be regarded as a denomination in their own right. Whether other sects which derive from the Shi'a (such as the Druze or Ismailis) should be described as denominations or minorities is a question to which we will return.

The closest Arabic term to "denomination" is *madhhab*, a word normally but inadequately translated as "school of law." It was once popular, especially in British colonial reports, to translate *madhhab* as "sect," and the word is sometimes used thus in modern Turkish and Malay.[29] Even in Arabic, the word is sometimes used in this way, as in "*madhhabs* of the heretics" (a phrase which appears in the title of a recent Arabic heresiography).[30] This, however, is a secondary rather than primary use: a *madhhab* cannot be described as a sect, since it has almost none of the characteristics of a sect (as shown in figure 1). As it is almost universally agreed that all the four Sunni *madhhabs* are equally "right," a *madhhab* is not in tension with anything. There is nothing "exclusivistic" or voluntary about it;[31] it is impossible to be expelled from it; and the only significant class of persons for whom it is in any sense a "primary source of social identity" are the *ulama*, those scholars who specialize in its version of the *fiqh* [codified sacred law].[32]

A *madhhab* is a denomination in the sense that any Muslim is born into one or other of the *madhhabs*: on certain points his family follows the rulings of one *madhhab* (or rather, of scholars from that *madhhab*) rather than one of the other three.[33] There are today five generally recognized *madhhabs* in Islam, four Sunni and one Shi'a.[34] For most purposes the four Sunni *madhhabs* together form one denomination, since the differences between them have almost no theological or sociological significance.[35] There are more important differences between these four Sunni *madhhabs* and the one (Ja'fari) *madhhab* of the Shi'a, however, and a certain degree of tension is found between Sunnis and Shi'a, as between Catholics and Orthodox.[36]

The principal difference between a *madhhab* and a denomination as the concept is normally understood (and as denominations exist in the West) is that a *madhhab* is not really an organized body.[37] The full-time personnel of a *madhhab*—the scholars who specialize in it—are not in any formal relation with each other. Each *madhhab* has a number of senior and respected scholars—Muftis—who may, in response to questions, issue *fatwas* giving their view on particular questions of interpretation or practice, but a Mufti has no authority (other than the

prestige conferred by his learning) over any other scholar, or over a follower of his *madhhab*. The *fatwas* he gives are not even binding.[38] The personnel of all the *madhhabs* present in a particular place do, however, form a class, the *ulama* [scholars], and may sometimes act as a group much as may any other class, such as merchants.

The second crucial difference between a *madhhab* and a typical Western denomination is that "lay" members of a *madhhab*, though in a sense subject to its jurisdiction for some legal purposes,[39] are not organizationally dependent on it for their religious practice. Neither a Mufti nor a scholar has any sacral function. In principle, any adult, sane Muslim can perform any ritual act within Islam. The *ulama* dominate religious education and preaching, and dominated the law in the premodern period, but this dominance followed from their education and training, not from anything approaching a sacral function. Most ordinary Muslims had never set eyes upon a Mufti, for example, until various governments started trying to use them as semi-official spokesmen.[40]

The *madhhab*, then, can be described as a denomination, but is different from Western or Christian denominations in important ways. As a result primarily of these differences, a sect in the Islamic world may be in tension with all Muslims (the *umma*)[41] in theory, with a *madhhab* on a doctrinal level, or with a particular Mufti or even the *ulama* as a class on a personal level, but in practice it is really in conflict with its environment, just as in the contemporary West. In the Islamic world, of course, religious norms are very important in that environment, since Islam plays a far more important normative role in the Islamic world than does any form of religion today in the West.

Minorities in the Islamic World

There are many "religious minorities" ("A" in figure 2) in the Islamic world: Coptic Orthodox Christians in Egypt, Jews in Morocco, Sikhs in Pakistan, Baha'is in Iran, and various others. These minorities fall into three categories on the basis of their status within Islamic law, categories which may usefully be adopted as sociological categories.[42] Christians and Jews are *ahl al-kitab*, "people of the book,"[43] granted certain privileges by Islamic law. In terms of legal status, the *ahl al-kitab* come second after Muslims, while "pre-Muhammadan" "idolaters" such as Hindus come third.[44] At the very bottom are "post-Muhammadans."[45] Islam recognizes a sequence of prophets which includes Moses and Jesus and culminates in Muhammad. It is a central tenet of Islam that Muhammad was the last prophet, who brought the perfect religion, and that there will be no more prophets after him until the end of time. Periodically, however, sects have emerged in the Islamic world recognizing post-Muhammadan prophets.[46] Most of the "Muslim groups" with which the nonspecialist is

familiar are in fact "post-Muhammadan" minorities of this kind, which started as sects but have since become founded religions, rejected by Islam and to a greater or lesser extent themselves rejecting Islam. Examples of the post-Muhammadan minority include the Ahl-i Haqq, found in Kurdistan, for whom the Divine Essence manifested itself after the time of the Prophet Muhammad in the form of Sultan Suhak (fifteenth century),[47] the [Qadiyani] Ahmadiyya, and the Baha'is (both of which will be discussed below).[48] As will be seen, post-Muhammadan minorities are generally in a far greater state of tension with their environment than are the *ahl al-kitab* or "idolaters."

Cults in the Islamic World

One of Colin Campbell's hypotheses concerning cults was that they and the "cultic milieu"[49] "flourish . . . in relation to (a) the amount of 'alien' culture contact and (b) the disintegration of dominant indigenous culture."[50] Although the dominant culture of the Islamic world is far from disintegration, there has been considerable "alien" culture contact for certain groups within Muslim countries, especially those whose members belong to the higher socioeconomic classes. There are Egyptians who, without ever having lived outside Egypt, are more comfortable reading in a European language than their own, and it is of people such as these that the cultic milieu mostly consists. Campbell's cultic milieu "includes deviant belief-systems and their associated practices,"[51] and an Egyptian who reads widely in a European language will inevitably encounter a variety of "deviant belief-systems," among them Christianity. Christianity is unlikely to be very attractive,[52] and so it is usually of non-Christian Western deviant belief systems that the contemporary cultic milieu in the Islamic world consists. In a sense, Campbell's definition of the cultic milieu as "the cultural underground of society"[53] could almost be reversed: in a socioeconomic sense, the cultic milieu of many Islamic countries is found in the cultural high ground.

There is less of a truly indigenous cultic milieu for the lower socioeconomic classes in the Islamic world than in the West, however. Campbell's Western cultic milieu "substantively . . . includes the worlds of the occult and the magical, of spiritualism and psychic phenomena, of mysticism and New Thought, of alien intelligences and lost civilizations, of faith healing and nature cure."[54] Of these, only New Thought, alien intelligences, and lost civilizations could be classed as "deviant" in a Muslim context; all the other elements are part of the cultural mainstream, not of any special milieu.[55] If the requirement that a cult be somehow "deviant" is removed, however, the Islamic world is full of cults. The two most frequent types of nondeviant cult are loosely

organized groups of devotees of a particular saint,[56] and enthusiasts of particular healers or casters-out of spirits.

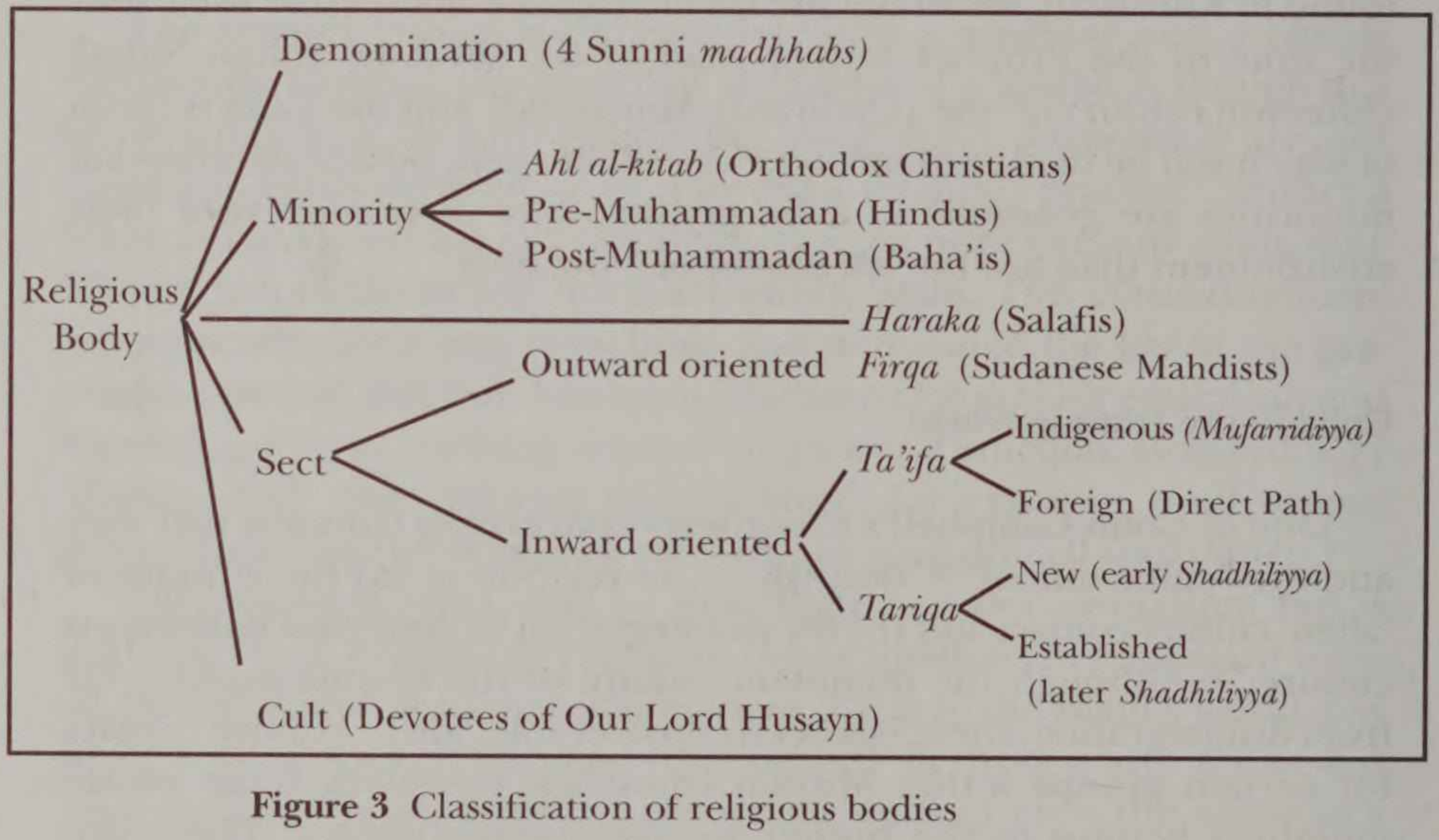


Figure 3 Classification of religious bodies

SECTS

This article proposes a classification of sects in the Islamic world into three categories: the *firqa* [literally, part or division], the *tariqa* [path], and the *ta'ifa* [section]. This classification (shown in Figure 3) is in some ways a pragmatic one, reflecting the need to define clusters of sectarian bodies which actually occur. The extent to which these three types of sect display the seven specific characteristics shown in figure 1 varies, but all show a sufficient number of characteristics to be described as a "sect." The two most important types are the *firqa* and the *tariqa*;[57] the closest to the archetypal contemporary Western sect or NRM is the *ta'ifa*. The *firqa* must be distinguished from a nonsectarian entity—the *haraka*, or movement—which in some ways resembles it. The *haraka*, though not a sect, is discussed below for the sake of completeness.

The first division is between sects which display an inward orientation and sects which lack one of our most important specific characteristics, the fellowship-principle. The *firqa* (like the nonsectarian *haraka*) claims a monopoly over the proper interpretation of Islam and is therefore oriented outwards towards those for whom it has a message (the entire community of Muslims). Although lacking one important specific characteristic of the sect (the fellowship-principle), the *firqa* displays all the other six and may be described as an outward-oriented sect. As has

been said, the *haraka* is not a sect, principally because it is barely organized.

The *tariqa* and *ta'ifa*, in contrast, display all the seven specific characteristics of the sect. Both are inward-orientated, in the sense that they are orientated towards the fellowship-principle and in the sense that they are more concerned with members of the sect than those outside, i.e. are not outward-orientated. The major difference between them is that the *tariqa* arises in a Sufi context. It is for this reason that different terms are used; almost the only point on which consensus currently exists in the definition of religious bodies in the Islamic world is that a body of Sufi origin is a *tariqa*. A more important distinction must then be made between new and "established" *tariqas*, since these two types of *tariqa* display important differences. Novelty is not used in any other definition, since *firqas* and *ta'ifas* are too unstable to become "established" without changing into something else (normally a nonsectarian body or a *tariqa*). In the same way, a unique distinction is made between *ta'ifas* of indigenous and foreign origin, since those of foreign origin have certain special attributes. This distinction is not made for other types of sect, since no cases are known of *firqas* or *tariqas* of foreign origin.

Our three types of sect vary in the degree of tension between them and their environment and in their degree of voluntarism, as is shown in Figure 4. The differences in tension within the two pairs (*firqa* and *ta'ifa/tariqa*) arise for different reasons. As has been said, the *tariqa* is a specifically Sufi phenomenon and tends to stay relatively close to the generally accepted teachings and practice of Islam; the *ta'ifa*, on the other hand, often departs from them radically, and is therefore in a much higher state of tension with its environment. In contrast, there is little difference in the (usually significant) degree to which the *firqa* and the *haraka* tend to depart from "accepted teachings and practices." The difference in tension between them arises largely because the *haraka* is barely organized, and so is in a much lower state of tension with its environment than the *firqa*.

Other Classifications

The system of classification proposed above differs both from various systems used by individual Western scholars and by individual scholars writing in Arabic. As we will see, there is a lack of unanimity among these other scholars. To the extent that Western scholars have referred to Islamic "sects" in recent years, the definition has usually been Weberian, as for example in the work of Fuad Khuri, who sees sects as protest movements, and places them in opposition not to their environment but to the state.[58] He distinguished sects from "religious

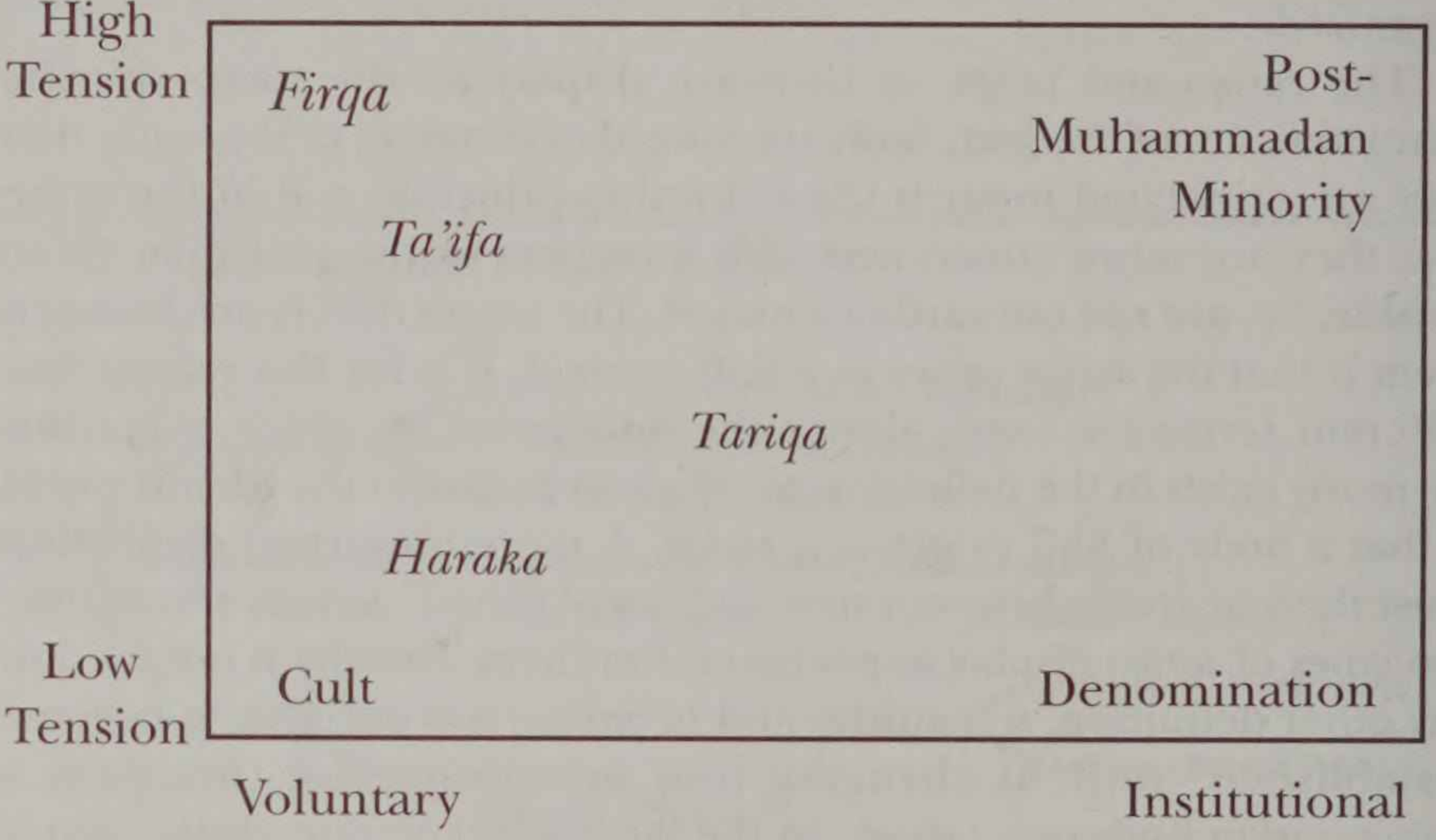


Figure 4 Types of sect

minorities" and "religious movements." For Khuri, sects arose in protest against Sunni orthodoxy; they exercise some form of control over territory and enjoy some degree of independence. Minorities, on the other hand, are subject to the control of a Sunni state, and "religious movements" "never developed a rebellious ideology."[59] This system of classification is consistent and works well for Khuri's own purposes, but is not compatible with classifications used outside the study of the Middle East. Control of territory is normally considered a characteristic of a state more than of a sect, and in practice many of Khuri's "sects" would usually be considered founded religions: he classifies not only the Druze and Ismailis as sects, but even the Maronites, who are Christians.[60] The Ismailis are classified as a minority by Khuri because they do not control any territory; on most other bases, they would fall into exactly the same category as the Druze. More importantly, Khuri's system has no place for either of the types of sects this article classifies as the *ta'ifa* and the *tariqa*, which are the most frequent and in some ways the most important types of sects in the Islamic world.

An alternative approach might be to look at definitions of Arabic terms for "sect." Arabic, although not the first language of most Muslims, has until recently had no rival as the language of scholarship and religion throughout the Islamic world.[61] As the language of the Quran, it will probably always remain the only language of Islamic theology. As we shall see, however, usage of the various Arabic terms for "sect" is not consistent.

Khuri gives the Arabic for "sect" as *ta'ifa*. In this he is following modern usage, which translates the English word "sect" as *ta'ifa* in, for example, newspaper reports of the activities of the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo NRM or the Order of the Solar Temple.[62] *Ta'ifa* is not, however, a precise term. It is also used to refer to a variety of other religious bodies, such as the Franciscans or Roman Catholics, and even to ethnic groups such as the Kurds, or artistic ones such as the Impressionist Movement. When referring to a sect, *ta'ifa* is usually qualified by the adjective *diniyya* [religious]. In many contexts, its meaning is close to "minority" (as the word is generally used, not as it is defined in this article).[63]

The word most used by scholars writing in Arabic, today as in the classical period, is *firqa*.[64] This might be translated into English as "division,"[65] but there is little or no consensus regarding meaning. *Firqa* is still sometimes used in its classic all-inclusive sense, as in recent works by Mirvat Bali (who concentrated on four important *firqas* from the early centuries of Islam) and by Abd al-Amir Muhanna and Ali Kharis, who surveyed more than 200 *firqas*, given in alphabetical order.[66] Many contemporary scholars, however, distinguish *firqas* from some other type of sect, and often subdivide *firqas* in one way or another. Thus Sa'id Murad distinguishes between *firqas* and "religious groups" [*jama'at al-diniyya*], and Mahmud Marzua between "political" *firqas* and denominations [*madhhabs*].[67] Sa'id Murad, however, places both of Marzua's types of sect into his category of "Islamic" *firqas*. Barakat Murad refers not to *firqas* but to "hidden faiths" [*aqaid al-batiniyya*] (which include both Sa'id Murad's Islamic and his non-Islamic *firqas*) and "heretical denominations" [*madhahib al-zanadiqa*].[68] The actual classifications of sects which are treated by more than one of these scholars are shown in Figure 5, along with the classification proposed in this article. The differences in classification are partly explained by what seem to be the different interests of these scholars. Marzua is interested in the well-known sects of the early centuries of Islam, all of which this article classes as *firqas*, except when they have since become minorities (or, in the case of Twelver Shi'ism, a denomination); he also makes a difficult distinction between political and religious motivation. Fuad Khuri is interested in major sects which have survived to the present time. Barakat Murad is interested not in political versus religious motivation, but in the historical origins of what he calls "hidden faiths"; hence his interest in pre-Islamic "heretical schools" ignored by the other scholars. Sa'id Murad is principally interested in contemporary Islamic bodies and includes others more for the sake of completeness. His Islamic *firqas* are again those of the early centuries, and his modern *firqas* those of the last two centuries; the bodies in his "non-Islamic" category would be classed by this article as minorities.

The usage of these scholars, then, is not consistent. More importantly, they concentrate on minorities and well-known sects, usually ancient ones, leaving no category for other or more recent types of sects.[69]

Description	Name	Barakat Murad	Sa'id Murad	Mahmud Marzua	Mirvat Bali	Fuad Khuri	Mark Sedgwick
Pre-Islamic	Yazidis		Non-Islamic			*Ta'ifa*	Minority
Early centuries of Islam	Asharites		Islamic	*Madhhab*	*Firqa*		*Firqa*
	Kharijites		Islamic	Political	*Firqa*		*Firqa*
	Muatazilites		Islamic	*Madhhab*	*Firqa*		*Firqa*
	Murjites		Islamic	*Madhhab*			*Firqa*
	Qarmathians	Faith		*Madhhab*			*Firqa*
Shi'a-derived	Druze	Faith	Non-Islamic			*Ta'ifa*	Minority
	Ismailis	Faith		*Madhhab*		Minority	Minority
	Twelver Shia		Islamic	*Madhhab*	*Firqa*	*Ta'ifa*	Denomination
Nineteenth-century	Sanusis		Modern			Movement	*Tariqa*
	Sudanese Mahdists		Modern			Movement	*Firqa*
	Wahhabis		Modern			Movement	*Firqa*
Post-Muhammadan	Baha'is	Faith	Non-Islamic			Minority	Minority
	Ahmadis	Faith	Non-Islamic				Minority

Figure 5 Scholars' varying classification of some sects

Outwards Orientations: *Firqas and Harakas*

The term *firqa*, as has been seen, was that used in the Prophet Muhammad's well-known prediction that the Muslims would split into sects. *Firqa* literally means little more than "part," and as we have seen is today often applied fairly indiscriminately to all varieties of religious bodies, including post-Muhammadan minorities. The first accounts of *firqas*, compiled in the ninth to twelfth centuries, usually described sects which had been in a state of the highest possible tension with their environment. This article, therefore, follows the earliest Arabic usage to define a *firqa* as an organized sectarian body which claims a monopoly over the proper interpretation of Islam, and is consequently outward-oriented, and usually in a state of high tension with its environment. Tension is usually so high, in fact, that the *firqa* is inherently unstable; as

we will see, a *firqa* normally either quickly becomes something else, or vanishes.

Firqas differ from the standard definition of sect in that, since their avowed mission is to the whole of Islam (or even all humanity) and their orientation is outwards, they are not typically much interested in any "fellowship." They are, however, exclusivistic voluntary bodies, with possibilities of discipline, and are for their members a "primary source of social identity." On this basis, they are clearly sects within much the usual sense of the word.

The names of many early *firqas* might themselves be translated as "sect." The earliest was the Kharijites, literally "leavers" or "dissenters," purists of the seventh century who initially gave their support to the last of the four "rightly guided" Caliphs, the Prophet's son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib, fighting on his side at the battle of Siffin in 657. The Kharijites later deserted Ali, however, being responsible for his assassination in 661.[70] The Kharijite *firqa* is the prototypical sect in Islam. Not only is it the earliest Islamic sect, but in the late twentieth century the term "Khariji" was sometimes applied to various contemporary groups, with little or no reference to theology, to mean "sectarian extremist."

The Shi'a, initially a *firqa* and soon a denomination, arose out of the same period of ferment as the Kharijites.[71] Shi'a is the noun derived from *shi'i*, which literally means "partisan" or "sectarian," but soon came to be applied to those defined by their devotion to the murdered Caliph Ali and to his son Husayn, who was martyred at the battle of Karbala in 680 after unsuccessfully attempting to seize the Caliphate back from the Umayyads.[72] A line of twelve Imams in succession to the Prophet Muhammad, starting with Ali and ending with the disappearance of the Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi in 874, was recognized by most Shi'a (known in consequence as "Twelvers"), but not by all. The Ismaili *firqa* of the Shi'a, for example, recognizes only seven Imams. The Ismailis established a Fatimid Caliphate of their own in what is now Tunisia, moving east to rule Cairo from 969 to 1171. The further *firqas* which split off from the Fatimids were—and are—in some sense political entities. The Nizaris (1101) established a statelet based in Alamut (Syria), becoming famous in the West as the "Assassins,"[73] and even today the followers of the Aga Khan in some ways constitute a state without a territory, as do the other Ismaili *firqas* dating from this period, the Bohras and the Druze (1021).

All these Shi'a *firqas* have survived to the present time, and have become either denominations or minorities. The status of denomination being a more comfortable one than that of minority, some of these one-time *firqas* have at points presented themselves, or been presented by their friends, as *madhhabs*. In practice, their scientific classification would probably vary from time to time and place to place, as the degree of tension between them and their environment has varied. The fate of other early *firqas*, such as the Mu'tazilites, Ash'arites, Murji'ites, and

Qarmathians, is often obscure. As Steven Judd states, "In later periods, . . . new conflicts centered on different doctrinal issues, sometimes making the old classifications puzzling, if not completely incoherent. . . . Murjites [for example] have been described as Umayyad loyalists, collectivists, political quietists, and even radical revolutionaries."[74]

More recent *firqas* have also been in states of extreme tension resulting in armed conflict. They can be divided into two categories, those deriving from a divinely inspired leader such as the Babis, the [Qadiyani] Ahmadis, or the Sudanese Mahdists, and those which placed little or no emphasis on divine communication, such as the Wahhabis and the Muslim Brotherhood. All of these proposed a new variety of Islam, and all became involved in armed conflict.

The Qadiyani Ahmadiyya, which began in India as a *firqa* and became a post-Muhammadan minority in Pakistan against its will, is a case where tension can be seen arising more from a sect's environment than from the activities or doctrines of the sect itself. This Ahmadiyya is named after a Punjabi Muslim, Ghulam Ahmad (c. 1835–1908), who believed that he was the divine instrument for the reform and revival of Islam. After his death, a smaller Lahori branch split off from the main "Qadiyani" movement (so called because it was for a time based in Qadiyan, India). The adjective "Qadiyani" also serves to distinguish Ghulam Ahmad's Ahmadiyya from unconnected Ahmadiyyas elsewhere, such as the Idrisi Ahmadiyya, discussed below.

Ghulam Ahmad's career was relatively uneventful. He proclaimed his mission in 1888, publishing the revelations he received, most importantly in his *Barahin-i Ahmadiyya*, a work widely distributed by his followers. He attracted a sizable following, settled in Qadiyan, wrote 88 books in Urdu, Arabic, and Persian, and established periodicals in Urdu and English. He died peacefully in 1908, having first published instructions concerning the direction and administration of the Ahmadi movement after his death.[75] At this point, the Ahmadiyya might have seemed well on the way to becoming a denomination.

The Ahmadiyya's proclaimed mission to all of Islam is associated with *firqas* stressing divine inspiration, such as the Sudanese Mahdists. Unlike the Mahdists, however, the Ahmadiyya was for almost sixty years in a state of unusually low tension with its environment. Had this environment not changed dramatically, the Ahmadiyya might have developed quietly into a denomination, as the Salafis did, or perhaps even into a *tariqa*. Ghulam Ahmad's teachings varied from the established understanding of Islam only in details; their heterodoxy was in no way comparable to that of some of the Malaysian and Indonesian *ta'ifas* considered below. Opposition in India was initially limited, resulting only in a few public debates. This opposition was not reflected in any tension with the public authorities. Ghulam Ahmad stressed the duty of loyalty to whichever regime was in power, which was in no way objectionable to the government of

British India.[76] The British saw no need to take the sort of action which at similar stages in the development of many other *firqas* triggered armed conflict. Significant tension, as we will see, only arose after the departure of the British.

The story of the Babis starts in 1806 with the arrival in Iran of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i (1753–1826), an Arab who gathered a considerable following, known as Shaykhis. This *ta'ifa* is discussed in more detail below. Al-Ahsa'i was succeeded by Kazim Rashti (d. 1844), whom many expected to be succeeded in his turn by his leading follower, Mulla Husayn of Bushruyih. Shortly after Rashti's death, however, Mulla Husayn began to follow Ali Muhammad Shirazi (1819–50), known as the Bab (portal) because of the special access he was believed to afford to the last of the Shi'i Imams, Muhammad al-Mahdi, the "hidden Imam" who had "gone into occultation" in 874. Shirazi believed that he was the expected Mahdi, who according to Shi'i eschatology would proclaim himself in front of the Ka'ba in Mecca shortly before the end of time, and then lead an insurrection which would briefly establish a reign of righteousness on earth. Shirazi recorded the revelations he received in a book, the *Qayyum al-Asma*, which was spread by his followers after 1844.[77] His teachings were controversial to a degree, including as they did his belief in the illegitimacy of all aspects of the Qajar regime then ruling Iran, the abrogation of the Sharia [Islamic law], and his own status as Mahdi.[78]

The presentation of Shirazi's teachings was such as to increase tension. As a first step, he dispatched followers with his message, one of whom (Ali Bastami) proceeded to spread his teachings amongst the leading Shi'i *ulama* in Iraq. Bastami presented himself before the Chief Mujtahid of Najaf, at that time probably the senior figure in Shi'i Islam, and in front of a large assembly called on the Mujtahid to abandon the teaching of the Quran and teach instead from Shirazi's *Qayyum al-Asma*. Unsurprisingly, the Chief Mujtahid demurred, expelling Shirazi's messenger from the assembly. Bastami was seized by a crowd and handed over to the Ottoman authorities. Convicted of charges of blasphemy and disturbing the peace, he was sentenced to death and reprieved only because of disputes about the competence of an Ottoman court (administering Sunni law) to judge a Shi'i subject of the Persian Empire on religious matters.[79]

Bastami's difficulties underlined the need for caution, and Shirazi canceled his planned proclamation before the Ka'ba in Mecca during the *hajj* pilgrimage. On his return to Iran he found that others of his messengers had also been arrested, and when required to do so he publicly denied that he was, or had claimed to be, the Mahdi. Despite this, he and his followers continued to spread his teachings. This activity could hardly escape notice, since he attracted considerable numbers, perhaps as many as 100,000 persons out of a population of 6,000,000. In 1846, Shirazi was arrested. In 1848, he surprised a court by claiming

divine authorship for his published works and informing his judges that "I am that person whom you have been expecting for more than a millennium . . . I am the Lord of Command." A sentence of death was passed on Shirazi and then suspended pending investigation of his sanity.[80]

While Shirazi was being held in prison, a number of revolts were started by his more radical followers in various parts of Iran; there was also an attempt on the life of the Prime Minister. At Tabarsi, fighting led by Mulla Husayn lasted from October 1848 to May 1849, and 1850 saw two further rebellions, one of which involved 5,000 Babis. After a new trial, Shirazi was executed, as much for treason as for heresy. As the Iranian government had hoped, the death of Shirazi ended the rebellions in his name.[81] It did not, however, entirely end the Babi *firqa*; its subsequent development into the Baha'i movement is considered below.

Armed conflict almost by definition means conflict with a state, and the *firqa* is thus usually a political and military entity as well as a religious body. The relationship between religion and politics in Islam is a large question which lies beyond the scope of the present article. An important point, however, is that the categories "religious" and "political" are not mutually exclusive: a religious group does not cease to be religious for becoming political, and neither does a political group cease to be political if it becomes religious. For our immediate purposes what really matters is that armed conflict is an indication of the highest possible tension. The state is, after all, an important part of a sect's environment, whether it is seen as acting in its own interests, or as a proxy for a denomination or for society in general.[82]

As has been said, the *firqa* is by its nature unstable. What happens to it often depends on the outcome of any armed conflict in which it has become involved. If victorious, it may become a denomination; if neither victorious nor defeated, a minority; if routed, it may vanish. Thus the Mahdist state in the Sudan was destroyed by British forces under nominal Egyptian authority, and the British subsequently did their best to ensure that the Mahdist *firqa* disappeared. Mahdism survived in two forms, as a political movement and as a *tariqa*, but not as a *firqa*; it came to have only very minimal religious significance for non-Mahdists.[83] The Wahhabis, on the other hand, were more successful. Although their first conquest of the Arabian peninsula was ended by an Ottoman army and Wahhabism was almost entirely destroyed, it survived to rise again in a second incarnation as what some scholars have called "neo-Wahhabism."[84] Neo-Wahhabism achieved a more lasting second conquest, out of which grew the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Wahhabi (or perhaps neo-Wahhabi) *firqa* thus became the dominant denomination in modern Saudi Arabia, with growing influence throughout the rest of the Islamic

world.[85] *Firqas* such as the Babis and the Druze, neither victorious nor extirpated, have become minorities.

The final status of one contemporary *firqa* will be interesting to observe. This is the Malaysian Arqam movement, established in 1968.[86] In the 1990s Arqam was expecting the appearance of the Mahdi (the divinely appointed "rightly guided one") in Uzbekistan. With over 10,000 followers (100,000, according to one estimate), 48 "communes," 257 schools, and over $100 million in business assets, Arqam was clearly beginning to achieve (in a contemporary form) the powerful position often found in the histories of earlier *firqas*. In 1994 it was banned, accused by Mahathir Mohamed, the Malaysian Prime Minister, of intending to resort to armed force. A Malaysian official described Arqam as "the biggest threat faced by the government since the communist[s]."[87] It was Malaysia's somewhat notorious Internal Security Act (ISA) that was used against Arqam: its leader, Ashaari Muhammad, was detained under the ISA in 1994, as were a number of his senior followers.[88] Fourteen more of these were ordered to be detained for two years (also under the ISA) in 1997,[89] and a larger number of less senior followers were "sent for rehabilitation."[90]

Other contemporary bodies which might be classified as *firqas* include "fundamentalist" groups such as Jihad in Egypt or Hamas in Palestine. These are often referred to as "political Islam," and Hamas is also commonly described as a political party. This description is not wrong: as has been noted, a *firqa* may often be a political or military entity as well as a religious body. Hamas, then, may be both a *firqa* and a political party.[91]

A *haraka* (literally, "movement") is distinguished from a *firqa* by its lack of organization. It is generally in a state of far lower tension with its environment than a *firqa*, even though its message may be equally radical. This may well be because only an organized body can threaten and resist a state. The implications of the differences between the nineteenth-century Salafis and the *madhhabs* as then established, for example, were dramatic and have since had far-reaching consequences,[92] but the degree of tension between the Salafis and their environment was low, probably because they were at the time only barely recognizable as a group of any sort. The members of a *haraka* have no great interest in any fellowship save of the purely intellectual kind, are not usually in a state of great tension with their environment, and are not exclusivistic. Since a *haraka* is barely a group, possibilities of discipline are very limited. A *haraka* displays the standard characteristics of a sect (as shown in figure 1) only in so far as it is a voluntary body and may be a "primary source of social identity" for its members. The same is true of many non-religious bodies. Not all outward-oriented religious bodies in Islam are *firqas* or sects.[93]

Inwards Orientations: *Ta'ifas and Tariqas*

Most sects in the Islamic world have not aimed at the (often forcible) regeneration of the entire community of Muslims, or claimed to be the unique repository of "true" Islam. Most are oriented inwards, towards the "fellowship-principle." These less spectacular but far more frequent sects fall into main two categories, the *ta'ifa* and the *tariqa*. As will be seen, a further distinction is necessary, between new and established *tariqas*.

The closest equivalent of the *tariqa* in the West is the monastic order, a body which is not normally regarded as sectarian for the very good reason that, although voluntary and very much oriented around the fellowship principle, it is organizationally integrated into a denomination.[94] Since the denominations of Islam are barely organized, however, a *tariqa* is of necessity organizationally autonomous, and so cannot be treated as part of a denomination. Although Sufism is commonly and correctly described as mysticism, a *tariqa* is clearly an organized community, and so is a sect in Troeltsch's definition.

A distinction must be made between the new and the established *tariqas* because the attributes associated with the two differ significantly. A *tariqa* typically starts with a small group following a single charismatic figure (such as Abu Hasan al-Shadhili, 1196–1258) who is regarded by his followers as a *wali*, that is, someone especially close to God. At this stage, the new *tariqa* probably has no name, and membership is entirely voluntary. The *tariqa* (or the *wali*, who is its *shaykh* or leader)[95] is not only the primary source of social identity for these members but also the most important thing in their lives. The *tariqa* is exclusivistic by virtue of the degree of commitment expected from members and may also be exclusivistic as a result of formalized requirements for admission. The new *tariqa*, then, displays all seven of the specific characteristics of the sect.

An additional attribute of the new *tariqa* is that, even though its focus is its *shaykh* rather than its teaching or practice, either teaching or practice will often differ in some way from that generally accepted in the relevant environment at the time. Some degree of tension with its environment may often result from this difference, and also from the exclusivism and commitment of the new *tariqa*'s members, the followers of the new *shaykh*.

As time passes, a variety of denominationalization often occurs. If the *tariqa* survives, membership becomes less voluntary: people join it more because of its position in a locality, or because of a family connection, than because of the *shaykh*. After a few generations, the *shaykh* will be a less charismatic successor of the *tariqa*'s founder, and the degree of commitment required of his followers will have declined. By this point, the *tariqa* has normally acquired a name (such as the "tariqa Shadhiliyya"); many of the unusual features of the new *tariqa* which

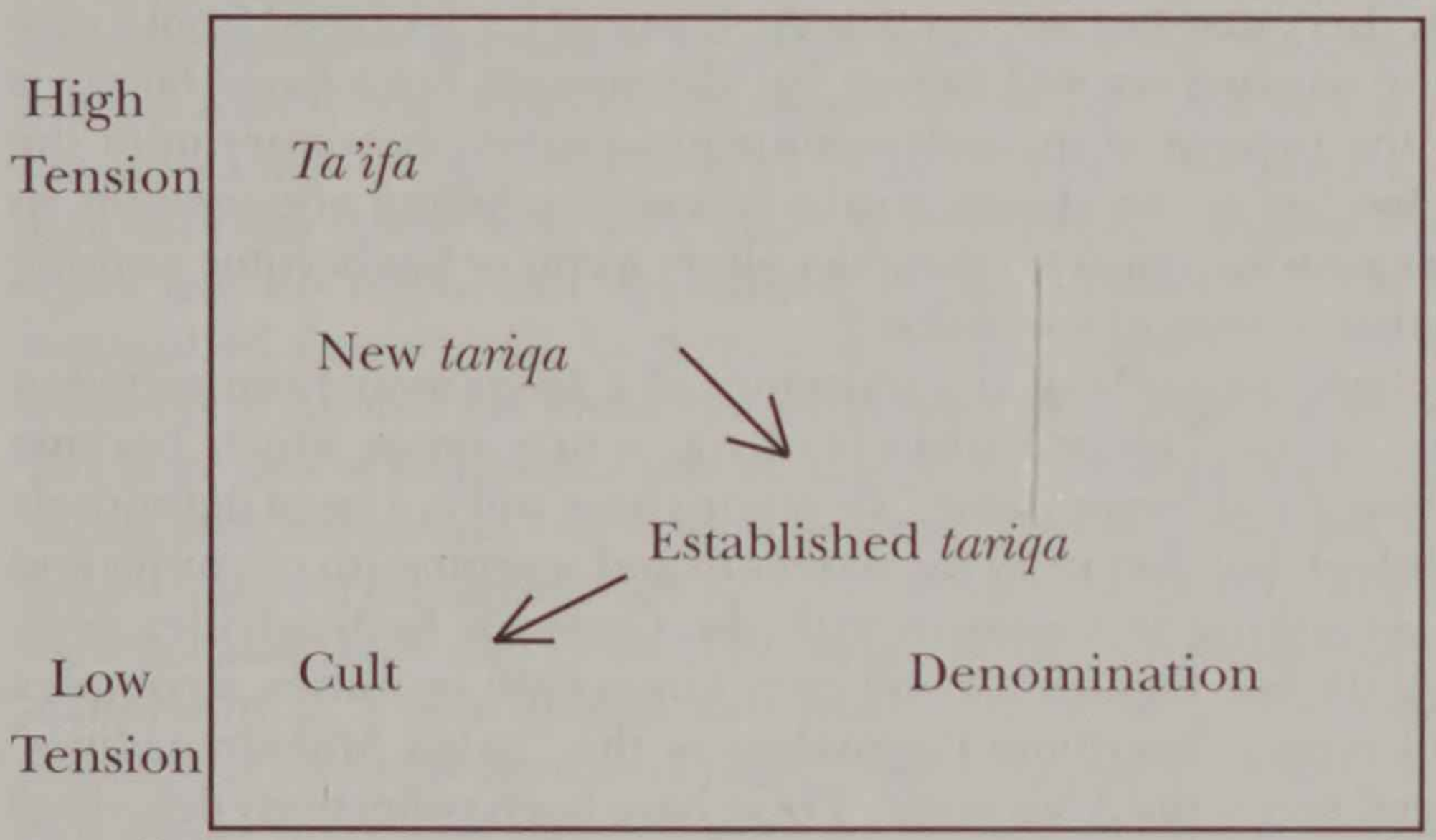


Figure 6 Development of *tariqas*

originally caused tension will have faded.[96] The established *tariqa* will be a secondary source of social identity, and sometimes as weak a source as the soccer team one supports. As a body aiming at fellowship but not in tension with its environment, the established *tariqa* will often continue for centuries as an integral part of that environment and is barely a sect any more. It continues to display something of each of the specific characteristics of the sect, but only in attenuated form. In many ways, it is closer to a denomination than a sect. It is not a denomination, however, because it is a body to which one may belong in addition to a *madhhab*, not as an alternative to a *madhhab*.

Ultimately, a *tariqa* will cease to be a sect at all in one of two ways. Established *tariqas* tend to split very frequently on the death of their *shaykh*s, and after a few centuries there are a large number of groups still describing themselves as "tariqa Shadhiliyya" but having no significant links with each other and often having very different attributes. At this stage the name "tariqa Shadhiliyya" indicates lineage, not a sectarian body, nor indeed a recognizable body of any kind. It has given rise to new, distinct sects, each one of which must be described more precisely, as for example "the Shadhiliyya of Shaykh Mahmud in the town of Qina."

Splits in a *tariqa* have been seen by some scholars as a form of failure, which indeed they would be for certain other forms of organization such as political parties. The objectives of a *tariqa*, however, are very

different from those of a political party. A mass organization under tight central control may advance the outward-oriented objectives of a *firqa*, but not those of a *tariqa*. The splitting of an established *tariqa* into new *tariqas*, then, may be compared to the bursting forth of seed from a ripe pod and equated not with failure but with success. For a *tariqa*, failure is when the process of quasi-denominationalization continues until the *tariqa* has lost all the characteristics of a sect including organization, in which case what remains resembles either a cult or has become nothing more than a form of sociability.[97]

A classic example of the trajectory of a *tariqa* away from sectarian tension is the Tariqa Muhammadiyya, a new *tariqa* which became established and "respectable." Its origins have still not been definitively established, but they lie in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and have something in common with the Ottoman Kadizadeliler *firqa*. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a complex of Sufi *tariqas* describing themselves as the "tariqa Muhammadiyya" emerged across the Arab world. These have been collectively described by some scholars as "neo-Sufism"; the degree of their heterodoxy may be disputed, but it is clear that in certain important respects they were not orthodox.[98]

Their heterodoxy lay in an unusual emphasis on the figure of the Prophet and in their insistence that their own path to a "waking vision" of the Prophet was the single true path; they thus denied the legitimacy of the other *tariqas*. In addition, they criticized certain practices commonly followed by most other *tariqas*. This, unsurprisingly, produced tension between them and the general Sufi environment. They also differed from the Islamic mainstream (Sufi and non-Sufi) in denying the validity of the *madhhabs*, emphasizing inspired interpretation over scholarship. This position was at the time deeply subversive and amounted to a frontal attack on the authority, position, and function of the *ulama*, creating definite tension with these high-profile representatives of the *umma*.

We will consider the history of the Tariqa Muhammadiyya in the context of one of its most important manifestations, later known as the Idrisi Ahmadiyya.[99] This *tariqa* started with Ahmad ibn Idris (1760–1837), a Moroccan scholar and follower of the Tariqa Muhammadiyya movement who settled in Mecca and began to teach there in 1799. He quickly gathered a group of followers, many of them also scholars; he also attracted opposition from the Meccan *ulama*, principally because of his stance on the *madhhabs*. This stance was not only theoretical: it resulted in certain modifications in his practice and that of his followers, most notably in the way in which they performed the ritual prayer. Ibn Idris's group was clearly a sect, both on the basis of its emphasis on fellowship and on the basis of the tensions between it and its environment.

After Ibn Idris's death, his first important successor, Muhammad al-Sanusi (1787–1859), was able to continue the Ahmadiyya in Mecca undisturbed; though his views were condemned in detail in three separate *fatwas* by important Egyptian Muftis,[100] these condemnations seem to have had no practical consequences for him, and he was able to establish a highly organized network of lodges across the Sahara, as well as in the Hijaz (today in western Saudi Arabia). From this point onwards, there was no important opposition to the Ahmadiyya[101] as it was established (principally by Sudanese, Malay, Egyptian, and Indian followers of Ahmad ibn Idris) in almost every part of the Islamic world. The later lack of opposition can be explained by two changes: that the Tariqa Muhammadiyya's views were becoming less controversial as other factors reduced the significance of the *madhhabs*, and that the Ahmadiyya itself became more and more "orthodox." With each passing on of the leadership to a new *shaykh* or establishment in a new area, the Ahmadiyya's special attributes faded, and it began to resemble other Sufi *tariqas* more and more,[102] until by the late twentieth century the originally subversive doctrine of the body was remembered only by a few isolated groups—the scattered descendants of a once-important Ahmadi group in the Sudan, and a few scholars in Damascus. In Malaysia, the Ahmadiyya became closely associated with the mainstream scholarly establishment, providing a number of Muftis in two states; the face of an Ahmadi king has even come to grace the RM 2 banknote. There can be few clearer indications of lack of tension than this.

The Tariqa Muhammadiyya, then, having started as a sectarian new *tariqa* which attracted opposition but not persecution, was transformed over two centuries into an established *tariqa*, largely as a result of the influence of the norms of the societies in which it operated. The operative norms have varied from place to place: in Egypt they were those of the Cairene elite, in Malaysia those of the Sufi establishment, in Syria of mainstream Islam.

A less usual example of the development of a *tariqa* is the Sanusiyya, a *tariqa* which was classified by Fuad Khuri as a "movement" along with the Wahhabis and the Sudanese Mahdists. After the Sanusiyya had become an established *tariqa*, its leadership in Cyrenaica (Libya) was prevailed upon to lead resistance against Italian colonization, thus ultimately transforming a *tariqa* into a resistance movement, more of a political than a religious body. Although *tariqas* do on occasion become involved in politics, groups (whether deriving originally from *firqas* or from *tariqas*) which lose much or all of their original religious nature on becoming political movements fall beyond the scope of this article.

The *tariqa* is an established and an entirely respectable part of the Islamic religious landscape. No Muslim would welcome the existence of *firqas*, but the *tariqa* is as desirable as the *madhhab*.[103] As a result, many *ta'ifas* often represent themselves as *tariqas*. They can, however, be

distinguished from *tariqas* either in terms of their non-Sufi origins,[104] or in terms of the distance between their teachings and practice and those generally accepted amongst Sufis.[105] Thus the "Ahmadiyya" of the Malaysian Hasan b. Yacob (f. 1980) called itself a *tariqa*. Its leader seems, however, to have had no connection with the "real" Idrisi Ahmadiyya. In addition, Hasan b. Yacob is said to have taught that one's own body is God, that the world is eternal, and that the text of the Quran is not authentic.[106] These are not views generally held by Sufis (or indeed Muslims).[107] A similar test can be applied to the Tarekat [*tariqa*] Mufarridiyya of Makmun Yahya, an Indonesian from Sumatra. From 1955, Makmun Yahya allegedly

> claimed to be the Imam Mahdi for the Muslims, Jesus for the Christians and father of all man for those without religions. [He further] claimed that . . . every prayer and act of repentance to Allah must be through the Angel Kuranaz and [himself] before they could be accepted by Allah. [He] never performed the Friday and Congregational prayers because he claimed to perform these [in Mecca].[108]

I have no information about the origins of the Mufarridiyya, but the heterodoxy of the teachings[109] here reported is sufficient to distinguish it from a *tariqa*. The Mufarridiyya, then, should almost certainly be classed as a *ta'ifa*. A claim such as this to be the Mahdi implies a mission to the whole of Islam and is at first sight characteristic of a *firqa*, not a *ta'ifa*. In fact, however, claims to Mahdiship are found in all types of sects in the Islamic world (but not in *harakas*), and what matters is whether the sect is really outward-oriented, or whether the claimant's significance is restricted to a small and well-defined group of followers, as it seems to have been with Makmum Yahya. In this case, the sect should be described as a *ta'ifa*, since it is in reality inward-oriented. Of course, in their earliest years many *firqas* would be defined as *ta'ifas* on this basis, since the significance of the leader of any new sect is initially restricted to the leader himself and to his first follower. No sect, then, can emerge as a fully grown *firqa*, and it is for this reason that the successful *ta'ifa* may be said to develop into a *firqa*. Most *ta'ifas*, however, simply fade away. Few if any become denominations or minorities directly, perhaps because the heterodoxy of their teachings and practice creates too large a gap between them and their environment.

The dividing line between *ta'ifa* and *tariqa*, then, is usually easy to establish. One difficult case, however, is the Shaykhis, from whom the Babi *firqa* emerged. The Shaykhis have been compared to Sufis; they saw their leader Ahmad al-Ahsa'i as a "perfect man" who had a direct understanding of the will of the hidden Imam.[110] The concept of the "perfect man" is very much a Sufi one, as is the variety of inspiration which al-Ahsa'i claimed,[111] but the Shaykhis should be classed not as a *tariqa* but as a *ta'ifa*, since they did not describe themselves as a Sufi

tariqa, and also because the degree of tension between them and sections of their environment was somewhat higher than is usually the case with a *tariqa*. One indicator of this tension was the attempt, in the 1840s (some years after al-Ahsa'i's death), of certain non-Shaykhi *ulama* to issue a *fatwa* condemning the Shaykhis. Confrontation was, however, avoided by the Mujtahid of Iran, who canceled the *fatwa* in question after an eloquent defense of the Shaykhi position by Mulla Husayn, the leading follower of al-Ahsa'i's successor, Rashti.[112]

The dividing line between *ta'ifa* and *firqa* may present more difficulties, however, as is illustrated by the Sudanese Republican Brotherhood. The Quran contains revelations made to the Prophet Muhammad at various points over several years, and so the same matter is often dealt with in different ways in different parts of the Quran. In such cases, the later revelations (which tend to be more detailed) have been taken to supersede the earlier revelations. Mahmud Muhammad Taha (d. 1985) reversed this principle, allowing himself and his followers to reach conclusions often dramatically different from those previously accepted.[113] Given that his following never grew into any sort of mass movement and remained inward-oriented, the Republican Brotherhood should probably be classed as a *ta'ifa*. Had it grown as Mahmud Muhammad Taha no doubt wished, it might have become a *firqa*, but this did not happen.

One variety of *ta'ifa* which deserves special mention is the *ta'ifa* of foreign origin. The Middle East lies next to Europe, and there has always been cultural transfer from the West, including transfer of sects and NRMs. Although no Western NRMs have grown to any great size in the Middle East, there have been and are instances of small groups following NRMs which have been studied in other contexts. Western NRMs of "Eastern" origin (such as the Theosophists) have of course existed in the Islamic world, but there have also been various foreign imports connected with the special nature of the cultic milieu in the Islamic world discussed above. The first Masonic lodges were established in the Ottoman world in the early eighteenth century, although it was only in the nineteenth century that they began to attract significant numbers of Muslims;[114] and both Swedenborg and Papus's Martinism reached the cosmopolitan port city of Salonika at the start of the twentieth century.[115] Shortly afterwards, a Spiritist Association was established in Cairo,[116] and there are various reports of Egyptian Muslims today following figures such as "Shaykh Silver Birch," a Westerner who was evidently at some point adopted into a Native American tribe.[117]

An example of a *ta'ifa* of foreign origin which has escaped persecution, despite what might be described as almost total heterodoxy, is the Direct Path. This is led by Professor Fulan,[118] a Muslim Egyptian academic who has for many years been following a so-far unidentified non-Muslim Indian *guru* who teaches a "direct path"[119] to enlightenment,

based on Advaita Vedanta but independent of any religious practice. Although Professor Fulan insists that he teaches "no dogma" and "no beliefs," his followers clearly constitute either an Egyptian *ta'ifa*, or the Egyptian branch of a foreign NRM. They assemble once a week in two groups to hear of the Direct Path. One group is warned in English against the "straitjacket" of religion and religious practice in discourses with frequent references to Western esoteric writers and Hindu and Buddhist teachings; the other, larger group is given a modified version of the same message in Arabic in the context of reading and interpretation of the Quran.[120] Quran reading and interpretation is a standard activity throughout the Islamic world, and groups engaged in it may be found in mosques everywhere. The English-language group is small, consisting of a mixture of Westerners resident in Cairo and Egyptians who have spent years abroad and are thoroughly Westernized, and usually meets in the apartment of an American follower of Professor Fulan. The Arabic-language group is larger, drawn mostly from the Egyptian military and civil elite, and meets in the professor's own house.

For over twenty years, Professor Fulan has been teaching these two different messages to two different groups. His English-language message corresponds most directly to the teachings of his *guru*; of his Arabic-language version, he says, "I have to express myself in that language," i.e. the language of Islam.[121] An informant, who went to a meeting of the Arabic-language group when it was addressed by the professor's *guru* in person while on a visit to Egypt, reports that the *guru's* message, which was not re-expressed in Quranic or Islamic terms, caused mounting dismay and resistance among his audience.

The Direct Path, then, is actually a *ta'ifa* of foreign origin,[122] but presents itself mostly as an Islamic body—not so much in order to avoid persecution as in order to gain access to its audience. While the Idrisi Ahmadiyya's teaching and practice gradually shed their heterodox nature almost by accident, Professor Fulan consciously reformulates non-Islamic teaching in Islamic terms.

SECTS AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

The theoretical status of sects in the Islamic world depends upon two factors: Islam (as interpreted by the *madhhabs* and expressed in the Sharia), and the law codes and government policies of the various Islamic states. The *fiqh* (the codified law of Islam, a part of the Sharia) was for many centuries the operative law of all Muslim states, at least in theory,[123] but from the nineteenth century, codes of statute civil and criminal law on the Napoleonic model began to replace the *fiqh*. Today, only a very few countries such as Saudi Arabia and Yemen do not have systems based on such codes. The European codes taken as a model have in general

been modified to varying extents in order to reflect *fiqh* norms and practices in areas such as personal status.[124]

A survey of the laws and policies relating to sects of all Islamic states would require volumes, and so we will instead consider the position of the Sharia, which was the operative law for much of Islamic history and which will generally be reflected, to a greater or lesser extent, in current state laws. The Sharia's position is nuanced; whilst it prescribes severe penalties, it discourages their application.

Although in general full rights and duties are given by the *fiqh* only to sane, adult, male Muslims not in a state of servitude, freedom of conscience and of worship is given not to Muslims, but to non-Muslims (subject to minor restrictions).[125] A Muslim does not enjoy freedom of conscience: a Muslim who abandons Islam is a *kafir*, and the penalty for *kufr* is death. What is thus punished is not heresy, but apostasy. As Bernard Lewis first pointed out in 1959, there is really no word in Arabic for "heretic," to the extent that in the nineteenth century the loan-word *hartiqi* or *hartuqi* [heretic] entered general usage, having previously been restricted to the literature of Syrian Christians.[126] (This word was sometimes applied to Salman Rushdie). A more Islamic term, however, is *mulhid*, which has a Quranic provenance. Literally meaning "deviant," it was used by the Khariji *firqa* to describe the Umayyads, and then by the later Abbasids to describe atheists, or, in the words of the tenth century scholar al-Ashari, "deniers of God's attributes, *zindiqs*, dualists . . . and others who repudiate the Creator and deny prophethood." In much later Ottoman usage, it was applied to "partisans of the French revolution."[127] In most cases, then, a *mulhid* is in effect a *kafir*.

Lewis identifies the closest Arabic equivalent to "heretic" as *zindiq*, a word used in the title of one of the recent heresiographies discussed above. The word *zindiq*, as has been pointed out both by Lewis and by Massignon, is of pre-Islamic Persian origin, originally indicating a follower of Mazdak, a Manichean "schismatic." It was probably adopted into Arabic along with certain other pre-existing Sassanian administrative practices, and although initially used fairly precisely, the term later came to indicate any "heretic whose teaching becomes a danger to the state,"[128] usually defined by "the practical criterion of open rebellion."[129] As we saw with the Babi movement and with Arqam, open rebellion (or the threat of rebellion) is often punished severely; the reasons for this, however, are political rather than religious. The term *zindiq* might then be associated with our classification of *firqa*, but tells us little about the status of other types of sect.

As Bernard Lewis points out, "the vital barrier lies not between Sunni and sectarian but between sectarian and [*kafir*]."[130] *Kufr*, rather than heterodoxy, is what is punished. The definition of *kufr*, however, is far from liberal;[131] and Lewis himself quotes the great early Arab satirist al-Jahiz: "The piety of theologians consists in hastening to denounce

dissidents as [*kafirs*]."[132] Despite this, executions for *kufr* are extremely rare. This is partly because in most interpretations the *fiqh* requires the reprieve of any *kafir* who recants,[133] so that in fact anyone executed is in some sense a voluntary martyr to their beliefs. It is also because the severity of the *fiqh* is balanced by numerous warnings in the non-codified parts of the Sharia[134] against making accusations of *kufr*, for example, "when one Muslim makes an accusation of *kufr* against another, that accusation will come to rest on one of them." Similar apparent contradictions can be observed in other areas where extreme penalties are involved. Death is prescribed for married adulterers, for example, but the *fiqh* requires four competent eyewitnesses to the act itself, in the absence of which a person who makes a slanderous accusation of adultery is himself subject to the death penalty.[135] According to some Muslim commentators, the severity of the penalty underlines the enormity of the act; the difficulty of proof and discouragement of prosecution mitigate the severity of the penalty.[136]

In practice, the teachings of objectionable sects may when necessary be condemned in *fatwas* without any question of *kufr* being raised, and accusations of *kufr* by *firqas* against the general community of Muslims are more frequent than accusations from the general community against sects.[137] Executions of leaders of *ta'ifas* have periodically occurred: al-Hallaj was famously crucified in 922 for apparently identifying himself with the Divinity, and Mahmud Muhammad Taha (whose *ta'ifa* was mentioned above) was hanged by President Nimeiry in 1985. Such executions are, however, few and far between. When it has happened, the killing of *kafirs* has most usually taken place in the context of the armed conflicts associated with *firqas*[138] or as a consequence of the application of tribal codes of honor.[139] Even when modern states punish heterodoxy, the punishments are often light. Fifteen *ta'ifas* and one *firqa* (Arqam, discussed above) were banned as "false teaching" by the Malaysian authorities in the early 1990s, for example. The leaders of most of these *ta'ifas* received no punishment at all, and of those who were sentenced by a court, none suffered severely: one was fined RM 300 (about 100 U.S. dollars) and two were sentenced to short terms of imprisonment (one or three months).[140] The difference between these sanctions and those applied against Arqam is instructive.

The *fiqh*, then, prescribes the harshest penalties against participation in all sects deemed "unorthodox" (defined in terms of *kufr*), and although the *fiqh* no longer constitutes the operative law of most Muslim states, its provisions are today expressed in some form in most law codes, in popular views of appropriateness, or both.

In practice, views of appropriateness are more important for the actual status of sects in the contemporary Islamic world than is their theoretical status under the Sharia or under statute law. The extent to which the power of the state is in reality constrained by law varies from

one contemporary Islamic state to another, but none of these states could remotely be described as a *Rechtstaat*, a state ruled by law.[141] The relative importance of the views, prejudices, and opinions of officials, and of the public, is therefore far greater than in a Western state.[142] In the West, a law will usually be followed even if it contradicts the private opinions of officials and the mood of the public. In most Islamic states, opinions will often triumph over law.

Fortunately for sects, many Muslims combine strong principled stands—that is, intolerance in principle—with tolerance in practice. In Egypt, for example, the polite euphemism "communist" does not indicate a person's political views so much as his religious ones; if someone is described or describes themselves as a "communist," the information being conveyed is usually that they are an atheist. Society is Muslim, and Islam is the norm; but individuals may do their own thing so long as they observe certain forms.[143] This is an aspect of what has been called "the consensus society," where public conformity and the appearance of consensus is for many purposes more important than private reality.[144]

This article does not afford space for a full discussion of the various relevant cultural and social norms present in Islamic societies. One example, however, serves to indicate what happens when these norms are ignored. Shortly before dawn on 22 January 1997, in a series of coordinated raids, officers of Egyptian State Security swooped down on the houses of a number of young Cairene "Satanists," removing individuals and evidence into custody. This operation was the culmination of several months of police activity, infiltrating and recording Satanist activities.

Satanism not being previously known in Egypt, the activities of these Satanists—or "worshipers of Satan" as they were called in Arabic—were somewhat confusing.[145] After some research, police had discovered the Church of Satan in San Francisco and its founder, Anton LaVey. One police spokesman explained that "Satanism is like a triangle. Its three corners are formed by LaVey's ideas, heavy metal music, and drugs."[146] An Interior Ministry memorandum[147] to local police stations gave a fuller list of the tell-tale characteristics of Satanists: (1) long hair (for men) and black clothing; (2) Satanic signs such as skulls, pentagrams, and inverted crosses, possibly tattooed on suspects' shoulders or chests; (3) homosexuality and group sex, use of drugs and alcohol, and resistance to bathing; (4) Satanic dances, identifiable by "head banging" and "hysteria"; and (5) Satanist propaganda.

Although some of this behavior, when displayed by Western adolescents, might tempt parents to despair, black clothing is almost *de rigeur* in certain smarter restaurants in the West, and skulls on leather jackets or inverted crosses on CD covers would not cause anyone to look twice. In Egypt, though, where men and women normally dance separately at wedding parties, where premarital sex must be kept secret

if it happens at all, and where homosexuality is too shocking to be much spoken about in public, such behavior is inexplicable and incomprehensible to all but the small minority which has spent time in the West. For most, a pentagram is a strange symbol, not an element in a design, and possession of a book with the words "Black Magic" in the title has a different meaning for the average Egyptian than it does for the average American. Police accordingly made videos of dancers at parties and later searched suspects' wardrobes for black clothing. Imported books and CDs were seized, and almost anyone connected with Cairo's few heavy-metal groups was among those arrested.[148]

Most of those held were high school and university students; some of them were children of expatriate parents who had grown up abroad. Religious scholars were brought to police stations so that suspects would have the opportunity of asking them questions about religion, presumably thus allowing them to see the error of their ways. The suspects were questioned about which parties they had recently attended and about their other activities; one female student at the American University in Cairo, for example, was asked about the symbolism of two rings she was wearing—one was a "peace" sign, she explained to the investigating magistrate, and the teddy bear on her other ring had no symbolism.[149]

Some of the alleged Satanists were released immediately, either without charge or on bail, and as Satanism became the leading topic of conversation throughout Egypt, the remainder sat in prison, charged with defaming religion—not, fortunately for them, with *kufr*, although at least one Friday preacher reminded the congregation in his mosque that worship of any "deity" save God was *kufr*, and that the appropriate penalty for it was death.[150] The Satanists were the "dominant discourse" for a little over two months in almost all Egyptian newspapers.[151] After a period of inactivity, it was then announced that there had been some misunderstandings; all remaining suspects were released without charge, and the Satanists disappeared from the press and from conversation.

There may or may not have been one or two real "Satanists" amongst those arrested, but it is clear that there was never any sect save in the imagination of the police. The incident illustrates the tension between the westernized section of Egyptian society and its environment, the cultural isolation of most Egyptians even in this era of globalization, the xenophobia of much of the Egyptian press, and perhaps the enthusiasm of the Egyptian state for presenting itself as the defender of Islam and morality, at no apparent cost to itself—a few adolescents could hardly fight back. More importantly for our present purposes, it also indicates the consequences of ignoring publicly the norms of Muslim societies, in whatever way.

THE PERSECUTION OF POST-MUHAMMADAN MINORITIES

A clear exception to the picture which has been painted above—of relative tolerance towards sects which do not threaten or seem to threaten the state, and which observe the forms required by social and cultural norms—is the treatment of two post-Muhammadan minorities during the last quarter of the twentieth century: the Qadiyani Ahmadiyya in Pakistan and the Baha'is in Iran.

As has been said, the Ahmadiyya was for almost sixty years in a state of unusually low tension with its environment, at least in India (a small number of Ahmadis were executed in neighboring Afghanistan in the 1920s).[152] It might have developed quietly into a denomination, or perhaps even a *tariqa*, but for independence and partition. Partition left Qadiyan in India, and (along with many other Muslims) the Ahmadi leadership was obliged to flee to Pakistan.[153] The new state of Pakistan was a very different environment from that in which the Ahmadiyya had arisen. Although Pakistan was established in the secular tradition of British India, with an Ahmadi (Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan) appointed foreign minister by Jinnah (Pakistan's founding father), Islam quickly became the major issue in Pakistani politics that it remains today. Lacking any of the normal bases for national identity, whether linguistic, geographical, or historical, Pakistani nationalism has of necessity relied much on religion. Islamic "purity" has been an important issue and a popular political slogan.[154]

In this environment, it is unsurprising that the position of the Ahmadiyya deteriorated dramatically. The central difficulty was that Ghulam Ahmad had come to regard and describe himself as a variety of prophet. He developed a concept of prophecy which defined him as a subsidiary, Muhammadan prophet,[155] but this concept has been accepted only by his Qadiyani Ahmadi followers. From the point of view of almost all other Muslims, Ghulam Ahmad's self-declaration as a prophet means that the Ahmadiyya is post-Muhammadan. Even some Ahmadis (the Lahore branch, later known as Lahoris in contrast to the more numerous Qadiyanis) edged away from this concept in the years after Ghulam Ahmad's death, coming to define him by 1927 as a *mujaddid* [renewer], an entirely orthodox category which might have given rise to a *tariqa*.[156]

Ghulam Ahmad's status as a "prophet" began to matter very much as the political significance of religion grew in Pakistan. The Ahmadiyya and the Ahmadi foreign minister were one of the chief targets of "fundamentalist" disturbances which swept the Punjab in 1953; order was restored only by the introduction of martial law.[157] The Ahmadiyya was again a target of the Islamist opposition to President Bhutto in the 1970s, and in 1974 further disturbances and the threat of a general strike obliged Bhutto to concede a change in the legal status of Ahmadis whereby they were reclassified, along with Hindus, Sikhs, and Parsis, as a non-Muslim minority.[158]

It was not until after the establishment of a military-fundamentalist regime under General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq that real persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan began. The 1974 change in their legal status had few practical consequences for Ahmadis, although it made it difficult for them to go on the *hajj* pilgrimage. In 1984, however, almost a century after Ghulam Ahmad had proclaimed his mission, new laws made it a criminal offense to preach either the Qadiyani or Lahori version of Islam, or even represent it as *being* Islam. It also became an offense for an Ahmadi to represent himself as a Muslim, even by implication, as for example by calling Ahmadi places of worship "mosques."[159] Many Ahmadis were imprisoned, and Ahmadi worship was interrupted or prevented. Attacks on Ahmadis by private individuals became increasingly frequent, with police often failing to intervene.[160]

The case of the Ahmadiyya, then, emphasizes that the environment with which a sect may be in tension can change, just as a sect itself may change. It also demonstrates that not all sects fit neatly into the system of classification we have established. High tension is associated with the *firqa*, and yet in the Ahmadiyya's case high tension did not arise until the sect was passing from voluntarism towards institutionalization and was on its way to becoming a denomination. As has been seen, this may well have been because the British authorities did not initially react to the Ahmadiyya as a Muslim government would have. Armed conflict is also associated with the *firqa*, but absent in the case of the Ahmadiyya. It is possible, however, that the Ahmadiyya of the 1890s might have responded differently to steps such as those taken later and that armed conflict might then have resulted.

A final peculiarity of the Ahmadiyya is with regard to the assumption of Islamic identity. In general, a sect is well-advised to adopt "orthodox" Islamic guise; in the case of the Ahmadiyya, it was precisely this that was made a criminal offense in 1984. The explanation may lie in the fact that the Ahmadiyya had, by the time of Ghulam Ahmad's death, very publicly crossed an important line. Divine inspiration is generally unexceptionable in an Islamic environment and is found in many *tariqas*, where it gives rise to little or no tension. When inspiration becomes revelation, however, and perhaps especially when revelations are written down, a line has been crossed. British India was perhaps the environment in which a *firqa* which had crossed this line might most easily avoid tension; the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was an environment where considerable tension was unavoidable.[161]

The persecution of the Baha'i minority in Iran was likewise triggered by changes in its environment. Baha'ism was established by Baha'u'llah Ali Nuri (1817–92) out of the remains of the defeated Babi *firqa*. A follower and supporter of Shirazi from 1844, Baha'u'llah was arrested both before and after Shirazi's death and in 1853 was exiled from Iran. After attracting a following among Iranian pilgrims in Baghdad, Iraq,

he declared himself in 1863 to be "he whom God will make manifest," the successor whose appearance had been predicted by Shirazi before his death. Baha'u'llah's following continued to grow during his subsequent exile in Edirne, Turkey (1863–68), and thereafter in Acre, Palestine (1868–92), especially during the 1880s. Baha'u'llah transformed Babi Shi'ism into a modernist and pacifist "liberation from the yoke of the old values and traditions," and in 1873, he published his *Kitab al-aqdas*, introducing his own version of the Sharia.[162] The real transformation of the Babi movement into a world religion, however, took place during the twentieth century, especially after 1921 under Baha'u'llah's great-grandson, Shawqi Rabbani ("Shoghi Efendi"), who was educated at the American University of Beirut and Balliol College, Oxford. By the time of Rabbani's death in 1957, the standard version of the Baha'i sacred texts was in English, and the greatest expansion of the new religion (a religion with "no ritual, dogma or clergy") had been in South and Southeast Asia, and in sub-Saharan Africa.[163]

After a period of persecution in the 1890s, Baha'is in Iran itself lived relatively quietly until the revolution of 1979.[164] The tacit tolerance of the Baha'is under the Pahlavi regime, however, was ultimately to their disadvantage, much as British tolerance in India arguably worsened the Qadiyani Ahmadiyya's position after partition. Iranian Baha'is were associated with an unpopular regime and with the westernization against which the revolution reacted,[165] and the presence of the Baha'i leadership in Israel was also a negative factor.[166] At the start of the revolution in 1979, Shirazi's house (a Baha'i shrine) was demolished, and in 1980 many Baha'is were arrested. Some were executed, and most were dismissed from their jobs (or, in the case of children, schools). In 1983, membership in any Baha'i institution became a criminal offense. As the revolution matured, however, persecution of Baha'is began to decline.[167]

The persecution of Baha'is in Iran must be seen within two contexts: the previous history of the Babi movement, and the general situation in post-Revolutionary Iran. The 1997 Amnesty International Report which lists the detention of a number of Baha'is also reports the detention of three Grand Ayatollahs, the execution of twelve Sufis, and the possible extrajudicial killing of a number of leaders of the Sunni minority. It also records the various sentences passed on a Baha'i who had been arrested in 1994: originally sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, he saw his sentence reduced to eighteen months on appeal. The prosecution then in turn appealed against this reduction, and succeeded in having the case referred to a Revolutionary Court. The Baha'i in question was then sentenced to death.[168] Such proceedings are more associated with revolutions than with Islam.[169]

CONCLUSION

We have now seen how the three types of sect we identified (or five if one includes the sub-divisions of *tariqa* and *ta'ifa*) are properly classified as sects.

		Firqa	*(Haraka)*	*Ta'ifa*		*Tariqa*	
Definition	Orientation[170]	*Outward*		*Inward*			
	Origin	(indigenous)		*Indigenous*	*Foreign*	*Sufi*	
	Novelty	(new)	(varies)	(new)	(varies)	*New*	*Established*
	Organization	*High*	*Barely a group*	(medium)			(higher)
Characteristics	Voluntary		Yes				Less so
	Exclusivistic	Somewhat		Yes			Somewhat
	Fellowship	Secondary or unimportant		Important	(varies)	Important	
	Poss. of discipline	High	None	High		High	Medium
	Social identity	Primary source				Primary	Secondary
	Degree of tension	Highest	Low	Medium			Low
Destination	Failure	Minority (*tariqa*)	(vanishes)	(*tariqa*)		(vanishes)	Cult
	Success	Denomination		*Firqa*		Est. *tariqa*	Lineage

Figure 7 Definition, characteristics, and destination of types of sect.

Not all of the others display the seven specific characteristics shown in figure 1 in equal measure or in the same way, but all are clearly different from denominations, minorities, and cults. The types of sect which are most sectarian, the *tariqa* and the *ta'ifa*, are those which may most frequently transform themselves into other types of sects (if they survive), while the *firqa* only rarely remains in any way sectarian because of its inherent instability.

We have also seen how, despite the provisions of the Sharia relating to *kufr*, sects in the Islamic world stand a good chance of survival, whether they are really Islamic or merely adopting Islamic garb. Professor Fulan in Cairo has been teaching his Direct Path unmolested for almost a quarter of a century, and the followers of "Shaykh Silver Birch"—now denominationalized and organized much as a Sufi *tariqa*—have suffered no persecution.[171] The Idrisi Ahmadiyya suffered no real difficulties in its years as a new *tariqa*, and subsequently became an entirely respectable "established" *tariqa*. The persecutions of Qadiyani Ahmadis and Babis are typical of the *firqa* and explicable in terms of their political and

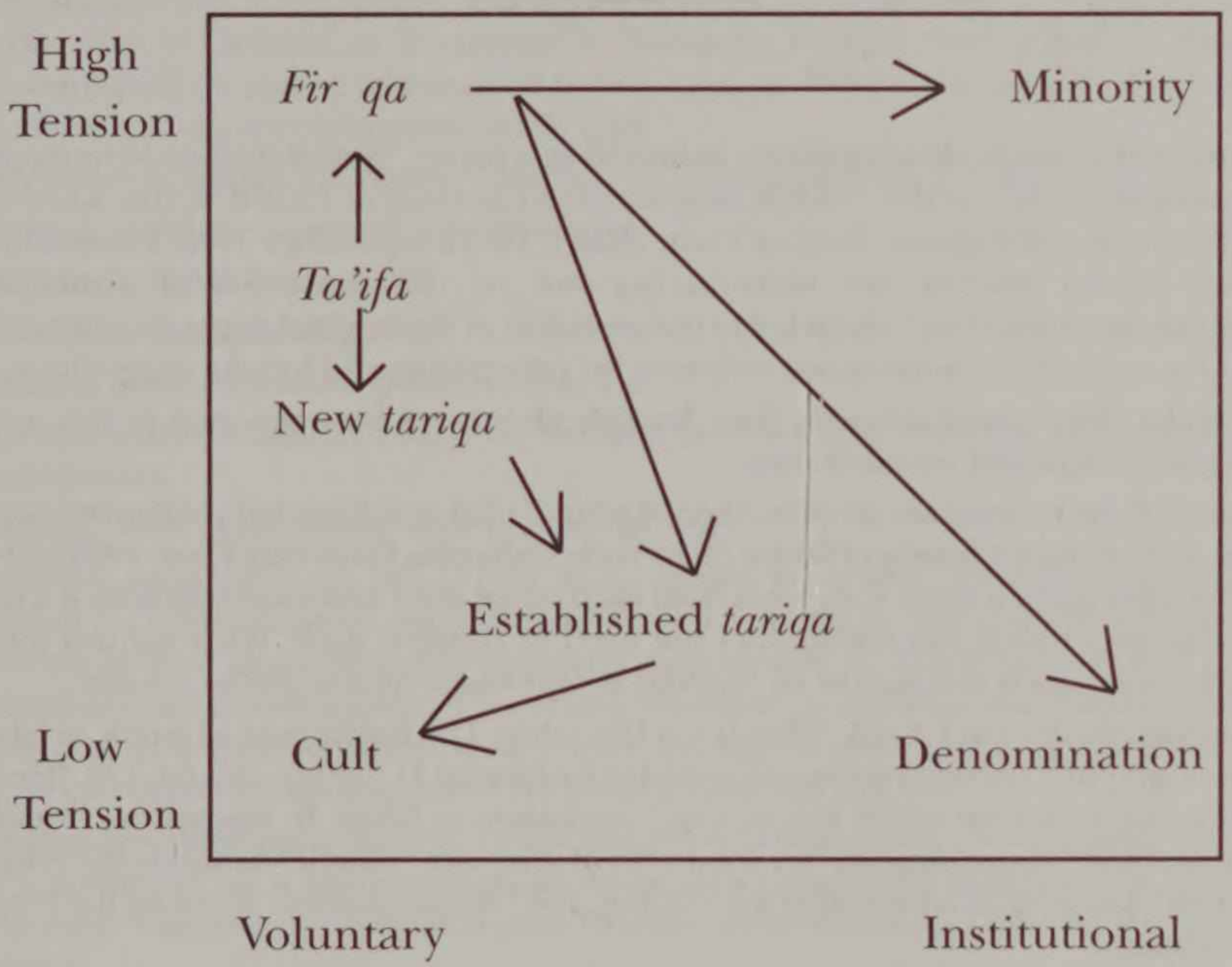


Figure 8 Development of sects

social environments, and also because neither sect adopted "proper" Islamic garb. The post-Muhammadan nature of the Ahmadiyya was emphasized rather than concealed, and it is hard to conceive of anything more confrontational than Bastami's dramatic appearance before the Chief Mujtahid of Najd. The execution of Shirazi was an expedient to which many insecure governments, threatened by multiple revolts, might have resorted. Minorities such as the Ahl-i Haqq, on the other hand, have survived for centuries despite their almost total heterodoxy by keeping a low profile—keeping their precise beliefs as secret as possible and living in remote places.[172]

What needs to be explained, perhaps, is not so much the persecution of sects in the Islamic world as their unexpected tolerance. Two explanations that have been suggested are the difficulty of proof and discouragement of prosecution under the Sharia and the way in which many Muslims combine intolerance in principle with tolerance in practice. A third possible explanation is the absence of organization from the denominations of Islam. In a Christian context, the leader of a sect will often be seen as usurping sacerdotal functions which are the legitimate preserve of another, established, institutional body—the church. When, as in Islam, there are no such functions to usurp[173] and no organized body to protect itself, tension is less likely to develop into persecution.

ENDNOTES

[1] Parts of this article were originally delivered as a paper, "New Religious Movements in the Muslim World," at the Twelfth International Congress of CESNUR (the Center for Studies on New Religions), held in Turin (Italy), 10–12 September 1998. I would like to thank Eileen Barker for introducing me to the most useful concept of "denominationalization," which led to the evolution of the original paper into this article, and also to thank my anonymous reviewers for penetrating and helpful suggestions.

[2] Singular *firqa*, plural properly *firaq*. English plurals are however used in this article, along with simplified transliteration.

[3] Most of these versions are given in Abd al-Qahir ibn Tahir al-Baghdadi, *al-farq bain al-firaq*, trans. and ed. Kate Chambers Seelye (New York: Columbia University Press, 1920), 21–22. *Hadith* reports often differ somewhat from each other; their historical reliability is a vexed question with which this article does not need to concern itself. What matters for our present purposes is that almost all Muslims accept *hadith* such as this as reliable.

[4] For example, Steven I. Judd, "Ghaylan al-Dimashqi: The Isolation of a Heretic in Islamic Historiography," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 (1999): 161–84, 172. "Heresy" is, however, a concept which has no exact equivalent in Islam. In this article, "Muslim," "Islamic," and "Muhammadan" are used as in Arabic, with "Islamic" denoting the religion, "Muslim" denoting an adherent of the religion, and "Muhammadan" denoting the Prophet Muhammad.

[5] The ninth-century work is the *Kitab firaq al-shi'a* of al-Hasan ibn Musa al-Nawbakhti (d. 899). At least five heresiographies were published in Cairo in the late 1980s and 1990s, four by Egyptian academics and one in a more popular series. An example of an internet heresiography is <www.geocities.com/~q_ahmed/73.htm> (accessed July 1999). This is an especially interesting example, being prepared by a member of the [Qadiyani] Ahmadiyya, a body discussed below which most other Muslims would consider a sect.

[6] Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) warned that "numbers [such as these] are not to be taken literally; the intended sense is rather that of magnitude" (*al-Muqaddima*, quoted in Lawrence Conrad, "Seven and the *tasbi'*: On the Implications of Numerical Symbolism for the Study of Medieval Islamic History," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31 [1988]: 42–73). Conrad demonstrates that, in almost all cases, it is wrong to take literally numbers involving sevens.

[7] A recent exception to this is Fuad I. Khuri, *Imams and Emirs: State, Religion and Sect in Islam* (London: Saki Books, 1990), to which we will return.

[8] Bryan R. Wilson, *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism: Sects and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 3.

[9] See *Die Welt des Islams* 36, no. 3 (November 1996).

[10] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (1911; London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), 340, n. 165b.

[11] Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, 340, n. 165b.

[12] Helmut Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1957), 19.

[13] Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Truber & Co, 1947), 199.

[14] Wilson, *Social Dimensions of Sectarianism*, 108.

[15] A "denomination" might be defined as an institutional religious body which is not in a state of tension with its environment. One is born into a denomination, and in some countries it will be shown on one's identity card (Turkey) or tax papers (Germany). The extent to which one's denomination is a source of social identity varies depending on

circumstances which are usually outside the control of the individual: it matters more whether one is Catholic or Protestant in Northern Ireland than it does in France. Denominations do not, of course, have to be Christian: Reform Judaism, for example, is one of the leading denominations in the USA.

[16] *The Future of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[17] Wilson, *Social Dimensions of Sectarianism*, 52.

[18] Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, 331.

[19] Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, 348.

[20] Wilson, *Social Dimensions of Sectarianism*, 1–2.

[21] Denominationalization might be defined as the transformation of a sect into a denomination.

[22] Wilson, *Social Dimensions of Sectarianism*, 105, 107.

[23] Niebuhr, *Social Sources*, 21, 145, 181–84. In the preface to his book, Niebuhr, a Yale theology professor for thirty-one years, explains that "The effort to distinguish churches primarily by reference to their doctrine and to approach the problem of church unity from a purely theological point of view appeared . . . to be a procedure so artificial and fruitless that [the author] found himself compelled to turn from theology to history, sociology, and ethics for a more satisfactory account of denominational differences" (p. vii).

[24] His famous observation on page 19, quoted above in that context, is more than anything else a comment on a fairly obvious problem with Troeltsch's definition of a sect as "voluntary." One might suspect that page 19 is now more widely read than later sections of the book.

[25] "Seventh-day Adventist Responses to Branch Davidian Notoriety: Patterns of Diversity within a Sect Reducing Tension with Society," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34 (1995): 323–42. This is perhaps a better example than the more frequently used one of the Mormons, since the Mormons originally had what has been described as "a well-founded fear of persecution."

[26] See Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization," *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 5, ed. Michael Hill (London: SCM Press, 1972), 119–36.

[27] This word has been chosen because it implies a somewhat precarious situation. Religious minorities are often also ethnic minorities or in a situation similar to ethnic minorities.

[28] Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, 132.

[29] Standard dictionaries give *mazhab* as a Malay word for "sect," and *mezhep* as a Turkish word for "cult." These translations are, however, of limited interest; *ibadet* and *tapinma* are also given as Turkish words for cult. The etymology of the former is "worship" (from Arabic) and of the latter "idolatry" (*tapi* , an idol).

[30] Barakat Muhammad Murad, *Madhahib al-zanadiqa wa aqaid al-batiniyya fi al-fikr al-Islami* (Cairo: al-Sir, 1992). See below. "Heretics" is an imprecise translation of *zanadiqa*—again, see below.

[31] It is possible to change one's *madhhab*, but this happens very rarely.

[32] In some parts of the Islamic world, differences in *madhhab* correspond with other differences. For example, landowners in Upper Egypt in the nineteenth century tended to follow the Hanafi *madhhab* while the peasantry was almost entirely Maliki. In such circumstances, however, *madhhab* serves more as a marker than a source of identity.

[33] In certain countries such as Egypt, the significance of the *madhhab* has declined over the last century to the point where many, perhaps most, Egyptian Muslims are not aware which *madhhab* they are following, but in practice almost all continue to follow one on many points. For example, the position of the hands at various points in the ritual prayer varies from *madhhab* to *madhhab*; anyone who prays will adopt one of the four alternative rulings, usually that of his family. On other points, one might argue that what has really happened has been that a single "Sunni *madhhab*" has been formed out of some or all of the four standard Sunni *madhhabs*.

[34] There were more in antiquity, but only the five which survived are relevant for our present purposes. The degree of reciprocal recognition between the Sunni *madhhabs* and the Shi'a varies from time to time and place to place, often depending on political factors.

[35] There are some important legal differences, for example in the rules for distribution of the estate of a deceased person.

[36] This tension is generally greatest when two communities live side by side, as in Iraq or (for Orthodox and Catholics) in the former Yugoslavia.

[37] This has caused difficulties for the Italian state in recent years. On the model of a *concordat* with the Catholic church, the state set about negotiating agreements with other denominations. It was easy to find a representative of Judaism with whom to negotiate, but who represented Islam?

[38] It is, however, frowned upon for a Muslim to obtain a variety of *fatwas* from different Muftis until he gets the answer he wants. The status of a *fatwa* differs somewhat between Sunni and Shi'a Islam.

[39] For example, different rules govern inheritance in different *madhhabs.*

[40] For an excellent study of the changing role of the Mufti, see Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas of the Dar al-Ifta* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997).

[41] An argument might be made for describing the *umma* as the "denomination" of Islam, since it is often emphasized that any Muslim is born into the *umma,* the community of all believers. The *umma* is, however, more of a key concept than a sociological reality. While the ultimate decision on disputed points of doctrine, for example, is the consensus [*ijma'*] of the *umma,* in practice the operative consensus has almost always been that of the *ulama* who represent the *umma* for these purposes, and different *madhhabs* have frequently arrived at different decisions. A sect is rarely in tension with the entire *umma,* but rather with some local expression of the *umma.* In all cases it is the concept of the *umma* which gives these local expressions much of their authority, but in practice the *umma* means little more than "Christendom" does.

[42] Theological distinctions may produce social realities. To varying extents, most contemporary Islamic states in theory treat people as citizens with equal rights, irrespective of their religion. In practice, however, the classifications derived from Islamic law often matter more. The relationship between law and opinion in Islamic states is considered below.

[43] So called because they have also received divine revelations, recorded in the Torah and the New Testament. It is the Quran's confirmation of this revelation that matters, much more than monotheism as such.

[44] In practical and popular terms, Jews have in recent years become somewhat confused with Israelis, and their status has suffered accordingly. The relationship between Zionism and Judaism in popular perceptions, however, falls beyond the scope of this article.

[45] "Muhammadan" is used in this article (as it is in Arabic) exclusively as an adjective denoting the Prophet Muhammad, and not to denote Islam. The expression "Mohametanism" was once used to denote Islam, but has been generally and properly rejected as both offensive to Muslims and inaccurate: the role of the Prophet in Islam is very different from the role of Christ in Christianity.

[46] "Post-Muhammadan" is not the same as "post-Islamic." Post-Muhammadan prophets regard themselves as successors to Muhammad and Jesus, in the same way that Islam sees Muhammad as the successor to Jesus and Moses. Not all post-Islamic prophets are post-Muhammadan. A person who claimed to be the Jewish Messiah, for example, would not be post-Muhammadan, and would be regarded by Islam as principally the concern of the religion which gave rise to him.

[47] The previous manifestation was actually that of Ali rather than Muhammad, which adds a further twist. See Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Inner Truth and Outer History: The Two Worlds of the Ahl-i Haqq of Kurdistan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (1994): 267–

85. For Muslims, of course, Muhammad was human, not a manifestation of the Divine Essence.

[48] The classification of the Baha'is as a minority refers to the body's status in Iran, not in areas outside the Islamic world, where it is clearly a founded religion.

[49] Campbell argued that individuals often belonged not so much to a single cult as to a milieu, a web of different but interconnected cults.

[50] Campbell, "Cult," 130.

[51] Campbell, "Cult," 122. "Deviant," Campbell means, in relation to the "dominant . . . culture."

[52] Christianity is well known in most Muslim countries as an identity if not as a theology, being much mentioned in the Quran, and perhaps more importantly as a consequence of the colonial experience. In some countries such as Egypt and Syria, there are also significant Christian minorities. For a Muslim, then, Christianity is from an early age a very present "other."

[53] Campbell, "Cult," 122.

[54] Campbell, "Cult," 122.

[55] The exception to this is perhaps the *zar*, a ritual placating of spirits or exorcism, which is generally regarded as deviant and also contains significant syncretic elements. One might speak of a popular *zar*-cultic milieu. There is an extensive literature on the *zar*.

[56] In Cairo, for example, the Devotees of Our Lord Husayn organize a "table of the Merciful One" [free meals for the poor during the Ramadan fast] and raise money for the restoration of mosques.

[57] The *firqa* is associated with reform, and the *tariqa* with renewal. See Wael B. Hallaq, "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?" (*International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16 [1984]: 3–41) for an interesting discussion of these two concepts.

[58] Khuri, *Imams and Emirs*, 17–18. As we will see, only one type of sect (the *firqa*) is frequently found in tension with the state.

[59] Khuri, *Imams and Emirs*, 22.

[60] One might also argue that the Jews (whom he classified as a minority) do control their own territory (Israel), as do or did many of his "religious movements": the Wahhabis still control Saudi Arabia, the Mahdi of the Sudan established the Mahdist State in the nineteenth century. His view that these bodies were primarily anti-colonial (rather than anti-Sunni) and "disappeared [as religious bodies] as soon as independence was achieved" (p. 22) is one usually not shared by other scholars.

[61] The rival is of course now English, a language which many contemporary non-Arab Muslim scholars and intellectuals are more likely to speak than Arabic.

[62] The word *ta'ifa* was used thus by *Ittihad* [United Arab Emirates] on 5 and 26 January 1996, *al-Sharq al-awsat* [London] on 25 February 1996; *al-Balad* [Saudi Arabia] on 9 January 1996, and *al-Ahram* [Cairo] on 18 January 1996. The Solar Temple is referred to in Arabic as "the religious *ta'ifa* of sun worshipers" (incidentally, "sun worshiper" is the Arabic for "sunflower").

[63] As, for example, in a Kuwaiti newspaper report on the *bidun* [a category of stateless persons long resident in Kuwait], or an Egyptian newspaper report on the reception given by the Prime Minister to the visiting leader of the Bohras (*al-Ahram*, 28 January 1999).

[64] Some other terms are little used today. The phrase "*al-milal wa al-nihal*" was once a popular one in the titles of heresiographies, *milal* meaning religions rather than sects: the word *milla* was used in the Ottoman empire to indicate the various religious groupings (Muslims, Jews, Orthodox Christians, etc.) which were administered separately for various purposes. This distinction survives today in some countries in the form of different personal-status laws for different *milal*. *Nihal* was sometimes used to indicate religions such as Buddhism, sometimes sects within Islam. See D. Gimaret, "Milal wa'l-Nihal," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1960–c.2002), 54-55.

[65] In journalistic Arabic, however, *firqa*'s chief meaning is now military "division," (as in "armored division") and it is consequently rarely applied to religious bodies. It can also mean squad, troop, or column—military terms vary widely from one Arab country to another. *Madhhab* is also used on occasion to mean "sect," but as we have seen its primary meaning is "denomination," and its use to describe something a sect must be regarded as a secondary use. Other words are sometimes used in other Islamic languages, but such usages are less useful than Arabic for our present purposes. Modern Turkish, for example, may use *tariqa* (*tarikat* in the reformed orthography) for "sect," and *tarikatçi* for "sectarian," but this really tells us more about the modern Turkish attitude towards Sufi *tariqas*, which were regarded as divisive and banned by Atatürk, than anything else. Similarly, our investigation is little advanced by the definition of the official Malay term *ajaran sesat* ("deviationist teachings") as "any teachings or practices . . . which . . . are contrary to Islam." See Malaysia, Office of the Prime Minister, Pusat Islam, "Ajaran Sesat," <www.islam.gov.my/sesat/BM>, accessed July 1999.

[66] Mirvat Izzat Muhammad Bali, *Namudhaj min madhahib al-firaq al-Islamiyya* [*Typology of the Madhhabs of Islamic Firqas*] (Cairo: Dar al-Wizan, 1991); Abd al-Amir Muhanna and Ali Kharis, *Jami al-firaq wa al-madhahib al-Islamiyya* [*All the Islamic Firqas and Madhhabs*] (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-Arabi, 1992).

[67] Sa'id Murad, *al-Firaq wa al-jama'at al-diniyya fi al-watan al-Arabi, qadiman wa hadithan* [*Firqas and Religious Groups in the Arab Lands, Ancient and Modern*] (Cairo: Ein, 1997) and Mahmud Muhammad Marzua, *Tarikh al-firaq al-Islamiyya* [*History of Islamic Firqas*] (Cairo: Dar al-Manar, 1991).

[68] Barakat Muhammad Murad, *Madhahib al-zanadiqa wa aqaid al-batiniyya fi al-fikr al-Islami* [*The Madhhabs of the Zindiqs and of Arcane Creeds in Islamic Thought*] (Cairo: al-Sir, 1992). The two Murads are not related; it is a common name; one teaches at Zagazig University and the other at Ayn Shams University. The word *zindiq* is discussed below. This article, of course, avoids the question of whether a sect is "Islamic" (legitimate) or not.

[69] Sa'id Murad is the only scholar to discuss any recent bodies save for the best-known (Sanusis, Sudanese Mahdists and Wahhabis, and Baha'is and Ahmadis). He deals with Sufi *tariqas* and "contemporary groups," most of which are radical "fundamentalist" *firqas* such as Jihad.

[70] The Kharijites are treated in all standard works on the emergence of Islam.

[71] One of the earliest known works of Islamic heresiography was entitled "The Book of the *firqas* of the Shi'a," the *Kitab firaq al-shi'a* of Al-Hasan ibn M usa al-Nawbakhti (d. 899).

[72] After the death of Ali, the Caliphate passed to a cousin of his predecessor Uthman, Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, who had fought against Ali at the battle of Siffin. Muawiya was the first of a long line of Umayyad Caliphs.

[73] Most of the delightful stories relating to the Assassins which were once so popular sadly have little basis in reality.

[74] Judd, "Ghaylan al-Dimashqi," 162, 173.

[75] Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and its Medieval Background* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 1–11.

[76] Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous*, 34–35.

[77] Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 157–72; Juan Ricardo Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 26.

[78] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, 26 and *passim*.

[79] Bastami became the focus of a Persian-Ottoman dispute which ultimately also involved the British and Russian ambassadors to the Porte. After a number of trials, he finally died (probably of natural causes) in 1845, while serving a sentence of hard labor in an Istanbul dockyard (Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, 211–37).

[80] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, 240–59, 372–91. The numerical estimate is Cole's (*Modernity and the Millennium*, 26).

[81] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, 395–408; Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religion: From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 26–28.

[82] It is interesting, however, that in many cases such conflicts start when a state challenges a powerful *firqa* without first making sufficient preparation. The uprising of the Sudanese Mahdi, for example, began with two failed attempts to arrest the Mahdi (Peter Malcolm Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of its Origins, Development and Overthrow* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958], 47–48), and the case of the Babi movement raises the question of whether the Iranian authorities might have avoided later difficulties if their initial action against Shirazi had been more decisive.

[83] See any standard history of the Sudan, such as Peter Malcolm Holt and M. W. Daly, *The History of the Sudan from the Coming of Islam to the Present Day* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979).

[84] See Esther Peskes, *Muhammad b. 'Abdalwahhab (1703–92) im Widerstreit: Untersuchungen zur Rekonstruktion der Frügeschichte der Wahhabiya* (Beirut: Beiruter Texte und Studien, 1993).

[85] There is a sizable literature on the Wahhabis. Amongst the best works is Esther Peskes, *Muhammad b. 'Abdalwahhab.*

[86] Arqam is commonly described as a *tariqa*, but (for reasons explained below) this does not mean that it is one.

[87] Reuters reports, "Malaysia Bans Messianic Islamic Sect" (Kuala Lumpur, 5 August 1994), and "Malaysia Police Crack down on Banned Islamic Sect" (Kuala Lumpur, 27 August 1994).

[88] Reuters, "Malaysia Police Crack Down."

[89] Amnesty International, "AI Report 1997: Malaysia" (available <www.amnesty.org /ailib/aireport/ar97/ASA28.htm>, accessed July 1999).

[90] Nizam Isa and Shamsul Akmar, "Diehards Trying to Revive Banned Movement," *The Star Online*, 30 May 1996 (<www.jaring.my/star>).

[91] Its adherents might even be divided between those whose motivation is more political than religious, and those for whom politics is secondary to religion. This possibility however returns us to the relationship between religion and politics in Islam, which (as has been said) lies beyond the scope of this article.

[92] Albert Hourani's *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) is now somewhat outdated, but remains a classic account.

[93] If it succeeds in its objectives, a *haraka* may modify and merge into an existing denomination, as the Salafis did. If it does not succeed, it will usually slowly wither away.

[94] This raises the interesting question of whether the shift in focus from church to society made necessary by secularism might indeed turn Christian monastic orders into sects. Characteristics such as celibacy and poverty may not produce any tension between an order and the Roman Catholic Church, but they are increasingly foreign to contemporary Western secular society.

[95] *Wali* is a rank or spiritual station; *shaykh* or Renewer is a function. Great *shaykh*s are almost always *walis*, but there is no requirement for a *shaykh* to be a *wali*, and many *walis* never function as *shaykh*s.

[96] These features may in some cases have been no more than the unusual degree of commitment to the founding *shaykh.*

[97] The post-Muhammadan minority the Ahl-i Haqq (mentioned above) evidently derives from a Sufi *tariqa*, but this is an unusual course.

[98] "Heterodox" and "orthodox" are defined in terms of the perceptions of the sect's environment and also indicate the degree of divergence from generally accepted norms of teaching and practice. This section is drawn from my *The Heirs of Ahmad ibn Idris: The Spread and Normalization of a Sufi Order, 1799–1996* (Ph.D. diss., University of Bergen, Norway, 1998).

[99] There is no connection between this Ahmadiyya and the Qadiyani one. For various reasons, "Ahmadiyya" is a popular name, and there are several unconnected Muslim religious groups which use this name.

[100] Knut S. Vikør, *Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge: Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Sanusi and his Brotherhood* (London: Hurst, 1995), 241–64.

[101] There were instances of more or less well-informed questioning of or opposition to the views and conduct of particular Ahmadi groups in Kelantan (Malaysia) and then in Egypt, but these focused on points specific to the groups in question, not those found generally in the [Idrisi] Ahmadiyya.

[102] This was a long and uneven process, but the tendency was everywhere the same. See my *Heirs of Ahmad ibn Idris.*

[103] This is sometimes emphasized by referring to the *tariqa* as a *mashrab* [a spiritual spring], rhyming with *madhhab.* Many Sufi practices were, however, attacked by the Wahhabis and the Salafis, and as a result of these attacks (and also of socio-economic changes associated with mass urbanization and other aspects of modernity) the word *tariqa* has in some circles ceased to have positive value. See footnote 29 on modern Turkish usage, above.

[104] A Sufi *shaykh* has normally been authorized to act as such by his own *shaykh.* The chain of such authorizations is recorded and in some ways corresponds to the concept of apostolic succession in Catholic Christianity.

[105] As has been said, the distance between their teachings and practice and those generally accepted by Muslims (including Sufis) is often great, and thus a source of tension. What matters for distinguishing between the *ta'ifa* and the *tariqa* is the distance between the (Sufi) *tariqa* and the (non-Sufi) *ta'ifa.*

[106] Pauzi bin Haji Awang, *Ahmadiyah Tariqah in Kelantan* (M.A. Thesis, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1983), 194–97, drawing on a report of the Kelantan Majlis Ugama.

[107] On this basis, many *ta'ifas,* although found and originating in the Islamic world, are not themselves especially "Islamic." This article, of course, deals not with "Islamic sects" but with "sects in the Islamic world."

[108] Pusat Islam, "Tarekat Mufarridiyah" (<www.islam.gov.my/sesat/BI/mufa.htm>, accessed July 1999).

[109] That is, in general terms and so also in Sufi terms.

[110] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium,* 23.

[111] Among Sunni Sufis, the contact would normally be not with an Imam but with the Prophet, of course.

[112] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal,* 159–60.

[113] See Taha's *The Second Message of Islam* (1967; Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987) and Abdullahi Ahmed an-Na'im, *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights and International Law* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

[114] Thierry Zarcone, *Mystiques, philosophes et francs-maçons en Islam: Riza Tevfiq, penseur ottoman (1868–1948), du soufisme à la confrérie* (Paris: Institut français d'études anatoliennes d'Istanbul, 1993), 177, 203–4 (Turkey), 268 (Iran), 222–23, 235 (Egypt).

[115] Paul Dumont, "La franc-maçonnerie d'obédience française à Salonique au début du XXe siècle," *Turcica* 16 (1984): 83–86.

[116] The *Jam'iyya al-Ahram al-Ruhiyya* of Amad Fahmi Abu'l-Khayr. See Fred De Jong, "The Works of Tantawi Jawhari (1862–1940): Some Bibliographical and Biographical Notes," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 34, nos 3/4 (1977): 154–56 and 159–60.

[117] My information on this group is vague and second-hand.

[118] This is not his real name.

[119] Consisting of a "upward path," the realization that the absolute is not that which is experienced, and a "downward path," seeing the object and subject as being the same, equally nonexistent.

[120] Comments on the English-language group are based on personal observation in February 1998 and discussions with one follower of the professor over a longer period. Comments on the Arabic-language group, which I was not allowed to visit, are based on discussions with this follower and with another informant who had visited the Arabic-language group some years before.

[121] Address to the English-language group, 14 February 1998.

[122] It might, however, alternatively be classified as a cult, since it is not a primary source of identity for any of its members and since members of the English-language group are mostly members of the local cultic milieu and even the international cultic milieu. One member of the group spoke of visits to a variety of NRMs in England and France, from which she had just returned.

[123] In practice, the *fiqh* was always supplemented by administrative regulation and often partly superseded by local customary law.

[124] In general countries such as Sudan which today claim to apply the Sharia most frequently apply a hybrid system where *fiqh* penalties have been written into criminal codes of foreign origin.

[125] The status of Christians and Christianity in the Islamic world is of course a much-disputed topic, and tempers often run high; but while there have been and are cases of persecution and inter-communal violence, and despite current Saudi Arabian regulations, a comparison of the history over the last thousand years of Jewish minorities in the Islamic world and in Europe reflects more credit on Islam than on Christianity. Even in this century, in the era of modern states, Middle Eastern Jews have fared rather better than the Jews of Europe. For a likely explanation of the widely (and mostly inaccurately) reported tribulations of upper Egyptian Copts in al-Koshah, see Steve Negus, "Village of Fear: Police Rampage in Upper Egypt," *Cairo Times*, 1 October 1998 (available <www.cairotimes.com/cairotimes/content/issues/hurights/kosheh.html>). See also Khaled Elgindy, "Diaspora Troublemakers: Is the Organized Coptic Community in the U.S. Doing More Harm than Good?" *Cairo Times*, 4 February 1999 (available <www.cairotimes.com/cairotimes/ content/issues/copts/expats.html>).

[126] Bernard Lewis, "The Significance of Heresy in Islam," *Islam in History: Ideas, People and Events*, ed. Bernard Lewis (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), 275–93, first published as "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in Islam," *Studia Islamica* 1 (1952): 43–63.

[127] Wilfred Madelung, "Mulhid," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 546.

[128] Louis Massignon, "Zindik," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1st ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 1228-229.

[129] Lewis, "Significance of Heresy," 287.

[130] Lewis, "Significance of Heresy," 289.

[131] According to some authorities, following Islam is no defense against a charge of *kufr* based on accepting the validity of a religion such as Christianity; according to others, failure to perform the five daily prayers is grounds for execution, though a distinction is made between those who accept that they *should* pray (who may be given a normal funeral) and those who do not (who may not). This definition would of course require the execution of a sizable proportion of the inhabitants of the Islamic world.

[132] From *Kitab al-hayawan*, quoted in Lewis, "Significance of Heresy," 289.

[133] "Renounce these claims, it is not proper to put yourself and other people so vainly into ruination," pleaded the Iranian Mujtahid who later reluctantly signed the *fatwa* which confirmed the sentence of death on Shirazi. The final interview between the Mujtahid and Shirazi was recorded by the Mujtahid's son. See Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, 400.

[134] The Sharia, in its proper sense, comprehends all rules and principles by which a Muslim should live, including the proper words to say when finishing a glass of water or the circumstances under which prayers may be shortened by travelers, as well as rules for the division of inheritance or the validity of contracts. I am referring here to *hadiths*, reported

sayings or doings of the Prophet, which constitute authoritative ethical guidance, as well as being one of the two principal sources of the *fiqh*.

[135] I am here concerned with principle, not with current practice in countries such as Pakistan, from which there are now numerous reports of miscarriages of justice.

[136] Shaykh Abd al-Hayy al-Naqshbandi, interview, March 1995.

[137] Most of the *firqas* mentioned above made wide-ranging accusations of *kufr*, as do contemporary fundamentalist *firqas*.

[138] For the Wahhabi *ikhwan*, see Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia 1919–36: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). *Kufr* is routinely used by contemporary revolutionary groups as the justification for their killings of policemen and presidents.

[139] In highly "traditional" areas such as upper Egypt, for example, a young Muslim woman who runs away with a Christian man is in danger of her life, but so is a young Muslim woman who runs away with a Muslim man or a Christian with a Christian.

[140] Pusat Islam, "Ajaran Sesat" (<www.islam.gov.my/sesat/BM, accessed July 1999>).

[141] The term *Rechtstaat* expresses, for contemporary Germans, one of the most important distinctions between the Federal Republic and the Third Reich. The way in which law can be, and is, ignored by the state in many parts of the Islamic world today is far more reminiscent of the Third Reich than of the Federal Republic.

[142] Public opinion is more frequently ignored by governments in the Islamic world than by governments in the West and must often be expressed more indirectly than in the West, but this does not mean that it does not exist. It does, and it matters.

[143] This is even true in the least liberal Muslim states, such as Saudi Arabia. See my "Saudi Sufis: Compromise in the Hijaz, 1925–40," *Die Welt des Islams* 37 (1997): 349–68.

[144] Khuri too makes this point (*Imams and Emirs*, 17).

[145] An interesting question is how the concept of Satanism arrived in Egypt (and, to judge from a similar scare there, in the Lebanon as well). The answer is presumably that, since the Arabic press carries reports from the major international news agencies, Egyptians and Lebanese read many of the same stories that Westerners do. The same story, however, will be interpreted differently by readers of different backgrounds.

[146] Muhammad Genedy, quoted in Sara El-Khalili, "Seeking Out Devils," *Caravan*, 16 February 1997, 1+. The *Caravan* is the student newspaper of the American University in Cairo, and whilst a student newspaper would not normally be considered an appropriate source for scholarly research, the extreme unreliability of reports in the national newspapers (see below) makes the *Caravan*, closer to some of those arrested and without any xenophobic agenda, relatively more reliable.

[147] Quoted by Hany Ismail, Abdin Police Station, interviewed by El-Khalili. I have not seen this memorandum, but it is entirely possible that its contents are substantially as reported.

[148] Various Egyptian press reports.

[149] Unidentified student interviewed by El-Khalili.

[150] Preacher in the mosque at Kilometer 2 on the Mansuriyya road, 14 March 1997.

[151] See Amr Hamzawy, "The French Expedition, Egyptian Satanists and Lady Di: Globalization and its Discontents," forthcoming in *Dissociation and Appropriation: Responses to Globalization in Asia and Africa*, ed. Zentrum Moderner Orient (Berlin: Das Arab. Buch, 1999).

[152] The Amir of Kabul, whose regime was at the time insecure, probably wished to disprove charges of Ahmadi sympathies which had been leveled against him. In reaction to these executions, the Ahmadiyya appealed to the Viceroy of India and the League of Nations. Indian press comment was on the whole hostile, often equating membership of the Ahmadiyya with *kufr*, but although tension outside Afghanistan may have increased

somewhat, these events appear as an isolated incident in comparison with what was to come. See Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous*, 28–29.

[153] The distinction between Ahmadis and non-Ahmadis was of little interest or importance to Hindus.

[154] It has been especially popular among politicians opposed to pre-partition local interest groups. See Ishtiaq Ahmed, *The Concept of an Islamic State: An Analysis of the Ideological Controversy in Pakistan* (London: Frances Pinter, 1987), 214–16.

[155] In this view, Muhammad was only the last *tashr'i* and *mustaqill* prophet, i.e. the last bringer of an entirely new religion. See Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous*, 128–34, 147.

[156] Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous*, 13–22, 148–50. It is widely accepted among Muslims that each century brings its own *mujaddid* or Renewer. There is general agreement on the identity of the first eleven Renewers (i.e. up to the seventeenth century CE), listed (for example) in Hallaq, "Gate of Ijtihad," 27–28. They include the Imam Shafi'i (founder of one of the four *madhhabs*), Imam Ghazali (author of one of Islam's greatest devotional manuals), al-Shadhili, and al-Sirhindi (both of whom gave rise to Sufi *tariqas*).

[157] The leading fundamentalist Abul Ala Maududi, leader of the Jamaat-i Islami, was tried and sentenced to death, but later pardoned. See Ishtiaq Ahmed, *Concept of an Islamic State*, 216.

[158] This entitled them to separate parliamentary representation, a privilege of which (predictably) no advantage was taken. Condemnation by the Saudi-dominated Muslim World League followed (Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous*, 40–45).

[159] Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous*, 45–46, 193.

[160] Amnesty International reports 34 deaths resulting from this kind of attack in the period 1984–96, as well as over 2,000 charges against Ahmadis, including 152 charges of blasphemy, punishable with death. No Ahmadis had actually been executed, however ("Pakistan: Persecution of Ahmadis Continues," Amnesty News Release, ASA 33/25/97, 24 July 1997). See also an Ahmadi account, <www.geocities.com/~q_ahmed/73.htm> (accessed July 1999).

[161] It is, however, remarkable that the legal persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan failed to distinguish between Lahori and Qadiyani, given that these two branches took very different lines on the nature of Ghulam Ahmad's inspiration.

[162] Smith, *Babi and Baha'i Religion*, 69–88; Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, 28–29; and Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, 414–15.

[163] Smith, *Babi and Baha'i Religion*, 115–28, 162–72.

[164] Smith, *Babi and Baha'i Religion*, 89. They were, however, formally banned in Germany and many German-occupied territories from 1937 to 1945 (p. 185).

[165] Smith, *Babi and Baha'i Religion*, 176–78.

[166] This of course was a consequence not of Zionist sympathies but of the exile of Baha'u'llah to Acre under the Ottomans.

[167] Douglas Martin, "The Case of the Bahá'í Minority in Iran," *Bahá'í World* (1992–93): 247–71; Amnesty International, *AI Annual Report on Iran*, 1997 and 1999 (available <www.amnesty.org, /aireport/ar97mde13.htm and /aireport/ar99/mde13.htm>, accessed July 1999).

[168] Amnesty International, *AI Annual Report on Iran*, 1997.

[169] Baha'is are, of course, persecuted in various fashions in non-revolutionary Islamic states as well, but with nothing approaching the severity with which they have been pursued in Iran.

[170] This is, of course, essentially the converse of a "specific characteristic," the "fellowship-principle."

[171] According to indirect information received.

[172] Mir-Hosseini says they "were—and to some extent still are—labeled heretics and subjected to persecution by their 'orthodox' neighbors" (p. 268). He does not go into any details about the nature or extent of this persecution. The point that the Ahl-i Haqq have survived despite persecution is mine; the "low profile" is Mir-Hosseini's.

[173] There are defined ways of selecting the most suitable person to lead the ritual prayer from among those assembled on any given occasion for that purpose—age, voice, etc.—but there is no ritual activity which may not be as well performed by one Muslim as by any another. Modern states have often restricted the numbers of individuals authorized to perform marriages for purely bureaucratic reasons or have attempted to prevent teaching and preaching by persons politically opposed to them, but these restrictions are purely administrative.

Heaven's Gate: A Study of Religious Obedience

Winston Davis

Whatever lives, obeys . . . he who cannot obey himself is commanded. That is the nature of the living.

Friedrich Nietzsche[1]

In March 1997, Marshall Herff Applewhite ("Do") and thirty-eight members of the Heaven's Gate cult[2] committed suicide at Rancho Santa Fe, California, in order to "beam up" to a UFO supposedly hiding behind the Hale-Bopp comet—a spacecraft which they believed would transport them to the "Level Above Human," or the "literal heavens." Later, two members who had been left behind committed what the press unkindly, but accurately, called "copycat suicide." Pundits, journalists, and members of the clergy explained the mass suicides as the result of "brainwashing." To separate people from the common-sense world of responsibility, families, sex, and credit cards, to keep them in a "metamorphic classroom" taught by a "Rep" from heaven (for over twenty years), and finally to get them to swallow a lethal concoction of phenobarbitals, vodka, and applesauce in order to rendezvous with a UFO on the other side of a comet—this radical agenda *had* to be the result of massive brainwashing. To many, the brainwashing hypothesis was convincing, especially because it seemed to link Heaven's Gate to the Jonestown suicides in 1978 and to the Branch Davidians who perished near Waco, Texas, in 1993. The same theory could be used to explain the sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subways by Aum Shinrikyô and why over a thousand people continued to be loyal to Aum even after extensive media coverage of the cult's abductions, tortures, and murders. Some said these "lost souls" stayed in Aum simply because they had "nowhere else to go"; others claimed they had been "brainwashed."[3]

Scholarship in general no longer accepts the traditional, simplistic theory of brainwashing.[4] Anson Shupe and David Bromley, for example, say that brainwashing explains behavior no better than spirit possession does.[5] Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge make the same point: "We have the testimony of our own senses to tell us that the brainwashing

metaphor is wrong and that cult members are not recruited by turning them into zombies."[6]

I think there are three good reasons to reject the theory of brainwashing that has become popular in the press and the pulpit:

1) There is no automatic religious or cultural way to manipulate brain cells and thus modify human thought and behavior.[7]
2) There is presently no empirical way to distinguish between what goes on in the brains of cult members and other religious (or nonreligious) people.
3) The theory of brainwashing provides a dangerous, pseudo-scientific rationale for the violation of First Amendment rights.

In this essay, I explain the Heaven's Gate suicides by examining the group's ethic and practice of religious obedience. Lacking detailed information about the personal background of Do's followers, I concentrate on the videos and Internet documents left behind by the group. I believe that a neo-Weberian analysis of these materials helps to explain the group's "zombie-like" behavior and ultimately the suicides themselves. The fascinating, indeed the terrifying thing about this material is that, read carefully, it contains many of the psycho-social formulas needed to gain control over the lives of other people. But, evidently, it does not provide a fail-safe way to control everybody. While the vernacular theory of brainwashing may no longer be scientifically viable, the general theory of social and psychological conditioning is still in rather good shape. I therefore do not reject the idea that some cult members are conditioned by their religious affiliations—if, by "religious conditioning," one means no more than the persuasive coercion that religious groups have on some people, and not some deterministic, automatic, or total remaking of wills and brains. I therefore find nothing objectionable in Benjamin Zablocki's revised theory of brainwashing as "a set of transactions between a charismatically-led collectivity and an isolated agent of the collectivity with the goal of transforming the agent into a deployable agent."[8] The tale I have to tell actually fits nicely into several of Robert Lifton's classical thought reform categories: milieu control, mystical manipulation (or mystical imperatives), the demand for purity, use of confession, sacred science, and loading the language (through, for example, extensive use of the "thought-terminating cliché").[9] Nevertheless, I believe that a Weberian focus on the ethics and ethos of Heaven's Gate, coupled with due emphasis on the group's social isolation and the psychological state of its leader, offers an explanation of the suicides that avoids the legal and academic quagmire associated with the popular theory of brainwashing. I will argue that Heaven's Gate's rejection of conventional moral responsibility and its cultivation of an ethic of simple religious obedience

created an ominous distance between the group and society. In the end, Do used his apocalyptic "transvaluation of all values" (to use Nietzsche's expression) to subvert the value of life itself. I believe that this explanation of the Rancho Santa Fe suicides is not only more fruitful and parsimonious than the popular theory of brainwashing, but that it can be used in conjunction with more sophisticated theories of religious conditioning.

Unlike Stark and Bainbridge, I think that cult members sometimes *do* appear to be "zombies." I see no reason, for example, to discredit the account given by Vincent Bugliosi of the zombie-like behavior of the female members of the Manson gang at their trial. Bugliosi recalls that in the courtroom

> . . . there was a sameness about them that was much stronger than their individuality. I'd notice it again later that afternoon, in talking to other female members of the Family. Same expressions, same patterned responses, same tone of voice, same lack of distinct personality. The realization came with a shock; they reminded me less of human beings than Barbie dolls.[10]

In the case of Heaven's Gate, numerous eyewitness accounts, as well as the cult's own video-taped farewell statements, depict a group of people that dressed alike, ate alike, talked alike, thought alike, and eventually died alike. Everything in their life-style deliberately aimed at squelching individuality and gender. As one devotee put it, "we want to all be as much as possible of the same mind" [24, 7]. Do himself said of his followers, "They are attempting with all of their might to be nothing but vessels of the Kingdom of Heaven. They don't want any separateness. They don't want thoughts of their own" [18, 8]. The group's taped farewells have few of the specific autobiographical details one associates with testimonials in the fundamentalist and/or evangelical tradition. On the video, Do's followers were pleasant, self-effacing, and servile. Most of their final remarks were mere regurgitations of Do's gospel, or "information," as it was called. Reading off a list of prepared questions for Do to answer, crew members used such expressions as "I could be wrong, but . . ." or "Would you care to say more about . . . ?" This studied, deferential behavior was a ritual enactment of the conviction that "it is [a] Next Level [Kingdom of God] Way, and a sign of maturity and wisdom . . . to think, act, and talk with no confidence" [24, 1].

Had they been brainwashed after all? Robert W. Balch, a sociologist from the University of Montana who infiltrated the group for research, notes:

> Many defectors, especially those associated with the halfway house [for ex-members in southern California], accused Bo and Peep [Do and Ti] of fraud and mind control. One defector compared his experience in the UFO cult with

his tour of duty in the Marines, claiming that he had been brainwashed on both occasions.[11]

Do himself did not reject the idea of brainwashing. The question for him was *who* had been brainwashed, and with what kind of "mindstuff." Do insisted that it was people in *this* world who had been brainwashed:

> Start writing a little chart of what they're into, and then let's discuss who's "brainwashed," who's under somebody's spell, who's almost a robot without knowing it, thinking that they're individual. They're individual in that they may go to different beauty parlors, and different manicurists, and different wedding chapels, but they do the same things [21, 23].

Do was ambivalent about brainwashing. He seemed eager to co-opt the idea either by turning it against the outside world, or by investing it with positive nuances of obedience to the divine will. One student claimed "the right to at least try to be 'brainwashed,'" explaining this in the group's own jargon as washing "my vehicle's [body's] brain of all corrupt programming and replac[ing] it with Next Level programming in an effort to become a new creature" [24, 2]. According to Do, when students say they want to be "putty" in the hands of the Heavenly Father, they are immediately tempted by Satan. "Lucifer's camp comes rushing in and says, 'See. Brainwashed condition.' And yet if you love our Father, you'd say, 'Oh, I hope so. I hope brainwashed condition'" [21, 23].

Do's own doctrine of free will seemed to contradict the basic premise of brainwashing. Looking at brainwashing from this angle, one crew member stated:

> They [Do and Ti, his partner] never talked me into doing anything. I made up my own mind. . . . The basic law of the universe is free will, and if your will is so weak that somebody could brainwash you, that's still your own fault. No matter what happens, it gets down to the fact that you are responsible for your actions and your life.[12]

As we shall see, the group's idea of the role of responsibility in the lives of crew members was far more complicated, indeed far more troubling.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HEAVEN'S GATE

Marshall Applewhite attended Austin College in Sherman, Texas, and earned a Master's degree in music from the University of Colorado. Hoping to follow in the footsteps of his father, a Presbyterian minister, he briefly studied for the ministry. Applewhite finally moved to Houston,

where he began a promising career as a professional singer and choir master. There he also became the chairman of a new music department at St. Thomas University.

Applewhite, who soon became a celebrity in Houston's musical circles, was deeply troubled about his sexual identity. Although he was a married man with children, he continued to have a number of secret homosexual liaisons. Dismissed by the university in 1970 for an improper relationship with a student, Applewhite fell into a deep depression and began to hear voices. It was at this time that he met Bonnie Lu Nettles, a registered nurse with a small astrology practice. In 1973, Applewhite and Nettles left Houston and began a spiritual odyssey that culminated in the revelation that they had been chosen for a special apocalyptic ministry. In the following Internet document Applewhite gives us his own version of the story:

> In the early 1970's, two members of the Kingdom of Heaven (or what some might call two aliens from space) incarnated into two unsuspecting humans in Houston, a registered nurse and a college music professor who were in their forties. The nurse and the professor hadn't previously known each other and had completely separate lives. The registered nurse was happily married with four children, worked in the nursery of a local hospital, and enjoyed a small astrology practice.[13] The music professor, a divorcee who had lived with a male friend [in a homosexual relationship] for some years, was contentedly involved in cultural and academic activities [4, 1].
>
> *The two* were then arrested and plopped in the county jail. . . . Ti [Nettles' religious name] was charged with stealing credit cards [belonging to the husband of their first convert, a woman from Houston]. Do was charged with auto theft [the car that he rented with his last credit card in St. Louis on Christmas night].
>
> After a few days, Ti was sent to a Houston jail where the charges were dropped by the woman's husband. She was released after having spent 30 days in jail. Do stayed in the Brownsville jail a while longer, and the credit card company dropped the charges related to the rented car. However, the DA's office in St. Louis picked up the charges, and Do was extradited to St. Louis. After six months his trial came before the judge, and he received a four-month sentence, which he had already served plus two extra months [4, 3].

Applewhite and Nettles ("The Two") made their way to California where they eventually converted about two hundred people. Their message was strange. They claimed to be reincarnations of Jesus Christ sent to earth via UFOs to save souls by imposing on them a strict regimen of celibacy and abnegation. They also predicted that they would be assassinated and resurrected three and a half days later—in front of TV cameras—as a fulfillment of prophecy (see Revelation 11: 3–13). Finally, their followers, or "crew," would be picked up and taken to the Level Above Human by UFOs.

At first The Two did not seem to know what to do with their new crew members. Some students questioned their authority; others eventually returned to a life of drugs and sex. One, a young man named Aaron, argued that the final stage of "overcoming" was overcoming one's dependence on The Two. Before long, Aaron was having sex with his partner and was arguing that members could smoke, drink, and make love as long as they had overcome their "*need* for drugs and intimacy." Balch discovered that "in less than a week three-fourths of the group had adopted Aaron's point of view."[14] Aaron's rebellion demonstrated the group's fundamental instability. Another critic, Joan Culpepper, organized a group called HER (Hinder Evolutionary Rip-offs) as an alternative to Do's group, which was then called HIM (Human Individual Metamorphosis). According to Culpepper, at least ten of the original twenty-four disciples rejected the teachings of The Two. Four students became actively engaged in "sabotaging" the movement.[15] Ineffective as leaders, The Two realized they needed to find some way to control (and entertain) their followers if they wanted to hold onto them until the mothership came to pick them up. Keeping the crew busy was no easy task since the Endtime was repeatedly postponed.

In 1975, Balch found that "the group was so disorganized, and its socialization techniques . . . so undefined, that the group could not sustain the commitment of its members."[16] The Two finally took decisive steps to revitalize the movement, steps that ultimately turned their loosely structured apocalyptic band into a demanding, high-intensity movement. After moving to a remote campground near Laramie, Wyoming, in 1976, they "became more organized in their groups and more systematic in their communication between cities" [4, 11]. Defections dropped to new lows and commitment increased. Sociologically stated, Do and Ti had learned how to routinize and institutionalize their own charisma. Not only had they learned how to keep crew members busy; they had learned how to make them obedient.

OBEDIENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY AS IDEAL TYPES

Two concepts in the Heaven's Gate Internet documents help us understand the fateful evolution of Do and his crew: responsibility and obedience (or what Do rather ironically called "flexibility"). Before looking any further at the documents from Heaven's Gate, I would like to lay out an ideal-typical framework for our analysis of its ethic. My approach to this problem could be called Weberian insofar as I attribute explanatory significance to ethical beliefs and communal practice. It could be called *neo*-Weberian insofar as I modify Weber's own distinction between an ethic of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*) and one based on absolute values and deeply held convictions (*Gesinnungsethik*).

An ideal-typical approach permits one to indulge in useful exaggerations. Taking full advantage of this license, I shall define obedience and responsibility as polar opposites. By obedience I mean a sincere compliance with or submission to a traditional or charismatic authority (e.g., a god, parent, sacred text, ritual practice, or religious, political, or military leader or institution). In its simplest form, obedience implies an absolute, unquestioning submission to this authority. One does what the god or guru tells one to do. Stated more precisely, "obedience is not a matter of doing what someone tells you to do. It is a matter of doing what he tells you to do *because he tells you to do it.*"[17] Although obedience plays a role in all legitimate regimes and in virtually all types of social action, Weber associates an "absolute obedience to God's will" with the organic social ethics of traditional society, and therefore with a religiously legitimated *status quo.* While simple obedience probably originated in relationships within the primordial family and tribe, as an ethic it was the work of the "emissary prophet."[18] Ultimately, it became the "foundation of prophetic politics."[19]

Christianity wholeheartedly endorsed the ethic of obedience found in the Hebrew Bible. The New Testament tells slaves to obey their masters, wives their husbands, children their parents, subjects the emperor, and churches God, Christ, and the apostles. Paul of Tarsus, arguably the founder of Christianity, could not conceive of an ethical system that did not begin and end in obedience (see Romans 6:16). In words that sound remarkably "cultic," Paul writes, "We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience" (II Corinthians 10:5–6). I shall argue that the ethic of Heaven's Gate was simultaneously a reversion to and an inadvertent parody of this traditional ethic of obedience.

On the other hand, Do rejected responsibility. Compared to obedience, responsibility is a relatively modern virtue.[20] In the languages of Europe, it is no older than the late fifteenth century, when it appeared as the vernacular equivalent of the legal terms *respondere, responsum,* and *responsio.* Originally, to be "respons-ible" probably meant that one was "able to respond" to a legal charge. According to Ernst Troeltsch, the concept of responsibility (if not the word itself) became an important element in Christian social teachings only with the rise of Calvinism.[21] Before that, the church's emphasis on paternalism and obedience curtailed individual responsibility.[22] The church's "patriarchalism of love" made superiors responsible for inferiors, who, in return, were to love and obey their "betters."[23]

I would argue that responsibility has become the queen of the modern virtues. But what does responsibility mean? When we speak about a person's "responsibilities" (in the plural) we usually mean no more than his or her duties. Since our responsibilities tend to be tasks assigned by

others—usually by some authority figure—they seem to call for our obedience. I call this "simple" responsibility.

In "Politics as a Vocation" and "Science as a Vocation," Max Weber lays out what I shall call a "complex" concept of responsibility.[24] In contrast to the heteronomy of obedience and simple responsibility, Weber's concept of responsibility is based on the Kantian notions of autonomy and personhood (*Persönlichkeit*). We can state Weber's position on responsibility in the following way: responsible people are people who demonstrate

> 1) a readiness to examine their own intentions, goals, and the means to achieve these goals critically and repeatedly;
> 2) a willingness to abandon or change their own course of action if and when they have reason to believe such action will be detrimental to larger, justifiable ends, obligations, or interests;
> 3) an ability to justify their final course of action to others.[25]

Armed with these ideal-types, we are in a better position to understand the significance of Do's creation of an ethic of simple obedience and his rejection of both simple and complex forms of responsibility.[26]

CREATING OBEDIENCE

In order to create a sense of absolute dependency and obedience in their followers, The Two isolated crew members from family and friends. For most of the group's nomadic existence, Ti, Do, and the crew stayed in public campgrounds, keeping their distance from other campers and hikers. Fearful of "discarnate Luciferians" and other "space aliens," they "created an encapsulated environment in which outsiders of any kind were unwelcome."[27] During public lectures, The Two flanked themselves with "buffers" of believers to neutralize the "negative vibrations" coming from the audience.[28] After the meetings were over, the curious were given no opportunity to mingle or talk with the crew informally. In the early days, the discipline of the group was basically a permutation of the negative ethic of the classic Protestant sect:

> Don't read newspapers or watch TV; don't call your parents; don't visit old friends; don't pick up hitchhikers. Other rules were designed to eliminate old habits and identities: Quit using drugs; change your name; shave your beard; get rid of clothing and jewelry that symbolize your old self . . . no sex, no human-level friendships, no socializing on a human level.[29]

Missing was anything positive.[30] "Aside from daily meetings, usually once in the morning and again in the evening, group activities were

virtually nonexistent."[31] In 1976, to reestablish their control over the movement and reduce the number of drop-outs, Bo and Peep moved the group to a campsite in Wyoming. There they instituted radical changes. From then on, all "information" from the Level Above Human would be channeled through a hierarchical "chain of mind." Members would receive instructions from Bo, who got them from Peep, who got them from her invisible Older Member, and "so on up the pipeline" to the "Chief of Chiefs," or God.[32] The Two had become an ecclesiocratic magisterium. Throughout the day, members were subjected to a wide variety of disciplines. To separate the wheat from the chaff, lax or uncommitted members were sent to a camp in Phoenix (where they eventually disbanded). After these reforms, defections declined and commitment increased dramatically. Balch notes that "everyone I interviewed who went through these changes talked about the 'intensity' of life in the group after the move to Wyoming."[33] Members "remarked on the physical sensations they experienced during the silent periods known as tomb time (usually around 3:00 AM) when the [space] ships were suspected to be in close range. These included ringing in the ears, 'body rushes,' and a general feeling of 'incredible energy.'"[34]

Frederick Bird argues that new religious movements sometimes reduce their followers' sense of moral accountability. Obligations to community and "significant others" are put aside. Guilt for past failures gives way to new feelings of innocence, autonomy, and the conviction that one is ultimately responsible to oneself alone.[35] Cults like Heaven's Gate also minimize accountability, but instead of nurturing innocence, autonomy, and responsibility to self, they foster an ethic of radical obedience. Like the "ascetic priest" in Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals*, Do imposed on his crew "regular performance, punctual and automatic obedience, unvarying routine, a sanctioning, even an enjoining of impersonality, self-oblivion."[36] A total of forty crew members would eventually follow him to the Level Above Human. To achieve this, Do, like Nietzsche's priest, had "to tame, to weaken, to discourage, to effeminate, emasculate, sophisticate" his followers.[37] Nevertheless, doubt—a symptom of disobedience—lingered in the minds of even the most committed. As in other religious groups (even "*low*-intensity" ones), these doubts could not be openly expressed.[38] How many doubts remained hidden behind a facade of obedience and conformity until the very end we will never know.

REJECTING RESPONSIBILITY

Heaven's Gate explicitly rejected both the simple and complex forms of responsibility. From the point of view of secular and religious modernity, its value system seemed to be a "world turned upside-down,"

to use Christopher Hill's expression. The "Level Above Human" was critical of government, education, money, the media, globalists, international bankers, Trilateralists, marriage, families, and all family or "mammalian" values. I hope to show that one of the reasons for the isolation of Heaven's Gate (and other cults) is not just their otherness but—ironically—their proximity to traditional religion. The mainstream looked upon this proximity as a blasphemous parody, an embarrassing resurrection of its own values. It was in the socioreligious space created by this isolation from (and tension with) the mainstream that Do could perfect his "ethic of obedience."

In Heaven's Gate, responsibility was denounced as a pseudo-virtue. We have seen that in the modern, "rightside-up" world, few virtues are more highly praised. To say that someone is responsible implies that he or she is trustworthy, conscientious, dependable, predictable, and good. Responsibility is not only the queen of modern virtues; it is their summation. For Do, however, responsibility was the creation of evil space aliens disguised as the world's "righteous or 'moral' leaders," people who accepted the "responsibility to maintain the world's stability." These "discarnate Luciferians" were said to determine what is right and wrong for the populace as a whole. "This 'morality call' translates down to every level of society's structure, i.e., its laws, its permissiveness, and its intolerance." According to Do, this is "no morality at all, but the long list of do's and don'ts which protect the money flow, secure the powerplayers, and sustain the acceptable morality code" [5, 8]. "Only the Luciferians could have Christians believing that Jesus promoted family values, becoming better humans, establishing professional religious institutions" [5, 9–10].

"Luci" [Lucifer] said, "Be a responsible person. Cling to this career. Cling to the family members of the flesh. Cling to all the responsibilities that you should. Be a stable humanitarian, someone that's reproductive both in culture and in physical nature" [7, 21].

Luciferians are also the source of everything that is "socially acceptable" and "politically correct."

They want you to be a perfect servant to society (THEIR society—of THEIR world)—to be the "acceptable establishment," to humanity, and to false religious concepts. Part of that "stay blinded" formula goes like this: "Above all, be married, a good parent, a reasonable churchgoer, buy a house, pay your mortgage, pay your insurance, have a good line of credit, be socially committed" [16, 5].

Do imagines those who followed, but then abandoned Jesus Christ saying to themselves, "Aw, this is just another guy. . . . I am going to get back with responsibility, and take me a wife, raise me some kids. Get

back into the mainstream" [7, 26]. In the same way, he said, students in his own classroom were free to leave and return to Luci. All they have to do is say to him, "'I did wrong, I'll prove to you that I'll do right, I'll re-assume my responsible position in this world,' then he'll accept you back. He'll let you back in that fold" [18, 27].

Do required his students to forsake all responsibilities: family ties, commitments, and all "human-mammalian indulgences." The hardest responsibilities to shake off are those created by sex. People have children and then say "my responsibilities go to the ones that are now the household that I have[—]these little urchins running around the place[—]I have to take care of them" [7, 12].

Do realized that, from the point of view of Luci's world, a member of Heaven's Gate would be thought to be irresponsible, anti-social, "duped, crazy, a cult member, a drifter, a loner, a drop-out, a separatist, etc." [5, 4]. From this "mammalian" point of view, a crew member "is copping out, he's becoming a hermit, he's dropping his responsibility to society" [13, 6]. Is there then no place at all for responsibility in Do's theology? Not as long as a "Rep" (Representative from the "literal heavens") is on the earth. As long as a Rep is here, students must devote themselves exclusively to the negative ethical praxis of "overcoming" the world. Only if a person finds himself in an age without a Rep may he follow an interim ethic and "become charitable-minded, humanitarian, do the best that he can to make a significant contribution to society, whether it's in medicine, or science, or whatever it might be" [13, 6].[39] When a Rep is present, the only valid responsibilities are simple religious obligations. The Rep himself is responsible for the crew's "overcoming" [21, 24]. The crew, in turn, has the responsibility to submit to the Rep's leadership and "get the information out." In other words, their responsibility is to obey.

Max Weber once noted that asceticism focused exclusively on the overcoming of creatural wickedness is likely to result in a "contemplative flight from the world."[40] Heaven's Gate is a good example. It represents a moral flight from the world, a "teleological suspension of the ethical." The Two seemed to become indifferent to morality and social obligations. In a letter to a woman in Houston, The Two refer to joy, love, and peace as so much "bunk."[41] Responsibility is wrong because it would mean that "energy would be going laterally [to the world] instead of vertically [to the Next Level]."[42]

> As long as you're human it makes no difference whether you're spending yourself [i.e. your life] as a scientist or a prostitute, as long as you're still spending your energy at the human level. There is really no difference. There's no one morality that is better than another.[43]

Do therefore believed that crew members need not feel obliged to care for others or be responsible for them.

CHOOSING HEAVEN: FREE WILL OR DETERMINISM?

Although the press treated Ti and Do as "crazies," their religious language was remarkably cerebral. It had its own coherence or systematicity and was, in its own way, relatively "rational"—at least in the Weberian sense. Do called himself a "lab instructor" and often referred to his followers as his "classroom" or "lab." His gospel was called "information," "Truth," "the facts," or "the formula." He also claimed that Jesus, his own previous incarnation, had also been a lab instructor and "a Representative sent to bring [people] information on how to get from [the] human level to [the] Level Above Human" [13, 5]. Do was said to get his "information" from "instructions" from Ti (his Older Member, also called, oddly enough, his Father) and other Older Members of the heavenly hierarchy ruled over by the "Chief of Chiefs."[44] Do's rationalism was flat-footed, prosaic, anti-ritualistic, and Protestant:[45] "Now, I don't really believe there is any Gothic architecture in our Father's House. I don't believe there are bells and robes and rituals and incense and all those things. It's practical. It's a laboratory, it's experiments" [13, 10].

Heaven's Gate was a mixture of Protestant individualism and monastic discipline. Do begins with the individual. "When that time is at hand, no couples can respond, only individuals who seek ONLY their Heavenly Father. . . . The individual who really recognizes his Heavenly Father, doesn't even have the desire to share his 'heart, soul, and mind' with anyone else" [4, 16]. As in the Presbyterian church in which Do was raised, people can respond to the "information" from the Next Level only as individuals. "Coming in contact with this information will force a decision for all with souls, and the stand they individually take will judge or determine their future" [5, 7]. To underscore this spiritual decisionism—and to defuse the charge that he had brainwashed his disciples—Do discoursed at great length on the freedom of the will. Even in a world dominated by Luciferian discarnates, humans are allowed "a full range of free-will options" [5, 10]. Thus, "we always have a choice. We can't even get rid of that choice. We're created with it" [7, 18]. The Next Level respects each individual's freedom. This means, however, that some will make wrong or false choices. But what, exactly, did Do mean by "choosing?"

> I am the soul. Now, what is in the soul, or what occupies the soul is mind. My mind? No, not my mind. I don't have any mind. So, what am I? Well, I'm the little switch inside that pillowcase, or that container [the body], that chooses what goes in it. What goes in the soul, what mindstuff goes in the soul? If you go to the originator . . . there are only two sources—originators—of the mind that

is available to us: the mind of the opposition (Satan) and his world, or the Truth, which comes from the Creator, the Kingdom of Heaven [17, 3–4].

Free will turns out to be nothing but an internal "switch" that allows "information" or "misinformation" to come into the soul—information from the Level Above Human, misinformation from the "radio waves" or "misinformation viruses" sent out by Luci. "Humans don't realize how the aliens use religions, the media, the government, the education system, and so on, to program them to accept their bondage" [24, 1]. Sin, according to Do, is merely "information that came from the wrong side of the tracks . . . it is misinformation" [10, 4]. In the classroom, students whose "mind-computers" have been "misprogrammed" by space aliens have to be "deprogrammed" and "reprogrammed" by the Rep on the basis of new information coming from the Level Above Human. In a curious way, choosing therefore means learning to be passive.

[T]he stronger I get, the better I get at my little choices. By learning this procedure of working against the negative, asking for help, and receiving it from the positive, or from our Heavenly Father's Kingdom, each time I go a step further and become more putty in the hands of this Kingdom [17, 9].

Even though the will was thought to be a mere "switch" with no identity or sense of direction of its own, Do insisted that the individual must (somehow) go ahead and choose.

No one has a right, it is not [the] Next Level way to hold someone from their choices. It is the Next Level way to let them go, become as evil as they want to be. Now, a Next Level member might step in and warn them . . . but they let them go right on and do what they choose to do. The Next Level is the Creator of equal rights. No one advocates equal rights to the extent that the Next Level does. And our classroom tries to emanate that, tries to be the same way with it, hoping that if this is for you, we can help you" [13, 15].

Do explained that people start to fall apart when a force from the Level Above Human secretly implants "computer chips," "tags," or "deposits" in their brains or "vehicles" [7, 15].

These implants cause them to search restlessly for a new way of life. And they start wondering—"What is happening?" And the next thing they know is, "Goodness, none of that means anything to me anymore. I've got to go and find something. I don't know what it is that I'm out to find. But I've got to go and find something that's going to take me, I don't even know where, but it's going to take me further than where I am." And what is happening? They're awakening [7, 16].

Do failed to see the contradiction between his belief in free will and his idea that the Level Above Human implants "computer chips" in some

people and that space aliens put "misinformation viruses" in the minds of others.[46] Nor did he see that if the will is merely a "switch" it has no way to assess or interpret its world, no way to ask the question that is always first on the lips of the responsible person: "what is going on?"[47] But then, as we have seen, Do was not interested in responsibility but obedience. For good reason, Balch repeatedly calls Heaven's Gate an "authoritarian belief system." He cites an interview with a certain "spiritual teacher in California" who met Ti and Do in the early years of their ministry. Do, the teacher said, went straight to the point: "We didn't come here to listen to you. We came here to *tell* you. We were sent here to tell you. . . . This you must obey."[48]

"FLEXIBILITY," I.E., OBEDIENCE

Do insisted that his astronaut crew needed to be "flexible." By this he meant they needed to be able to follow orders without giving them a second thought. "Wanting what I want when I want it," was one of the greatest sins in Heaven's Gate [9, 3]. "To become a good crew member, we have to have *flexibility*—so flexible, that whatever instruction is given to the crew, we can easily move into [it], even if it's [just the order to] 'sit in a waiting mode'" [9, 3]. This means that the crew constantly had to be "working against identity, working against separateness, working against uniqueness, working against anything that is still of the human kingdom" [9, 4]. The "good crew member" who "wants to be available for service" is, in fact, a good example of Peter Selznick's "deployable agent," the dependable factotum found in many high-intensity, high-demand movements.[49] Do pictured the deployable agent as "someone who knows procedure, *likes* procedure, and can function in a way that we really feel like a mechanism that is working. And then talk about satisfying! That becomes very, very satisfying" [9, 10]. Being a crew member means "liking to *change* as it is given to us, not wanting to be the old self . . . [It means having the attitude of:] 'Just can't wait until another day and more lessons and opportunities'" [12, 5]. Assigned procedures "help us demonstrate our crewdom, or our crewness, or our identity as a crew member, instead of as individuals that want the little freedom of doing this or that a little differently" [12, 10].

And you say, "Goodnight, this is structured!" Yes, it's structured, and I love it. [Do laughs]. And, it's not that I enjoy being the instrument of giving out these procedures, but these students love it. They've seen the value. It does not restrict them. It frees them. . . . It liberates them" [12, 10].

Mixing his metaphors with abandon, Do describes the flexibility of a crew member as the willingness to be a

> . . . cog in a wheel or a spoke in a wheel. If the wheel has a function to perform, then one spoke shouldn't sing louder than another spoke, or require certain attention that other spokes don't require, or have in its mind something different. It may not understand what the wheel is even performing. But if its head is in a right place, it doesn't even question what the wheel is performing. It says, "I can see here that we're performing a function. I may not understand it, but it's not my place to question it, and I know that I'll be more inclined to be in a position where I can serve if I stop questioning, because then I'm not muddying the air [9, 4].

> On the other hand, when I am *not* flexible, "I am choosing to believe my own mind instead of the mind that is being given to me through my Teachers and through my helpers and through my partnerships" [11, 11]. "If I resent procedures or they're in my way, then I will have chosen slow growth. I will have chosen tardiness. I will have chosen rebellion" [12, 10].
>
> Do and Ti constantly tinkered with their group's discipline and routines. This functioned to keep their followers entertained and obedient.

> So, procedures . . . we have a zillion procedures. Sometimes we get instruction [from the Level Above Human] to update them, and we'll go and examine what was the procedure we had for this. And maybe it has been updated, what we had before was a little outdated [12, 10].

> We've been put through all kinds of tests, including water fasts and juice fasts and strict vegetarian diets where we consumed only vegetables for a long period of time, and then vegetables and fruits, and then just fruits only for a period of time. We've been through all these things and we've learned lessons at each one of them [11, 4].[50]

> [The group] experimented in all kinds of disciplines, such as wearing hoods to learn about the "conning" ways of their visual personalities, and making 12-minute checks—each person physically going to a given spot every 12 minutes to concentrate on his or her desire to serve. They were given new names with three letters in the first syllable and a common two-syllable second part [4, 11].

While constant experimentation may seem to be evidence of desultory or indecisive leadership, it ultimately helped to enhance the authority of The Two over the crew.

> We've done so many diets that, you know, we ran out of books of diets to do. . . . But we then began to realize that what we were really doing was liberating ourselves. We were liberating us from our own likes and dislikes. . . . So the path of overcoming almost eventually works itself into a path of "follow the leader" more than a path of overcoming [18, 29].

The "behavioral guidelines given in the early days of the classroom November 1976" include a checklist designed to create an ethos of obedience and deployable agency:

> Can you follow instructions without adding your own interpretation? Can you deliver instructions as you receive them or do they change according to your computer [your own mind]? Do you needlessly ask a question when the answer is obvious or a moment of silent observation would quickly reveal the answer? Are you pushy, aggressive, interfering, or demanding in any way? When your teachers have asked someone to do a task and it relates to you, do you treat that task and its deliverers with as much respect as you would if it came directly from your teachers [2, 1–2]?

The list of sins in the "additional guidelines for learning control and restraint Spring 1988" is equally revealing:

> Keeping an offense to myself, not exposing it the same day; Taking any action without using my check partner; Trusting my own judgment—or using my own mind; Responding defensively to my classmates or teachers; Criticizing or finding fault with my classmates or teachers; Staying in my own head, having private thoughts, not staying open with my partner—separateness; Inappropriately offering suggestions, second-guessing, or jumping ahead of my teachers; Having likes or dislikes; Desiring attention or approval—wanting to be seen as good [3, 1–2].

Learning to be dependent was as important as learning to be obedient.

> [Y]ounger members learn to be respectful and acknowledge the wisdom and serviceability of Older Members in the Next Level. Where one can fall from progressing in the Next Level is to slip into believing that he can grow on his own. The only way an individual can grow in the Next Level is to learn to be dependent on his Older Member as that source of unlimited growth and knowledge. So, any younger member in good standing, forever remains totally dependent upon (and looks to) his Older Member for all things [5, 10–11].

Members therefore "will attempt to rid themselves of their old minds and identities in exchange for the mind that flows through me [Do], as they attempt to be accepted as one of my 'children'" [6, 4]. Although Do had an ambivalent and selective attitude toward the Bible, he believed that one should have the attitude of a servant when reading it. But servanthood for Do was ominously tinged with nihilism and masochism:[51]

> You want to be putty in His hands. You don't even want to exist. And that's the truth. You don't. You don't even want to have any identity. You don't want to be recognized. You don't want to be a leader [7, 18–19].

Religious obedience ruled out any and all self-confidence:

> One of the things we lose in this transition [is] self-confidence. We become like a child that says, "I don't know anything. I don't have any self-confidence in anything." I have to look to the Next Level. I have to let the Representative from the Next Level serve in that position of whom I look to. I have to say, "*You* know what's right" [12, 4].

Heaven's Gate gave new meaning to the traditional Christian ideal of becoming a "child of God." For Do, this meant "You're going to be, in a sense, submissive" [9, 2].

> Even though they're tiny little children in that Kingdom Level, it's ok. They might wet their diaper, they might make little boo-boos, but it's permissible, they can handle it, it's tolerable [13, 7].

Do repeatedly urges the student to emulate dogs and cats:

> When all that little animal wants is to please, . . . it just runs around wanting an indication of, "Am I pleasing? Am I pleasing?" and is just waiting for one moment of attention from that human, and he doesn't like to run with the dogs. I mean, if it has truly evolved, it doesn't want to run with the pack [10, 8–9].

Do used his pet analogy to make another, macabre point. Having your pet spayed or neutered, he said, is "one of the *kindest* things that could happen to that dog or that pet. Because then that gives added help to that little pet to be more preoccupied with service, more preoccupied with pleasing, more preoccupied with [saying] "What can I do [to please]?" [10, 9]. Thus, when Do and several of his male followers had themselves surgically castrated, they were not only making themselves eunuchs "for the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:12, one of Do's favorite Bible verses); they were also putting into practice their own canine model of obedience.

Do was, so to speak, a jealous god. To put it less theologically, he was mildly paranoid. Having confronted (and quelled) his students' rebellion, he worried that friendship between crew members would encourage gossip or turn into insubordination. In his eyes, friendship weakened the crew's dependency on the Rep. Members of the classroom were therefore assigned "check partners." When the classroom broke up and scattered to different cities, students were given "overseers" or "procedure helpers" [18, 7]. These individuals were not the student's friends; the only friend the student was to have was Do:[52]

> If you're going to overcome this world and come into my Kingdom, you're going to be only familiar with one thing, and that's my Kingdom. You're only going to love one thing, that's my Kingdom. As far as a physical familiarity with anyone,

the only familiarity you're going to have, the only confidant you can have, the only one you can talk to about things that you might want to talk . . . [about] are your check partner, within procedures, and your Older Member. That's the way we have designed it, and if you try to change those, then to that degree you're going against the lesson plan [11, 10].

Confidentiality to me is the same thing as deceit. It's finding someone else to join me in my deceit, because if I'm entering into something with someone else that I wouldn't enter into with my teacher, or other members of the class, then I'm creating an unnatural circumstance there. It's certainly less than objective or more than objective, whichever way you want to look at it, and it becomes a relationship that was not an assignment [11, 10].

It was therefore against the rules to "con" someone in the community into having a "special relationship":

It's easy to bring into a classroom that habit of needing a confidant, or needing someone to have a close relationship with, even though you may not be looking for a physical or sensuous relationship. But in a sense, our Father's Kingdom says, "I'm it. If you're going to get into My Kingdom, I have to be *it*. I have to be satisfactory to you. What I offer you has to be satisfactory. It has to be all you want [9, 9].

Do claimed to be the crew's Father or Older Member [21, 3]. Putting a new spin on the old image of the church as the Bride of Christ, he regarded his "classroom" as his "faithful wife, faithful in all behavior, faithful in all belief and practice" [13, 19]. Although he claimed to be subordinate to Ti in the "chain of mind," eyewitness accounts suggest it was Do who usually "called the shots."[53]

THE TRIUMPH OF SIMPLE OBEDIENCE

Do was an astute psychologist. One would *have* to be to get scores of people to submit to a capriciously changing round of ascetic practices, to be constantly in a state of intense eschatological expectation for over twenty years, and in the end to commit suicide while still in the prime of life. He was well aware of the influence he had over his students.

When we're changing from the human kingdom into our Father's Kingdom, we lose our identity a number of times along the way. We become a different individual. . . . And I'm sure that it could have certain drawbacks. I'm sure that as some of the class members visited with their family, their family could say, "I don't know this person anymore". . . . I'm afraid that they would be right [12, 3].

His students, too, realized that their lives had changed. They said to themselves, "I'm losing the programming [of my previous life]. I'm being

led through, step-by-step, destroying the old programming and realizing that it is not true, that over here is the truth" [12, 4].

Do's demands seemed excessive to outsiders. Like other messiahs, he asked people to leave everything to follow him. But careful observers like Balch and Taylor note that the burden Do imposed on his crew was relatively light. Very few left children, expensive homes, or good jobs behind. Most early followers were too young, too "footloose and fancy free" to have many "responsibilities in Luci's world." Some had experienced such unhappy relationships that giving up sex and personal intimacies was a small sacrifice. One young devotee put it this way:

> I gave up a lot to come on this trip, man. I gave up my record collection, a set of tools, my old lady [girl friend]. But it's not the first record collection I've given up, and it's not the first set of tools. And I've had eight old ladies.[54]

For those who stayed with him, Do's redefinitions of reality and obligation finally prevailed. In the end, he succeeded in putting together a crew obedient unto death. The following testimonies are taken from the crew's farewell statements. Whether they represent what crew members really felt, or what they thought they were *supposed* to feel, we will never know.

> Nrrody: Ti and Do and the Next Level are my life. Without them, there is nothing—literally. Nothing else is real [22, 2].

> Stmody: I am totally dependent on them for everything and am better off because of it. I am lost without them, and only someone who doesn't know them would see this dependency as a sign of weakness [24, 1].

> Slvody: No matter what I did or how involved with the world I got, I always "ran a low-grade depression" and felt separate from those around me [28, 3]. I know there is nothing for me in the world; my only life is with my Older Members. I know that the only reason that I have life is because the Next Level and my Older Members gave me the deposit that began my soul [28, 4].

> Glnody: I know that what Ti and Do have taught is the *only* reality [29, 2].

> Lvvody: Now that I was connected with my Teachers, I knew I was safe—in their hands and the Next Level's safe-keeping. There was no more fear [30, 5].

Ti and Do garnered these accolades because they were genuinely loved and respected. Like other successful religious leaders, they knew how to exercise authority without appearing dictatorial. They also mastered the fine art of religious entertainment. Several crew members recalled how much "fun" it was to be around them. To their students, they exemplified all of the virtues of the World Above Human:

> They realize that they could be wrong, so they are careful to qualify what they say and hesitate to make quick judgments. Their approach is straightforward and honest, without deception. They are respectful of others, without allowing familiarity. They are thoughtfully restrained in all their actions and words, without impulsiveness. They are refined in all they do, without haughtiness. They are positive and optimistic, turning each situation to an advantage. They are cheerful and pleasant, without being saccharine. . . . They are consistently clean, neat, sensitive, and gentle, never lowering their standards [Slvody in 28, 2].

Cults not only abandon the world; they are also expelled from it by the mainstream. The relationship of the world to the cult is therefore a joint venture of "ins" and "outs," the respectable and the deviant. This interaction is a crucial variable that determines whether the group becomes self-destructive and/or aggressive toward the outside world, or whether it remains innocuously on the sidelines of society.

If a sect is a spoof on the monastic discipline of the church, a cult is, willy-nilly, a parody, or better yet, a pastiche of religious beliefs and practices long forgotten by the mainstream.[55] Playfully reinventing Christianity's Salvation Syndrome and basic values, Heaven's Gate reworked the religion at all levels.[56] Its suicidal "beaming up" was not only a blasphemous burlesque of the traditional idea of "dying and going to heaven." It exposed the weirdness of biblical apocalypticism itself. The group's voluntary castrations and asexuality—not without parallel in historic Christianity—made light of the religion's traditional glorification of celibacy and otherworldliness. Finally, its doctrine of "flexibility" was a parody of the traditional biblical-ecclesiastical ethic of obedience, a parody that ultimately threatened to draw attention to the dangers of clergy dependency.[57]

Deviant movements often cross their Rubicon when they realize they have been rejected by the world, or when the state intervenes in their affairs. At this point, some become openly aggressive or self-destructive. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Heaven's Gate was derided by the outside world. Even avuncular Walter Cronkite belittled them on the "CBS Evening News." Once, after struggling with hecklers in a public meeting, Ti suddenly stood up and announced that the doors to the Next Level had been closed.[58] After this, the group began to close in on itself. When crew members resurfaced in 1992, they discovered that the Internet was a perfect way to "get the information out." But, in the end, interaction with outsiders via computer increased Do's sense of alienation. When he posted his "'95 Statement by an E.T. Presently Incarnate," the reaction was quick and ugly. Ridiculed and rejected, Do felt he had been given the signal to begin his "preparations to return 'home'" [14, 7]. In January 1997, members of the group attended a UFO conference in Laughlin, Nevada. What they heard there was virtually the Last Trumpet summoning them to the Level Above Human.

Lee Shargel, who claimed to be a former NASA scientist, announced that behind the comet Hale-Bopp there was a space probe sent by loving aliens from the planet Chulos, orbiting the star Vega. The good aliens would "evict" the bad aliens who have been lurking around Earth since the crash of a UFO at Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947.[59]

CONCLUSIONS

> Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey. . . ?
>
> Romans 6:16

Religious suicide is sometimes an awesome moral achievement. One thinks, for example, of the Jews who committed suicide at Masada, or of the Buddhist monks who immolated themselves to protest the war in Vietnam. But in other cases religious suicide seems tragic, stupid, or absurd. Sometimes it turns out to be a trump card played by the messiah who, instead of dying a martyr's death, lives to see his prophecies disconfirmed, his flock "turned off" by his own apocalyptic "rap," or the police at the door. Religious suicide can also be a way to cover up the delay of the *parousia* and the failure of other messianic promises.

To those not "of the household of faith," religious suicide remains an unfathomable mystery. Looked at "from within," from the messiah's own eschatological point of view, the end is just the *beginning*. This, of course, was precisely what Do himself believed: death was to be the beginning of a joyful voyage aboard a UFO to the Level Above Human. Even if we can grasp this religious inversion of "reality" intellectually, questions abound: How could *anyone* get people to overcome the basic instinct of self-preservation and take their own lives? How could people *ever* follow a man who explicitly warned that his mission was to "shorten their days"?

In the face of these mind-boggling questions, the analysis I have presented in this essay is only a partial or preliminary explanation of religious suicide. I have simply presented the metaethical or disciplinary framework used by Do for his "transvaluation of all values." The answer to the question of why certain people (but not others) chose to obey Do and die with him awaits more detailed research into the lives of these followers before and after they met The Two.

Cults typically demand of their members "total commitment and total energy," as one of Heaven's Gate's own documents puts it [23, 1]. The intensity of the group is largely a function of three things. First, its "skin," that is, the boundary between the religious system and its social environment. Generally speaking, the thicker its skin, the more intense

life within the group becomes; the more "porous" it is, the more relaxed the group will be—and the more compromised and sullied by "the world." What determines the thickness of this skin is primarily the attitude of the cult and the world toward each other. Generally speaking, world rejection by the cult and cult rejection by the world make for a thicker cultic skin. Parody of the mainstream by the cult creates what could be called "mainstream-resentment and rejection."[60] This, in turn, causes the cult to grow a thicker, defensive epidermis. The other two variables directly effecting the intensity and trajectory of cults are: 1) the mental health and charisma of their leaders, and 2) the groups' internal ethic and ethos.[61] In this paper, I have concentrated primarily on the latter, i.e., the ethical praxis of Heaven's Gate. But each of the three factors of intensity just mentioned plays an essential role in the explanation of cultic behavior in general, and of cultic suicide in particular. Not all intense religious movements become deviant and, likewise, not all ethical systems of obedience result in aggressive or self-destructive behavior. The religious obedience of Orthodox Jews and Catholic monks, for example, seldom entails perceptible "negative externalities" or significant "collateral damage." In general, obedient religious groups that graft themselves directly or indirectly into the stock of settled, ambient communities—especially by "compromising with the world"—seem to be the least likely to go astray. But religiously obedient movements that cut themselves off from "the world," ones led by gurus suffering from paranoia, sado-masochism, schizophrenia, and criminal tendencies, or by messiahs who manipulate the trust and obedience of their followers in order to transform them into docile, deployable agents—these groups are a different matter altogether. They are and will continue to be a problem for society and their own members alike.

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30. Lvvody. Ingredients of a Deposit—Becoming a New Creature. 6 pp. Available: <http://levelabovehuman.org/book/a-5.htm>. Accessed 1 May 1997.

ENDNOTES

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987), 114.

[2] The word "cult" is a hybrid concept with roots in journalism, sociology, religious studies, and law. For many years, I avoided using it, considering it too amorphous and prejudicial for use in the academic study of religion. Recently, however, I have concluded that society and scholarship probably *do* need a term for marginal, innovative, demanding, highly intense new religious movements engaging in criminal or self-destructive behavior. It is in

this sense only that I use the word in this essay. Given this definition, it would be circular or tautological to say that a group has become criminal or self-destructive *because* it is a cult.

[3] Kevin Sullivan, "Japan Cult Thrives While Guru Is Jailed," *Washington Post* (Sunday, 28 September 1997): A–21.

[4] See Keith A. Roberts, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1984), 136–58, and Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Brainwashing and Totalitarian Influence," in *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*, Vol. 1, ed. V. S. Ramachandran (San Diego: Academic Press, 1994), 457–71. In two hard-hitting essays, Benjamin Zablocki recently has tried to revive the concept of brainwashing: "The Blacklisting of a Concept: The Strange History of the Brainwashing Conjecture in the Sociology of Religion," *Nova Religio* 1, no. 1 (October 1997): 96–121; and "Exit Cost Analysis: A New Approach to the Scientific Study of Brainwashing," *Nova Religio* 1, no. 2 (April 1998): 216–49. For a journalistic overview of the controversy, see Charlotte Allen, "Brainwashed! Scholars of Cults Accuse Each Other of Bad Faith," *Lingua franca* 8, no. 9 (Dec./Jan., 1999): 28–36.

[5] Anson D. Shupe, Jr. and David G. Bromley, *The New Vigilantes* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980), 30.

[6] Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 420.

[7] Robert Jay Lifton, one of the founding fathers of brainwashing theory, explicitly rejects the idea that brainwashing is "an all-powerful, irresistible, unfathomable, and magical method of achieving total control over the human mind." *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), 4.

[8] Zablocki, "Exit Cost Analysis," 221. Lifton calls this "the psychology of the pawn" (Lifton, *Thought Reform*, 423).

[9] Lifton, *Thought Reform*, ch. 22.

[10] Vincent Bugliosi, with Curt Gentry, *Helter Skelter* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), 179.

[11] Robert W. Balch, "'When the Light Goes Out, Darkness Comes': A Study of Defection from a Totalistic Cult," in *Religious Movements: Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers*, ed. Rodney Stark (New York: Paragon, 1985), 50.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Raised a Baptist, Nettles became a member of the Houston Theosophical Society and "belonged to a meditation group that channeled messages from discarnate spirits." Robert W. Balch, "Waiting for the Ships: Disillusionment and the Revitalization of Faith in Bo and Peep's UFO Cult," in *The Gods Have Landed: New Religions from Other Worlds*, ed. James R. Lewis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 141.

[14] Ibid., 151.

[15] Brad Steiger and Hayden Hewes, *Inside Heaven's Gate: The UFO Cult Leaders Tell Their Story in Their Own Words* (New York: Signet, 1997), 44.

[16] Balch, "Waiting for the Ships," 138.

[17] Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 9.

[18] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 55.

[19] Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, trans., Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (New York: Free Press, 1952), 319.

[20] For the history of the concept of responsibility, see my translation and introduction to Georg Picht's "The Concept of Responsibility," in *Religion* 28 (1998): 185–203 and my essay, "Max Weber on Religion and Political Responsibility," *Religion* 29 (1999): 29–60.

[21] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 2:589, 608, 617–19.

[22] Ibid., 1:108.

[23] Ibid., 1:132.

[24] H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 77–156.

[25] See my "Max Weber on Religion and Political Responsibility."

[26] Do also showed no interest in casuistry, i.e., situational or complex obedience.

[27] Balch, "Waiting for the Ships," 139. Space aliens were believed to be vampire-like beings who invade this world "to acquire the relatively young, virile human DNA which they use as part of a hybridization process, to produce the bodies that they need. . . . The accounts of human abductees [by UFO's] tend to verify this activity, as they reportedly describe the extracting of human sperm, eggs, and even fetuses for this purpose" [Jwnody in 25, 4].

[28] Balch, "Waiting for the Ships," 143.

[29] Ibid., 149.

[30] One strange thing about Heaven's Gate was its lack of traditional religious rituals. Members of the group did not seem to worship together. Some might think that their practice of "tuning in" or "straining for a connection" with approaching spacecraft or the will of the Fathers was the functional equivalent of meditation. But, in fact, it was more like an attempt to screw one's imagination—and loyalty—to the sticking point (to corrupt Shakespeare).

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 154.

[33] Ibid., 158.

[34] Ibid., 160.

[35] See Frederick Bird, "The Pursuit of Innocence: New Religious Movements and Moral Accountability," *Sociological Analysis* 40, no. 4 (1979): 335–46.

[36] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), 271.

[37] Ibid., 279.

[38] In "'When the Light Goes Out'," Balch has done an excellent job documenting the existence of doubt and cognitive deviance in Heaven's Gate even after The Two established their magisterium.

[39] The few times Do touched on social or political issues, his instincts seemed to be thoroughly conservative. "It's so ridiculous for any minority group to want equal time, want no inhibiting factors placed upon them, whether it be gays, or women's rights, or other races. And yet, they are the ones, by their mere preaching, that insist on that consciousness. If I am a black person who is insisting on black rights, then I am the racist" [12, 16].

[40] Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber*, 326.

[41] Robert Balch, "Bo and Peep: A Case Study of the Origins of Messianic Leadership," in *Millennialism and Charisma*, ed. Roy Wallis (Belfast: The Queen's University, 1982), 43.

[42] Ibid., 159.

[43] Steiger and Hewes, *Inside Heaven's Gate*, 113–4.

[44] Do believed in a pyramid-shaped pantheon of Older and Younger Members of the Level Above Human culminating in the "Chief of Chiefs," or God [10, 3].

[45] One salient anti-Protestant element was their rejection of the Lutheran doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Do believed that this was a Pauline distortion of the message of Jesus. Jesus allegedly taught Do's own "overcoming formula," i.e., salvation "by (ascetic) works" [24, 4].

[46] In addition to implanting these "chips," the Evolutionary Level Above Human "even wrote the program mapping out the circuitry for the spectrum of human choices" [Jwnody, in 26, 1].

[47] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1963), 64.

[48] Robert W. Balch, "Bo and Peep," 46.

[49] Philip Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960).

[50] Manipulating the names, diets, and sexual relations of members is common in many high intensity movements. David Koresh and Jim Jones infamously tinkered with the sexual lives of their followers. Koresh regulated the Davidians' diet, sometimes allowing them to eat bananas, oranges, and raisins, while forbidding oranges and grapes at the same meal. More ominous were the "white nights" and "suicide drills" at Jonestown. These practices obviously helped to implement an ethos of simple obedience.

[51] For the role of masochism in religious movements, see Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 74.

[52] Here, the praxis of Heaven's Gate approximates what Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 143, calls "the principle of elementary location or *partitioning*." "Avoid distribution in groups; break up collective dispositions; analyze confused, massive or transient pluralities. . . . One must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals . . . their unusable and dangerous coagulation." As in the prisons studied by Foucault, Do's use of "partitioning" resulted in an "individualizing pyramid." (p. 220; see also p. 238). The ultimate significance of the "cells" and "places" within the pyramid? "They guarantee the obedience of individuals, but also a better economy of time and gesture" (p. 148).

[53] Balch, "Bo and Peep," 37, 39, 51.

[54] Robert W. Balch and David Taylor, "Seekers and Saucers: The Role of the Cultic Milieu in Joining a UFO Cult," *American Behavioral Scientist* 20, no. 6 (July/August 1997): 848. See also Balch, "Waiting for the Ships," 101.

[55] Fredric Jameson points out that pastiche does not have parody's ulterior motive, satirical impulse, laughter, or "feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic." To indulge in pastiche is "to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum." Pastiche is therefore an "allusive and elusive plagiarism of older plots." ("Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster [Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983], 114, 115, 117).

[56] For the idea of "Salvation Syndromes," see my *Dojo: Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 129–32 and passim.

[57] In the weeks after the suicides, clerics throughout the country tried to distance themselves and their flocks from "the crazies." Throughout the land, preachers used the folly of the cult to proclaim the wisdom of traditional institutional religion. In the small town in Virginia where I live, a sign immediately went up in front of a fundamentalist church on Main Street saying "You can't get to heaven on Hale-Bopp."

[58] Balch, "Waiting for the Ships," 154.

[59] Ibid.

[60] In *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche brilliantly exposed the resentment of the underclass. He failed to point out that, since few members of the upper class are Overmen, resentment also rears its ugly head in mainstream religion and culture, especially when cherished ideals are subjected to ridicule or parody.

[61] One of the most isolated cults in recent times—one with a very thick skin—was People's Temple. The Temple's compound in Guyana was also surrounded by a fence and armed guards. Jim Jones constantly warned his followers about the quicksand, poisonous snakes, and carnivorous frogs in the surrounding jungle. The Manson Family was equally isolated. "There were no newspapers at Spahn Ranch, no clocks. Cut off from the rest of society, [Manson] created in this timeless land a tight little society of his own, with its own value system. It was holistic, complete, and totally at odds with the world outside" (See Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, 655).

The Devil at Heaven's Gate: Rethinking the Study of Religion in the Age of Cyber-Space

Hugh B. Urban

Since this is the close of the Age, the battle in the Heavens with their servants on Earth will be the means of that closing and the spading under of the plants (including the humans) of this civilization. "Weeds" are now getting rid of weeds—from gang wars to nations involved in ethnic cleansing. This is simply a part of the natural recycling process which precedes a restoration period of the planet in preparation for another civilization's beginning.

How and When Heaven's Gate (the Door to the Next Level Above the Human) May Be Entered (HG I, 11)[1]

Messianic hope was based on the *reality* of the Apocalypse. But this latter has no more reality than the original Big Bang. . . . Our Apocalypse is not real, it is *virtual.* And it's not in the future, it is *here and now.*

Jean Baudrillard, "Hysteresis of the Millennium"[2]

Some eighteen years ago, the respected historian of religions, Jonathan Z. Smith, delivered an influential paper entitled "The Devil in Mr. Jones." The subject of Smith's paper was the profoundly disturbing mass suicide of some 914 members of the Peoples Temple, led by the Reverend James Warren Jones, in Jonestown, Guyana, in 1978. For his entrée into this troubling and perplexing phenomenon, Smith reminds us that the academic study of religions was born largely during the era of the European Enlightenment. As a product of the Enlightenment quest for rational understanding and humanistic tolerance, the study of religion has a fundamental duty to try to make some kind of coherent sense of even the most seemingly senseless of religious events:

Simply put, the academic study of religion is a child of the Enlightenment. . . . [R]eligion was domesticated; it was transformed from pathos to ethos. . . .

> [R]eligion was brought within the realm of common sense. . . . Rediscovering the old tag "nothing human is foreign to me," the Enlightenment impulse was one . . . which refused to leave any human datum including religion beyond the pale of understanding, beyond the realm of reason. As students of religion we have become stubbornly committed to making the attempt . . . at achieving intelligibility. We must accept the burden of the long hard road of understanding. To do less is to forfeit our license to practice in the academy.[3]

Indeed, Smith even suggests that the Jonestown incident really poses the ultimate challenge to the historian of religions: precisely because of its seeming irrationality, incomprehensibility, and shocking enigma, it poses the greatest threat to an academic discipline that claims to make rational sense out of all religious phenomena: "One might claim that Jonestown was the most important single event in the history of religions, for if we continue to leave it un-understandable, we will have surrendered our rights to the academy."[4]

In the article that follows, I will undertake the study of what seems, at first glance, to be a phenomenon very similar to that of the Jonestown suicides—namely, the now quite infamous case of the mass suicide of the "Heaven's Gate" community in March of 1997. Not unlike the Jonestown suicides, Heaven's Gate involved the collective, apparently voluntary deaths of some thirty-nine men and women at the command of a rather enigmatic religious leader, Marshall Applewhite, who claimed to be taking them to the "Next Level" or the kingdom of heaven. And not unlike the Jonestown case, the "religious significance" of these deaths has continued to frustrate, perplex, and tantalize contemporary historians of religions, remaining one of the great enigmas for us "children of the Enlightenment."[5]

While I would by no means belittle the importance of Smith's insights, I will argue that his means of approach and many of his conclusions are perhaps no longer relevant to our own profoundly postmodern situation in late twentieth-century, late capitalist America. It may well be true that the history of religions was originally a "child of the Enlightenment," yet its filial ties to its Enlightenment patrimony appear to have become increasingly tenuous as we enter the final stages of our own distinctly late capitalist era. Indeed, if we are in some sense children of the Enlightenment, then we are also surely *incestuous bedfellows with our shunned half-siblings, technology, postmodernism, and consumer capitalism.*[6] As Sam Gill has recently argued, the new world of technology is profoundly transforming not only the objects of the history of religions, with the rise of technological, on-line religions such as Heaven's Gate; it is now transforming the very way in which we conduct our scholarship, forcing us more and more to enter the ethereal world of hyperspace in order to conduct our research and to teach our students. Today we plunge headlong into a world increasingly saturated with technologically manufactured simulations and endlessly reproduced and instantly

manipulated images, which seem to dissolve our most cherished Enlightenment categories of the real and the imaginary, the original and the copy, rational order and the irrational play of signifiers.[7]

Religious phenomena such as the Heaven's Gate suicides, I will argue, probably cannot be narrowly circumscribed within the traditional Enlightenment concepts of reason and understanding. They may very well turn out to be quite meaningless and seemingly incomprehensible when scrutinized with the all-seeing eye of Enlightenment rationality. Instead, I would suggest that we need to employ certain distinctly post-enlightenment hermeneutic tools, particularly those dealing with the rapidly expanding new realms of computer technology, global communications, and hypermedia.

Using some insights drawn from Jean Baudrillard, Fredric Jameson, and other critics of late capitalist "simulational culture,"[8] I will argue that Do and his followers in Heaven's Gate reflect the intense ambivalence and alienation shared by many individuals lost in late twentieth-century capitalist society. In a world in which the boundary between the real and the imaginary, the original and the simulation, or the human body and the computer screen, is growing increasingly blurred, the search for ultimate meaning, or even a coherent personal identity, often becomes more complex, even seemingly futile. Very much a technologically based religion, whose members actually worked firsthand in the cyber realm as Web-page designers, Heaven's Gate seems to have offered a loving, human community and an alternative source of personal identity amidst the seemingly cold and sterile world of hyperspace.

In many respects, Heaven's Gate would appear to be the ultimate postmodern pastiche and the ideal spirituality for the age of hypertext: it is in a sense a religion perfectly suited to the age of "simulation," in Baudrillard's sense of a technologically reproduced sign which comes to appear "hyperreal," or more real than the "real" object it represents. As a remarkable fusion of simulated images and sound bytes borrowed from an enormous range of sources, from the Book of Revelation to "Star Trek," the on-line religion of Heaven's Gate became for its members more real, more meaningful, and more true than the "real" world itself. Not only were the members Web-site designers themselves, but the very theological language they employed was saturated with the discourse of computer technology: human beings are "vehicles" equipped with mental hardware and implanted with computer chips that must be properly "reprogrammed" through religious training. Finally, with its ideal of mastering the bodily "vehicle," transcending sexual desire, and ascending into a supra-material cyberspace world, Heaven's Gate was a religion that seemed ideally suited to the "processed life" of the late twentieth-century cyborg/human.[9]

Yet at the same time, if Applewhite and his followers in Heaven's Gate were very much products of the technological age, they were also

profoundly ambivalent, even hostile in their attitude toward contemporary American society, government, and big business. Indeed, they were deeply suspicious of what Baudrillard calls "*la société de la consommation*"—a late capitalist world in which consumption is all-important, in which images of wealth, power, youth, and sex are bound together in a seductive, endless circle of media advertisements and artificial desires. Viewing contemporary American society as utterly corrupt and ruled by the Luciferian forces of capitalism and greed, the members of Heaven's Gate saw no hope beyond a millennial destruction. Not unlike Baudrillard in his early, most pessimistic work such as *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Applewhite and his followers saw only one real way out of the vicious circle of the late capitalist consumer code: the most extreme act of mass suicide, the most shocking act of death which puts a brutal stop to the otherwise endless circle of seduction and consumption.[10]

In short, Heaven's Gate provides us with a striking insight into some of the deepest contradictions of religion in the age of cyberspace. On the one hand, the new technologies open up new possibilities to create alternative spiritual communities, seemingly egalitarian social groups with the promise of a new selfhood freed from the hierarchies of race, class, and gender in mainstream society. On the other hand, however, the group reveals the threat of losing one's identity, even losing a sense of the "real" itself amidst the bewildering play of endlessly reproduced simulations. It is in precisely this sense that they pose the greatest challenge to the historian of religions—not as yet another datum to be comprehended within the scope of Enlightenment rationality, but rather as a striking example of the impact of technology upon religious belief, upon spiritual communities, and upon the very concept of human identity.

ECSTASY ON-LINE: RELIGION, THE NEW AGE, AND HYPERSPACE

> {D}igitalization is its metaphysical principle (the God of Leibnitz) and DNA its prophet.
>
> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*[11]

Since at least the time of Max Weber, a great many scholars have lamented the destructive potential of modern Western technology for traditional religious belief. In an increasingly bureaucratized, industrialized, and now computerized world, a world dominated more by the media and the marketplace than by the pulpit, there would seem to be little room left for real piety or spiritual fervor. As more pessimistic schol-

ars like Daniel Bell argue, the coming of post-industrial society, or capitalism in its advanced stage, has ushered in an era of generalized "secularization of culture, namely by the death of God, the loss of a sense of hell and the collapse of traditional systems of salvation":

> The real problem of modernity is the problem of belief. Secular systems of meaning have proved illusory solutions to the spiritual crisis once the anchorage of society in religion has been severed . . . [There is] a void in belief . . . which the aesthetic justification of life with its emphasis on hedonism and self-expression is incapable of filling.[12]

Such fears have become all the more intense as we enter the era of global communications and the new media technologies, which seem to dissolve all traditional institutional hierarchies and absorb even the most remote and undeveloped villages across the planet into the ever-expanding network of global capitalism. As Bryan S. Turner puts it, "The corruption of pristine faith is going to be brought about by Tina Turner and Coca Cola and not by rational arguments."[13]

And yet, as more optimistic scholars such as Mike Featherstone have persuasively argued, the spread of Western consumer capitalism throughout the globe does not necessarily sound the death knell of religion. On the contrary, a growing number of new and alternative religions, as well as new spins on old traditions, have found some remarkably innovative ways to "capitalize," as it were, on the new technologies and marketing strategies of modern big business, to adapt and in fact to flourish within the volatile world of late capitalism. The sacred continues to survive and reappear in various ways throughout consumer culture, often by "sacralizing" the most secular aspects of the late capitalist world itself, including consumer commodities, business structures, and new media technologies:

> Modernity, with its processes of rationalization, commodification, secularization and disenchantment does not lead to the eclipse of religious sentiments, for while formal religions may decline, symbolic classifications and ritual practices . . . live on at the heart of the secular social processes. As Durkheim pointed out, anything can become sacred, so why not the "profane" goods of capitalism? . . . [C]ommodities . . . can become de-commodified and receive a symbolic charge (over and above that intended by advertisers) which makes them sacred to their users.[14]

Indeed, one might even argue that there is a strange kind of "fit" between many of the new religious movements (NRMs) and late capitalist, hyper-technological society—a fit not unlike that of Weber's Protestant ethic and early modern capitalism. More and more we seem to be witnessing the rise of alternative spiritual forms—from Christian televangelism to Scientology to self-help gurus like Deepak Chopra and

his cohorts—that seem not only compatible with, but ideally suited to the ever-changing and endlessly transformable world of mass communications and high technology.[15] For, as Jennifer Terry and Melodie Calvert point out, all forms of technology are capable of being "appropriated differently than their original design intended and creatively extended or subverted by particular users under particular historical and political circumstances."[16] Hence, even the most seemingly secular and irreligious of technological media, even the most material hardware of late capitalist society, have the potential to be appropriated and transformed into technologies of the sacred.

Nowhere is this adaptation to technology more apparent than in the realm of the World Wide Web—a medium which has increasingly become the forum of choice for many burgeoning young NRMs. The role of technology in general, and of the World Wide Web in particular, is still one of the least explored areas of the New Age; indeed, many NRMs appear to have capitalized upon and exploited the possibilities of the Internet in ways that have left the rest of us decades behind. First and most obviously, the Web provides a new and extremely effective means of spreading the word, of marketing a new religious message to a vast global audience, all relatively inexpensively. Anyone with server access, Adobe Photoshop, and a small amount of computer savvy can now advertise his or her spiritual wares alongside major corporations such as AT&T and Coca Cola.

Second and perhaps more profound, however, are the implications of the Internet for personal identity, status and social roles. As a great many advocates of the Web have argued, the anonymity of the Internet offers the user the potential to experience a new identity, to engage in personal exploration and social interaction relatively free of normal hierarchies and social prejudices. Offering the ability to log on without any indication of one's gender, race, or physical appearance, the Internet presents remarkable new possibilities for the imagining and re-imagining of the self: "the possibility of browsing information anonymously with no login nickname," as Nina Wakeford comments, "means that a basic feature of identity (re)creation which elsewhere structures the negotiations of risk and trust . . . is absent for most Web users."[17]

Indeed, the Internet has been hailed by some as the potential locus, not only for a new individual identity, but for participation in an alternative social space—one freed from the hierarchies of class, wealth, and gender that structure mainstream social spaces. With its ability to unite individuals from all points of the globe, irrespective of geographic boundaries, age, sex, or race, the World Wide Web, according to its more optimistic advocates, also holds the potential to create new "virtual communities." Indeed, some have even created their own alternative religious communities and virtual ritual spaces, in which individuals vastly separated in physical space can enter virtual temples and other sacred

spaces to participate in on-line ceremonial gatherings.[18] According to its most celebratory proponents like George Landow, the new hyper-technologies offer a radical "engine of personal and political trans-formation"—a radically democratizing, anti-totalitarian force which, in keeping with the larger intellectual trends of deconstruction and post-structuralism, knocks down hierarchies of wealth, race, and gender, ultimately empowering those who are typically disempowered in mainstream society.[19] As another optimistic web-enthusiast puts it,

> Life in cyberspace . . . is more egalitarian than elitist, more de-centered than hierarchical. . . . Life in cyberspace seems to be shaping up exactly like Thomas Jefferson would have wanted: founded on the practice of individual liberty and a commitment to pluralism, diversity and community.[20]

Of course, there have also been far more skeptical, cynical, and pessimistic critics of the new technology, who find these utopian pretensions of hypertext theory self-deluded and perhaps even dangerous. As a variety of recent observers have commented, the Internet—like computer technology in general—opens up vast new potential for both oppression and liberation, both capitalist exploitation and personal empowerment. "Digital reality contains alternative possibilities towards emancipation and domination," as Arthur and Marilouise Kroker put it.[21] If it can be used for more democratic and egalitarian ends, there is also no doubt that it can and increasingly is being used as yet anther extension of consumer capitalism to all points of the globe and all aspects of human consciousness. Indeed, the more pessimistic critics have even forewarned that the Internet signals the end of communication and even of human bodily experience as we know it, with the dissolution of all reality into the hyperreal world of computer simulations and simulacra.

> The virtual communities formed on the Internet allow people to be whomever they want, freed of the physical constraints of corporeality, geographical confinement and socially inscribed identities. . . . However, this anonymity and fluidity also have a price—the possibility of losing true identity.[22]

As we will see in what follows, the Heaven's Gate suicides throw many of these issues surrounding the new technology and religion, the New Age and the World Wide Web, into stunning, often frightening, bold relief.

A "TWISTED THEOLOGY" OR A RELIGION FOR LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA?: THE HISTORY AND BELIEFS OF HEAVEN'S GATE

We watch a lot of Star Trek , a lot of Star Wars; it's just . . . like going on a holodeck . . . now it's time to stop. The game's over. It's time to put into practice what we've learned. We take off the virtual reality helmet . . . go back out of the holodeck to be with . . . the other members of the craft in the heavens.

Thomas Nichols, brother of Michelle Nichols, who played Lieutenant Uhura on "Star Trek"[23]

Since the world drives to a delirious state of things, we must drive to a delirious point of view.

Jean Baudrillard, *La Transparence du Mal*[24]

Perhaps the most perplexing aspect of the Heaven's Gate phenomenon is simply its enigmatic history and its remarkable belief system. An elaborate combination of Christian theology (largely drawn from the Book of Revelation), various New Age teachings, UFO speculations, conspiracy theories, and popular television programs such as "Star Trek" and the "X-Files," Heaven's Gate has typically been characterized by the media in fairly derogatory and dismissive terms: as a "twisted theology,"[25] as an "X-Files" meets Revelation stew" and "a dense and jumbled universe of UFOs and extraterrestrials careening smack into unusual astronomical happenings, apocalyptic Christian heresies and end-is-nigh paranoia,"[26] as a "bizarre cybercult" comprised of "cultural fluff," spawned "out where religion and junk culture meet,"[27] and as "a world view on the furthest fringes of millennialism, with disconnected elements of Christianity interpreted through a thick lens of science fiction."[28]

The founder and now quite infamous leader of Heaven's Gate—whom most Americans know from the wild-eyed, rather alarming images of him taken from his farewell video and reprinted throughout major newspapers—was Marshall Herff Applewhite, alias "Bo" or "Do." The son of a Presbyterian minister in Texas, Applewhite has been described by some as a kind of "Mr. Rogers" character. Good-looking, with a powerful singing voice, he taught as a music professor at the University of Alabama in the 1960s, living as a conventional family man with a wife and two kids. His marriage, however, would eventually break up, and he would be forced to leave Alabama because of the scandalous rumors of his homosexual tendencies.[29] In the late 1960s, he taught music at the University of St. Thomas, a Roman Catholic school in Houston—a job

which he was also forced to leave in 1970 because of his apparent emotional problems and depression. Eventually, he would have himself hospitalized in the hope of being cured of his homosexual desires.

Applewhite's life changed dramatically, however, when he met a young nurse and dabbler in astrology named Bonnie Lu Trusdale Nettles. Both deeply interested in alternative spiritualities, and finding in one another eternal soul mates, Nettles and Applewhite began to believe that they had been infused with heavenly spirits and were now the vehicles for some much higher divine purpose on this earth. As a sign of their transformation, they adopted new names for each other like Tiddly and Wink, Guinea and Pig, Nincom and Poop, and later, Do and Ti. Ultimately, however, they came to regard themselves simply as "the Two"—a reference to the two witnesses mentioned in the Book of Revelation who were prophesied to appear at the end of the world in order to prepare the way for the Kingdom of Heaven.

In 1975, the couple (then calling themselves Bo and Peep) formed a religious group in Los Angeles whose primary goal was to leave the mortal world on a spaceship and journey to the "'Father's kingdom' in outer space." Members had to overcome earthly attachments to friends, family, jobs, and material possessions. By following the guidelines set down by Bo and Peep, these early followers hoped to become "immortal, androgynous beings complete with physical bodies that would be free of all human limitations." During this period, the group was infiltrated and studied from within by Montana sociologist Robert Balch, who traveled with members through California and Arizona. The followers, Balch reports, lived a nomadic existence journeying from one secluded campsite to another. Idle socializing within the group was discouraged, as was contact with the other campers. The main communication these followers had with the outside world was when they approached ministers and local merchants for handouts, and during public presentations of their message.[30]

The movement faltered when Ti died of cancer in 1985—an event which seems to have driven Applewhite into a deep depression and further amplified his urgent sense of the coming apocalypse. Applewhite and his followers disappeared from public sight for the next eight years, spending part of that time at an isolated compound built of old tires and lumber (their "Earth Ship") in the New Mexico desert.[31] But they suddenly resurfaced again in 1993 bearing the new title of "Heaven's Gate," advertising the movement in highly visible national magazines like *Rolling Stone* and *USA Today*, and offering a "last chance to advance beyond the human." By 1994, the community had rented itself a $7000-a-month estate owned by an Iranian businessman in Rancho Santa Fe, San Diego County.[32] Although their new home was equipped with such luxuries as an elevator, a jacuzzi, and a putting green, the Heaven's Gate members appear to have led a very spartan life in their home, living in

bunk beds, plastic chairs, and cheap furniture, and subsisting on bulk food and simple meals of pasta, lemonade, and diet coke. With the house as their base, they established their own lucrative small business as Web-site designers, offering cheap rates and efficient service under the name "Higher Source." Indeed, the members seem to have felt more at home in cyberspace than in the physical world and made impressive profits by designing sites for a variety of employers such as the San Diego Polo Club and "Keep the Faith," a Christian music Web site.

The membership of Heaven's Gate really seems to defy any reduction to stereotyped images of dysfunctional social outcasts lured into a brainwashing cult. Ranging in age from 26 to 72, the members came from backgrounds as diverse as former army paratroopers (Michael Barr Sandoe, 26), rock musicians (Darwin Lee Johnson, 42, of the band "Dharma Combat"), massage therapists (Jeffrey Howard Lewis, 41), computer trainers (Cheryl Butcher, 42), oyster men (Alan Bowers, 45), farm girls (Margaret Bull, 54), nurses (Julie la Montague, 45), bus drivers (Alphonso Foster, 44), artists (Robert Arancio, 45), and even car salesmen (Lindley Ayerhart Pease, 41). Indeed, the occupational, sexual, and racial profile of these thirty-nine individuals does not appear that much different from a sample cross-section of the American population as a whole.

Moreover, while it is true that some of the members—most notably Applewhite himself and the infamous survivor and narrator, Rio DiAngelo—came from troubled families and suffered various social dysfunctions, this does not appear to be true for the group as a whole. Many members were described as extremely normal, well-adjusted, and quite functional individuals leading ordinary, productive lives prior to their involvement with Heaven's Gate. For example, Cheryl Butcher is described as a shy, bright, self-taught computer expert, a perfect daughter, and a good student; likewise, Ladonna Brugato, a forty-year-old computer consultant, is said to have been a "girl next door simply trying to get by as single mom."[33]

By 1997, however, the movement seems to have taken a darker turn. After composing their own 223-page movie script describing their beliefs and calling others to join the move toward Heaven's Gate, the members failed repeatedly to sell the script in Hollywood (despite the fact that one Phoenix producer, Alex Papas, assured the members that their script would be a box office smash).[34] In response, they appear to have fallen into an increasingly suspicious, depressed, and paranoid state. Fearing another Waco and growing increasingly worried about FBI surveillance of their activities, they began to collect weapons, including five handguns, three rifles, and ammunition later found by the police in a warehouse near the mansion.[35] They began to speak more openly about the "weeds of Lucifer" or the "space aliens" who had overrun mankind, corrupting our government and religious institutions; and they also began to plead

more urgently that it was now time to depart from this world of sin, to ascend to the higher plane of the Next Level. The approach of the Hale Bopp comet—widely noted in New Age circles as an event of spiritual and cosmic proportions and one that happened to coincide roughly with Holy Week in the Christian calendar—suddenly appeared to offer the Heaven's Gate members the divine opportunity they had been awaiting: an astronomical omen signaling that it was now time to leave this world. They saw the comet as a herald of a coming spaceship from the heavenly Kingdom, sent to take them personally to the Next Level.

THE ECSTASY OF THE DECLINE: THE LAST SPREE OF CONSUMPTION

> The farewell tape looks like a garden party of the apocalypse, with the California sunshine and the trees in the mansion's backyard blowing in the breeze.
>
> Elizabeth Gleick, *"The Marker We've Been Waiting For"*[36]

The last several weeks before the Heaven's Gate suicides appear to have been a remarkable last fling or final spending spree before the community's ascent to the Next Level. This previously very ascetic and prudish group suddenly went on a kind of joyride of consumption, burning up virtually all of their substantial savings on a variety of seemingly frivolous trips and entertainments—movies, gambling, tourist trips, big meals, and nice hotels.

Indeed, one is more than a little reminded here of Baudrillard's phrase, "the Ecstasy of the decline" by which he means the "terminal stages of fading culture" or the giddy, morbid glee of a consumer society consuming itself and spinning ever faster into self-destructive oblivion.

Traveling to Las Vegas, the Heaven's Gate members stayed at the Stratosphere Hotel, where they spent much of their time playing the slot machines. Several members then took a bus trip to Santa Rosa and Sacramento, then onward to Oregon, running up some two thousand dollars in hotel bills. Their excursions included an outing to a wild animal park, where they spent eighty dollars on ice cream, and trips to Sea World and to the movies (to see *Star Wars*, one of their all-time favorites). On their last days, March 20 and 21, the formerly ascetic group went out to a steak house, where they spent $549, and then out to lunch, spending an additional $351. The last, rather cryptic entry in their account book was the finding of two cents on the street.

This wild spree appears to have culminated in the final act of "expenditure": the collective suicides of thirty-nine Heaven's Gate

members. So it was that on March 23, 1997, the first group of fifteen swallowed a fatal mixture of applesauce or pudding with pheno-barbital, washed down with vodka and helped along by the asphyxiating effect of a plastic bag over the head. The next day, March 24, a second group of fifteen died in the same manner. And on the third day, March 25, the remaining nine killed themselves, the first six in the same way as the others, and the last three—the ultimate angels of death—wearing only plastic bags over their heads. The suicides were remarkably well orchestrated and uniform: each body was dressed in a standard black shirt, black pants, brand new black Nikes, with their faces covered by purple shrouds. Those who wore glasses had laid them neatly folded by their side. Still more striking, however, is the rich trail of video and Internet information that the victims left behind including a detailed farewell video recorded by Applewhite and a colorful Web site urging its viewers to "leave the earth" now, before it is "recycled" and destroyed.

Rather ironically, it appears that the members of Heaven's Gate did have the foresight to purchase an insurance policy covering the possibility of alien abduction: for $1000, Goodfellow Rebecca Ingrams Pearson (GRIP) offered them a policy covering up to fifty members and providing $1 million per person for abduction, impregnation, or death caused by aliens (the same firm, it turns out, also insures virgins against immaculate conception, prostitutes from loss of earnings from headache and backache, conversion to werewolf or vampire, death or injury through paranormal activity, and unfaithful husbands against "Bobbitting").[37]

"X-FILES" MEETS REVELATION STEW? THE SPIRITUAL PASTICHE OF HEAVEN'S GATE

> Now reference and reality disappear altogether, and even meaning—the signified—is problematized. We are left with that pure and random play of signifiers that we call postmodernism, which no longer produces monumental works of the modernist type but ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts, the building blocks of older cultural productions, in some new . . . bricolage: metabooks which cannibalize other books.
>
> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*[38]

A fairly ingenious and imaginative mixture of traditional Christian theology with the space-age exploits of *Star Wars*, "Star Trek," and other elements of popular culture, the world of Heaven's Gate stands out as a superb example of the art of pastiche or *bricolage*. It is in this sense that I would suggest Heaven's Gate be regarded as a specially late capitalist

or postmodern religion—a religion not simply containing elements of syncretism or religious borrowing, but one essentially founded on the art of pastiche and the free-wheeling appropriation of a remarkably wide diversity of religious and cultural artifacts. It is very much, in Jameson's terms, comprised of the "fragments of preexistent texts, the building blocks of older cultural productions, in some new bricolage." As one author summarizes this rather remarkable fusion of traditional Christian faith and popular cultural mythology,

> Do's vision . . . was an odd mixture of Biblical apocalyptic, New Age mysticism and science fiction. . . . There were elements of Eastern religions, Islam, Mormonism, and scientology . . . Do's gospel evolved from a 1970's style UFO cult into a full blown sacred narrative. . . . But for all that, Do was very much in the American grain: a would-be prophet melding bits of this tradition and that into a desperate faith aimed at saving a tiny marginalized cult from impending world disaster.[39]

At the heart of the Heaven's Gate theology was the belief in a Kingdom of Heaven—a peaceful, transcendent other world, inhabited by the gods and situated at some unspecified location in outer space. The inhabitants of the Kingdom, it seems, had spread throughout the universe, planting the "gardens" of various civilizations with the "seeds" of human souls. When these seeds have grown and ripened, they then send a messenger or divine incarnation to "harvest" the good seeds from among their human crop. Two thousand years ago, the Kingdom had sent down the being now known as Jesus Christ in order to harvest the good seeds from among the human plants on this earth. Jesus, according to this rather eclectic theology, can also be described with the ("Star Trek" influenced) image of the "Captain," who was sent to this world with his "Away Team" to beam humankind up to the Next Level. Unfortunately, the Captain was killed, and his teachings were misunderstood, abused, and perverted by his later followers, who turned them into a kind of wealthy elitist "Country Club religion":

> Two thousand years ago, the Kingdom Level Above Human appointed an Older Member to send a Representative (His "Son") . . . to incarnate on this garden. . . . While on Earth as an "away team" with their "Captain," they were to work on their overcoming of humanness and tell the civilization how the true Kingdom of God can be entered. The . . . humans under control of the adversarial space races killed the Captain . . . and turned the teachings of the Captain . . . into watered-down Country Club religion (HG VI, 4).

The original message brought by the Captain or Christ was thus perverted by the evil race of "space aliens"—a group of demonic beings known in Christian mythology as the fallen angels led by Lucifer. Having slain the

first Captain and corrupted his teachings, they have subsequently insinuated themselves into virtually all of modern government, big business, and even religious institutions. Today, they control the entire world through a hidden network or "club" whose tentacles stretch throughout the globe, secretly running modern political, economic, and religious organizations, and assuming a quasi-divine status:

> Where the space aliens have a major stronghold in playing "God" is through those humans with the most power. The power is the strongest among the very rich and the very righteous (their self-styled religion) who accept that it is their ("God-given") responsibility to maintain the world's stability. . . . These powerful individuals have a loose-knit world-wide "club" that for the most part dictates who their primary "monopoly" players are—those leaders in the strong societies (HG I, 10).

With their twisted teachings purveyed under the name of politics and religion, the space aliens have brainwashed virtually all ignorant inhabitants of earth into being docile servants in their corrupt order. Only those who blindly obey the norms of society—marriage, children, economic productivity—are allowed to survive in this regime, while those who challenge it are labeled deviant subversive "cults" (like the Heaven's Gate "cult" itself):[40]

> (These space aliens) don't want themselves "found out". . . . They want you to be a perfect servant to society . . . to the "acceptable establishment," and to false religious concepts. Part of that "stay blinded" formula goes like this: "Above all, be married, a good parent, a reasonable church goer, buy a house . . . have a good line of credit, be socially committed, and graciously accept death with the hope that 'through His shed blood,' or some other worthless religious precept, you will go to Heaven after your death."
>
> Any little group that isn't naively, totally submissive to their social rules, or begins to see through this "control mechanism," or questions its rightness, is seen as subversive, radical, anti-social, a cult, treasonous—or "terrorists" (HG I, 10).

In order to save humankind from this oppressive, demonically programmed regime of the space aliens, the Kingdom of Heaven therefore sent a second away team in the final days of this century, to help harvest those few human souls who remained uncorrupted. This second away team became incarnate in the bodies of "the Two," Do and Ti, in order to lead the Heaven's Gate followers back to the next Level.

> Again an "away team" from the Level Above Human incarnated in the 1970s in the mature (adult) bodies that had been picked and prepped for this current mission. This time the "Admiral" (the Older Member, or "Father," incarnate in a female vehicle) came with the "Captain" and his crew (HG I, 7; cf. Intro, iii, vii).

As bizarre and perhaps silly as much of the Heaven's Gate theology might sound to most contemporary Americans, it was in many ways a teaching rather strangely well adapted to our own hugely pluralistic and eclectic late capitalist consumer culture. As Gustav Niebuhr suggests, their rejection of mainstream society and governmental institutions, and their turn to a more austere, puritanical lifestyle was highly appealing to the generation of the 1970s, who lived through the chaos of Vietnam, the Nixon administration, and the growing suspicion toward American government as a whole:

> The message that Mr. Applewhite and Ms. Nettles preached was well suited to a nation traumatized by the loss of the war in Vietnam, the resignation of President Nixon and years of social upheaval and violence. They were both anti-establishment and puritanical, calling for total separation from society, simple living with shared resources and adherence to a moral code that eschewed drink, drugs and sex.[41]

Going further, however, we might say that Heaven's Gate was even more uniquely suited to the generation of the 1990s—the era of global communications, hypertext, and the World Wide Web. This is very much a religion for the technological age, one whose members seemed to have felt more at home in the cool digital space of the cyber realm than in the messy ambiguities of the physical human body.

THE ASCENT INTO HYPERSPACE: HEAVEN'S GATE AS A RELIGION FOR THE TECHNOLOGICAL AGE

> The Web is the new frontier. If there is going to be a new heaven on Earth it's going to be there. . . . Cyberspace is open to all with the minimal equipment required to access it. It's God's new New Kingdom where billions of dollars are at stake and millennium fever has taken hold.
>
> William Henry, *The Keepers of Heaven's Gate*[42]

> It is man with his planet Earth, with his territory, his body, who is now the satellite. Once transcendent, he has become exorbitant.
>
> Jean Baudrillard, *La Transparence du Mal*[43]

Perhaps the most striking fact about the Heaven's Gate phenomenon is that it was a distinctly technological religion, a spiritual teaching

conceived in, by, and for the age of global communication technology. Whereas most religious sects today have learned how to make some use of the new computer technology, establishing web pages and using on-line communications, Heaven's Gate was one of the first to emerge as a true religion of and for the computer age.

First and most simply, the Net is an ideal means of mass proselytization and rapid conversion—a missionary device which operates instantly, globally, and anonymously. Second, and more interesting, is the fact that the Internet, more than perhaps any other conventional medium, fosters the process of religious syncretism and the blending of many different traditions drawn from radically different and seemingly contradictory sources. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Heaven's Gate's theology, with its remarkable fusion of Christian faith, anti-government paranoia, UFO mythology, and popular television series. As one Internet critic rather cynically describes the Heaven's Gate techno-spirituality:

> The young people of the Higher Source group spent their days crouching in front of computer screens, on the addictive ether of the Internet. The wording of their web site . . . gave a clue to their antiseptic, orderly world, with its whiff of plastic wires and the hypnotic tapping of computer keyboards. "Higher Source is very much 'in tune' with the future direction of technology," was the group's metallic message to newcomers.[44]

Not only did its members employ themselves as web page designers, and not only did they use the Internet as one of their primary means of proselytization, teaching, and converting new members; but more strikingly, they also *incorporated the discourse of computer technology into their religious system.* Their aim was nothing less than to "re-program" human selves that had been falsely programmed by modern society and government, to rewrite the software of the soul, and, ultimately, to ascend to an immaterial level of hyperspace beyond the mundane physical plane altogether. It is in this sense that Heaven's Gate is an ideal spirituality for the age of the simulation—a religion for an era in which the technologically produced world of the computer image has come to appear more real than reality itself.

DEPROGRAMMING AND REPROGRAMMING THE SOUL

> The soul has its own "brain" or "hard drive" that accumulates only information of the Next Level.
>
> *"How and When Heaven's Gate (the Door to the Next Level Above the Human) May be Entered" (HG I, 8)*

The central metaphor that appears throughout the Heaven's Gate teachings is a fundamentally technological one—that of "programming," "computer chips," and the "software" which has been implanted into each one of our human body "vehicles." The divine beings inhabiting the Next Level, the Heaven's Gate text tells us, periodically descend into human civilization in order to implant their special chips—that is, souls—into the "plants" or "biological vehicles" of human bodies. These chips or souls contain the possibilities for growth and spiritual development for each bodily vehicle (HG I, 8). However, the human body vehicles and their deposited chips are in turn subject to an ongoing process of programming by the social, political, and religious world around them. As the HG text puts it, "your 'programming'... determines the limit of your acceptance or understanding" (HG I, 5–6); that is to say, the way that we have been programmed or conditioned by society, government, and religious institutions conditions the way we see the world, and also determines how open we will be to liberating new teachings like those of Heaven's Gate.

However, when the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Heaven decide that it is time to send down a new "Harvester" to lead human beings back to the Next Level, they implant a special new chip into the bodies that will serve as the Harvesters' physical vehicles. Two thousand years ago, they implanted such a chip in the body of Jesus Christ, and so too, in this generation, they have implanted chips into the bodily vehicles of Do and Ti:

> Other crews from the Level Above Human preceded our arrival and "tagged"—placed a deposit "chip"—in each of the vehicles that we would incarnate into, when that instruction would be given. These "chips" set aside those bodies for us (HG I, 7).

The physical brain in each human vehicle thus serves as a kind of "hard drive" for the soul. This hard drive can be programmed either with the false and destructive software of the space aliens or with the pure and true software of the Next Level.[45] When this latter, true spiritual software is programmed into the brain through authentic religious teachings like those of Heaven's Gate, it tends to grow and expand, like a tiny "cyber-fetus." Ultimately, when it grows large enough it will displace and take over the normal human mind altogether—indeed, the normal human mind must then be "aborted" and "discarded" like a "deflated balloon" that has been popped and pushed aside by this new cyber fetus.

> The soul has its own "brain" or "hard drive" that accumulates only information of the Next Level. . . . The soul also becomes part of the new physical body of the new creature. . . . Therefore, when a soul is a part of a new deposit, it has very little information and is as a very small Next Level "fetus." As it develops or grows in size, it necessitates the abortion of the human mind, which is in a

container beside it. . . . As the Next Level mind increases the human-mind container . . . decreases until, if the Next Level mind makes it to "term," the human deflated balloon is discarded and the . . . Next Level mind is all that fills the container. . . . That soul with its Next Level mind has by then become a physical body in a new species (the Level Above Human) (HG I, 8).

In short, the process of entering, converting to, and progressing within the Heaven's Gate movement is very clearly described in terms of a deprogramming and reprogramming of the brain, a literal rewriting of the brain's software which ultimately results in the death of the old socialized self and the creation of a new spiritual self in its place. This demands that all ordinary "human" ways of thinking, acting, desiring, and feeling must be deconstructed, to render the soul pure and open to the influence of the Next Level. "Leaving behind this world includes: family, sensuality, selfish desires, your human mind, and even your human body if it be required of you—all mammalian ways, thinking, and behavior" (HG Intro, iii). Members of the group were forced to follow rather elaborate and strict rules regulating their every pattern of thought, aiming to eradicate all negative ways of thinking and to inculcate the true thought patterns of the Next Level. The "Major Offenses" thus included deceit, sensuality (permitting arousal in thought or action), and breaking any instruction; while the "Lesser Offenses" consisted of taking any action without a check partner, trusting one's own judgment or using one's own mind, responding defensively to classmates or teachers, criticizing, jumping ahead of teachers, picking or choosing certain tasks, having likes or dislikes, permitting lack of control over emotions or having inappropriate curiosity.[46] As Rio DiAngelo put it in his interview with *Newsweek*, "You can't be thinking like a human, you can't be thinking are you going to have sex or you've got to shave or you have angry thoughts. . . . You've got to be ready."[47]

BEYOND THE HUMAN: MASTERING AND TRANSCENDING THE PHYSICAL VEHICLE

> The student must complete this change to the point of abhorring human behavior before his soul can become a "match" with a biological body of the true Kingdom of God—for that new, genderless body is designed to function at a far more refined level.
>
> *"How and When Heaven's Gate (the Door to the Next Level Above the Human) May be Entered" (HG VI, 4)*

> As soon as behavior is focused on certain operations, screens or terminals, the rest appears as some vast, useless body which has been abandoned and condemned. The real itself appears as a large futile body.
>
> Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of the Decline*[48]

The final stage in this process of deprogramming and reprogramming the self, it would seem, lies in a complete mastery, transcendence, and even radical transformation of the physical body itself. The journey to the Next Level cannot be accomplished in the ordinary physical vehicle, but rather, only by "separating and disconnecting" the soul-fetus from the material hardware of the body altogether:

> The final act of metamorphosis or separation from the human kingdom is the "disconnect" or separation from the human physical container or body in order to be released from the human environment and enter . . . the Next Level (HG I, 9).

This is not necessarily a painful or terrifying experience, however; indeed, leaving behind the body is merely "similar to putting it in a closet, like a suit of clothes that doesn't need to be worn for a while" (HG Intro, iii). As former member Nick Cooke put it, "the word was given to depart from this world back to the mother ship. To move into bodies that had been prepared for them—bodies of a finer nature—androgynous and sexless. It's an evolutionary step."[49]

> They will have nothing to fear, nor will they know DEATH—even if they lose their human body. That belief will one day find them a member in the Level Above Human in a physical body belonging to . . . the Evolutionary Level Above Human—leaving behind this perishable world for one that is everlasting and non-corruptible (HG VI, 4).

The most difficult impediment in this struggle to master and transcend the body, however, is the sexual impulse. It is our sexual desires above all which, for Applewhite, bind us to this physical vehicle of the body and keep us under the deluded control of the space aliens. Sensuality "is the strongest addiction there is. It doesn't matter if it's male-female, female-female, male to male, female to dog. You think about it and it changes your vibration."[50] It was precisely in order to conquer the addictive power of sexuality (and perhaps his own homosexual impulses) once and for all that Do had himself castrated; some of his male disciples would also follow suit, going down to Mexico to have the operation done. As DiAngelo commented on the movement's preoccupation with castration, "You have to work against [sexual urges], and the thing that's doing that is the equipment you're given."[51]

In this sense, the Heaven's Gate movement represents a particularly acute example of a much larger cultural phenomenon of the late capi-

talist, hyper-technological cyber era: namely, the conflict between technology and the physical body, the struggle between the ideal of a pure, immutable, incorruptible digital world and the hard reality of the mortal, corruptible human body in this material world. As Arthur Kroker suggests, this is much of the drive behind our generation's increasing desire to ascend into hyperspace, to leave the suffering, mortal body behind and enter a purely virtual realm. It is the digital generation's version of the age-old struggle between the material and the immaterial, between the corruptible flesh and the desire to transcend the body in an incorruptible other-world:

> Not something new, digital reality continues anew a very ancient story: the struggle between two irreconcilable elements in the human drama—the unwanted reality of the decay of the flesh and the long-dreamed promised land of escape from body organic of the pre technological body. Between the necessity of bodily corruption and existing human flesh, that's the utopia and futility of digital reality.[52]

Thus we dream of a new virtual identity for ourselves—"a World Wide Web self" with a new "hardware body electronically equipped for fast travel across the World Wide Web: neuroskin URL exoskeleton, with HTML beacons coded into its processing sensor."[53] The ironic truth, however, is that the more we expand our technological capability and the more we immerse ourselves in these digital worlds, the closer we come to the danger of losing the body amidst the bewildering proliferation of technological bodies. As Sam Gill recently warned, "The border separating animals (humans) and machines (computers) has been transgressed. . . . We are the cyborg as a creature in a postgender world." And we are perhaps ever more in danger of losing the "org" side of our "cyborg" selves.[54] Other authors, expanding upon the darkest fears raised by Baudrillard's work, state the problem in even more starkly pessimistic terms: "the body has become a mere extension of network television."[55] As Chris Rojek suggests, we must now confront the prospect of the body being left behind by the telecommunications revolution:

> Telecommunications have clearly surpassed the natural senses of the body. Telecommunications are more efficient in zooming in on data, magnifying objects and revealing what lies beneath surface appearance. The body has already become a terminal in the communication networks which make contemporary sociability possible.[56]

The world of the Internet, above all, seems to offer a kind of vehicle "beyond the Human," a means of transcending the mundane mortal world and the limitations of the fragile physical body. Surfing the Net, we can instantly travel across the planet, to visit Web sites, gather data, view images, interact with individuals from every point of the globe,

leaving behind our limited bodily selves and the narrow confines of the material world. In cyberspace, the very conceptual boundaries of physical time and space dissolve as we travel at light speed through millennia of history and culture at the click of a mouse:

> The screen becomes a hyperreal vehicle for traveling across a simulated world. . . . The computer . . . functions as the last vehicle, one which threatens to resolve all topographical concerns. Motion, speed and travel lose their real meanings, while gaining power as technological simulations.
>
> The technology that aims at containing distance creates a virtual world which destroys the possibility of distance. In this vertiginous moment of physical stasis and virtual travel, the Voyeur-Voyager experiences an immediacy which dissolves space and time.[57]

In Heaven's Gate, I would argue, the ancient conflict between the spirit and the flesh, the transcendent otherworld and the harsh realties of the corruptible physical world, is combined with the central conflict of our own technological generation. The spiritual combat between soul and flesh has now melded with the postmodern combat between the immutable, superhuman, hyperreal world of technology and the frail, fallible world of the body.

SPIRITUALITY FOR THE AGE OF SIMULATION

> Reality itself founders in hyperrealism, the meticulous reduplication of the real . . . through another reproductive medium. . . . The real is volatized, becoming an allegory of death.
>
> Jean Baudrillard[58]

It is in precisely this sense that Heaven's Gate appears to be an ideal religion for the age of the "simulation." According to Baudrillard's post-Marxist narrative, we have now entered a radical new stage of technology and the power of reproduction: the stage of the simulation. In the earlier eras of the simple copy or the mechanical reproduction, the distinction between original and copy, the real and the imaginary, still held true. In our own generation of digital simulation, however, this distinction begins to falter and finally collapses altogether, as we are now capable of producing infinite simulated reproductions that are not only indistinguishable from the now long lost original, but are in many cases more intense, more perfect, digitally enhanced supra-real re-creations. We thus enter a new world of the hyperreal. Real and imaginary, original and reproduction, collapse into one another, and the entire system implodes into a vast circulation of signs—simulated images without any referent in a real, external world, but simply referring endlessly to one another

in a vast play of seductive yet meaningless significations: "The hyperreal . . . manages to efface even this contradiction between the real and the Imaginary. Unreality no longer resides in the dream or fantasy . . . but in the *real's hallucinatory resemblance to itself* reality itself is hyperrealistic. . . . We already live out the aesthetic hallucination of realty."[59] As K. H. Chen summarizes,

> Our senses of the world, of the real, have largely been redefined by the explosion of mass media proportion; media practices have rearranged our senses of space and time. What is real is no longer our direct contact with the world but what we are given on the TV screen: TV is the world. . . . [W]e enter into a new age of simulation.[60]

A remarkable fusion of "Star Trek" and *Star Wars*, UFO mythology and Christian fundamentalism, Heaven's Gate is a striking example of simulational culture in its most extreme form. Comprised of a bewildering pastiche of media images and fragments of popular culture, the Heaven's Gate world was essentially made up of simulations in Baudrillard's sense—technologically produced images that appear hyperreal, more real, more meaningful, more true than the objective world itself. As one member put it, the present world is comparable to the "Star Trek" holodeck or the technologically generated, virtual reality simulation preparing them to enter the real world of the spaceship taking them to the Next Level.[61]

FATAL STRATEGIES: DIGITAL DREAMS FOR THE END OF THE WORLD[62]

> Many say they live only for the "Harvest Time"—the "Last Days"—the "Second Coming." These have all arrived!
>
> *"How and When Heaven's Gate (the Door to the Next Level Above the Human) May be Entered" (HG VI, 4)*

> If the world is fatal, let us be more fatal than it. If it is indifferent. Let us be more indifferent. We must conquer the world . . . through an indifference that is at least equal to the world.
>
> Jean Baudrillard, *The Evil Demon of Images*[63]

If Heaven's Gate could, in one sense, be described as an ideal religion for the age of simulation and technology in postmodern America, it is also a movement that reflects a profound ambivalence, even deep hostility toward late twentieth-century American society. Like many

NRMs, as Peter Sacks comments, Heaven's Gate reflects the broader postmodern suspicion of all conventional structures of authority and a rejection of modern rationality itself. "The increasingly widespread tendency to view institutions such as central government in conspiratorial terms is a logical step along [the] spectrum of responses to the postmodern crisis of knowledge and authority"; and it has, as such, been a major factor in the rise of various antirational, anti-institutional NRMs, which utterly reject modern forms of authority and legitimation.[64] For Applewhite and his followers, not only this mortal physical body, but the entire material world, contemporary society, and the entire cycle of human history are rapidly approaching their ultimate end. Perverted and controlled by the space aliens or fallen angels, all contemporary social, economic, political, and even religious institutions are utterly corrupt, now spreading their demonic influence to every human mind born and reared within their pre-programmed social order:

> The space aliens have very successfully, through their religions, confused the humans' concept of "God" or "Deity". . . . The Next Level abhors religions, for they bind humans to the human kingdom, using strong misinformation mixed with cosmic or universal consciousness of Creation, about which, in truth, they know nothing (HG I, 10–11).

> Today's leaders in the "industrialized world," though claiming to be democratic, self-righteously dictate to the rest of the world their own ideas of what are acceptable practices and behavior—Money RULES! The monetary systems, through indebtedness, ownership, and insurance . . . bind man to servitude. The powers behind the money have discovered man's most tempting addictions, and through advertisement, movies, television, and publications, feed these addictions with the excitement of sex, drugs . . . and all manner of violence, to ensure their continued monetary power. Under the guise of "the social norm," this world also imposes its distorted religious values (HG VI, 4).

According to an e-mailing sent from *heavensgate.com* on September 20, 1996, Heaven's Gate is part of a widespread movement of those freethinking souls who are brave enough to go against the modern world, who reject the corrupt authority of government and religious institutions, and who are willing to kill and die in opposition to the "system." They are thus of one spirit with the Branch Davidians, the Unabomber, the Solar Temple, and even with the most extreme para-military groups and Muslim fundamentalist terrorists:

> These who have CONNECTED MENTALLY are driven . . . to go against the world—the systems, the socially and politically accepted "norms"—and are determined . . . to go to "God" . . . and to die in opposition to this world. . . . [E]xamples . . . cover a broad spectrum—from the Weavers at Ruby Ridge, the Branch Davidians at Waco, the Unabomber, the Order of the Solar Temple, Aum Shinri Kyo of Japan, the Freemen of Montana, to UFO believers, and others.

> Many . . . take the form of the patriot/militia movements, Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, the many other Islamic movements, and countless groups that are simply rebelling from the system, the "norm," and WANT TO GO TO GOD, OR LEAVE THIS CORRUPT WORLD, at any price.[65]

When we read the highly pessimistic, even paranoid teachings of Heaven's Gate, we cannot help but be reminded of the more pessimistic recent postmodern critics, such as Jameson, Baudrillard, and Umberto Eco. As postmodernism's "high priest" and archcynic, Baudrillard in particular often sounds reminiscent of Applewhite in his searing critique of contemporary culture. The late capitalist system is, for Baudrillard, a culture thoroughly dominated by the seductive logic of the market and utterly saturated by an "empire of images," a relentless flurry of advertisements churning in an endless, self-referential circle of consumption: "We have reached the point where consumption has grasped the whole of life."[66]

> The modern consumer society is a system in which . . . consumption is all important. . . . Thanks to the 20th century revolutionization of consciousness—through mass communications, hi-tech media, the advertising industry, the empire of images throughout the global village—human beings now inhabit an artificial, hermetically sealed pleasure dome. Nothing is constant. Everything reflects everything else in a theater of dazzling simulations dominated by the proliferation of signs. . . . Desire itself is manufactured and nothing any longer possesses any intrinsic value. Meaning is produced by endless symbolic exchanges within a dominant code, whose rhetoric is entirely self-referential; a sexy woman is used to sell a car; a car sells cigarettes, cigarettes sell machismo, machismo is used to sell jeans. . . . Sex, youth, health, speed, style, power, money—all interpenetrate in the mesmerizing dream world of floating signifiers that typifies the ephemeral, destabilized vortex of late capitalism.[67]

Contemporary Western society is now thoroughly dominated by what Baudrillard rather cryptically calls the logic of "the code"—the logic of digital media and the endless reproduction of information, which saturates the consumer with an infinite barrage of electronically generated images, signifiers without any signified object in the external world.

The strange world of the Internet would seem to represent one of the most striking realizations of Baudrillard's world of simulations and the logic of the digital code. As Mark Nunes suggests, the Internet embodies many of Baudrillard's darkest fears about the dissolution between reality and imagination, as the hyperreal images of cyberspace appear to us ever more seductive and persuasive than reality itself:

> This figuration of Internet as a kind of cybernetic terrain works to undermine the symbolic distance between the metaphoric and the real. It abandons the real for the hyperreal by representing an increasingly real simulation of a comprehensive world. This heading points the way toward . . . hypertelia, that

fated catastrophe when the sophistication of a model outdoes the reality it attempts to comprehend.[68]

Amidst this ever-expanding, ever more bewildering maelstrom of images and technological reproductions, many critics fear that we are in danger of losing our very selves—of reducing the human self to yet another technologically generated simulation, fed by advertisements, conceived merely to participate in the endless, self-referential, and meaningless game of consumption. As Baudrillard describes it, this dissolution also has a terrifying aspect, the schizophrenic paranoia of a self that has collapsed into a disjointed flurry of disconnected signs: "Not hysteria any longer with its theatrical staging of the autonomous subject and certainly not paranoia . . . but schizophrenia and terror."[69]

Ultimately, as some of the more dramatic of recent techno-critics warn, we may have already entered not only the terminal stages of the human subject, but even a kind of technological apocalypse of the known world itself. As Arthur Kroker argues, taking some of Baudrillard's insights to the furthest extreme, we are so thoroughly dominated by the "empire of technology" that we face a complete implosion of reality itself amidst the relentless logic of simulations. The real world itself has already been dissolved in a technological Armageddon in which computer generated simulations and televised media images have already replaced the now long lost "solid world of external objects."

> What results is an eschatology of technological culture. . . . The simulacrum takes the place of virtual reality. . . . In the simulacrum, reality itself disappears . . . and what takes its place is a mediascape infected by the logic of hyper-reality. A society of the hyper-spectacle with such intensity that the commodity form finally breaks free of its grounding in materiality, becoming a sign-form in a circulating machinery of immaterial desires. Cold seduction . . . for a hallucinatory culture of special effects personalities moving at warp speed to nowhere.[70]

It is much this same kind of paranoia, pessimism, and apocalyptic terror, I would argue, that was at work within Heaven's Gate. Not unlike Baudrillard, Kroker, and the more nihilistic of the postmodern prophets, Applewhite and his disciples saw modern society as a dark empire dominated by a hidden, insidious code, ruled by the inexorable forces of consumer capitalism, and headed at light speed toward its own self-consuming apocalypse.

SYMBOLIC EXCHANGE AND DEATH

> There's nothing left for us here. We couldn't be happier.
>
> Marshall Herff Applewhite on his video-recorded farewell message

> In societies reduced to blur and glut, terror is the only meaningful act. There's too much of everything, more things and messages and meanings than we can use in ten thousand lifetimes. Inertia-hysteria. Is history possible? . . . Who do we take seriously? Only the lethal believer, the person who kills and dies for faith. Everything else is absorbed. The artist is absorbed, the madman is absorbed and processed. . . . Give him a dollar, put him in a TV commercial. Only the terrorist stands outside. The culture hasn't figured out how to assimilate him.
>
> Don DeLillo, *Mao II*[71]

If Applewhite and Baudrillard share similarly pessimistic visions of contemporary Western consumer culture, it would seem that they also offered equally bleak and fatalistic solutions to the problem. For Heaven's Gate, modern society, with all its social, political, and even religious institutions, is now thoroughly controlled by the Luciferian forces of the space aliens: our minds have now been entirely programmed by a materialist, selfish, consumer logic, in which money rules and the rich and powerful exploit the weak and helpless. It is therefore now time to leave this world and ascend to the pure, pristine, incorruptible Next Level; and this ascent can only take place through the act of death—by abandoning this fragile vehicle of the physical body, leaving behind the corrupt material world altogether (see HG I and VI).

Here the Heaven's Gate rhetoric sounds eerily like that of some of postmodernism's most fatalistic of prophets—perhaps the most famous of which is Baudrillard in his early, most nihilistic writings such as *Symbolic Exchange and Death* and *Fatal Strategies*. For the early Baudrillard, contemporary mass culture is so thoroughly dominated by the logic of the code—through the media, through computer technology, through the publicity industry and the world of TV politics—that no political or social revolution is possible. Any attempt at revolution would simply feed back into the circle of simulations, becoming yet another televised image or media sound bite, yet another sign to be consumed by its viewing audience. In a televised world in which image and style are everything, in which both image and style are instantly manufactured and manipulated through media technology, political action begins to appear at best futile, at worst self-defeating or absurd: "individuals are no longer citizens . . . nor proletarians anticipating the onset of communism. They are consumers, and hence the prey of objects as defined by the code."[72]

> The individual has been sucked into the negative electrical mass of the media age. . . . Baudrillard has ruled out opposition to the system, at least at the level of public debate and formal politics.[73]

Given this seemingly bleak and hopeless situation, Baudrillard can suggest only the most radical, violent, and shocking of solutions. In his

early work, he offers us only the solution of death itself as a way out of the circle of simulations. In his search for some "escape from an all-absorbing system with no fixed determinations, where anything can be anything else, a society . . . dominated by the digital logic of the code," Baudrillard gives us the rather terrifying answer that "only death escapes the code, only death is an act without equivalent return."[74]

You can't fight the code with political economy or revolution. All these outdated weapons (including those we find in . . . the ethics and metaphysics of man and nature . . .) are neutralized by a high order general system. . . . Perhaps death and death alone . . . belongs to a higher order than the code. . . . Death must be played against death: a radical tautology that makes the system's own logic the ultimate weapon. The only strategy against the hyperrealist system is some sort of pataphysics, a science of imaginary solutions; that is, a science fiction of the system's reversal against itself at the extreme limit of simulation, a reversible simulation in a hyperlogic of death and destruction. . . . *Ex-terminate* every term, abolish value in the term's revolution against itself: that is the only symbolic violence triumphant over the violence of the code.[75]

Such is Baudrillard's solution: an act of violence, terrorism, and self-destruction so profound that it would bring about an equal and reciprocal self-destruction in the system itself: "to defy the system with a gift to which it cannot respond save by its own collapse and death. . . . The system turns on itself, as a scorpion does when encircled by the challenge of death. . . . The system must itself commit suicide in response to the multiplied challenge of death and suicide."[76]

Much the same kind of fatal strategy was at work in the Heaven's Gate suicides. Facing a society they saw as thoroughly controlled by an insidious hidden code, dominated by the logic of consumer capitalism and ruled by a seemingly alien political system, they saw their only response to be one of self-destruction—a suicide that would, perhaps, counteract the self-destructive, suicidal impulse of late millennial Western culture, and so lead them beyond this world altogether, to the freedom and transcendence of the Next Level.

CONCLUSIONS: RELIGION BEYOND MEANING AND READABILITY— THE CHALLENGE OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN THE AGE OF CYBERSPACE

This is the reason for the journey into hyperreality, in search of instances where the American imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake; where the boundaries between the

> game and illusion are blurred, the art museum is contaminated by the freak show, and falsehood is enjoyed in a situation of "fullness" of *horror vacui*.
>
> Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*[77]

Despite its seemingly bizarre, incomprehensible, in many ways even morbidly silly character, the Heaven's Gate phenomenon poses several profound challenges to the contemporary historian of religions. First and most basic is the challenge of the *irrational* in religion—the threat of a religious event so strange and shocking that it appears to shatter our cherished Enlightenment paradigms of rationality and intelligibility. Quite in contrast to Jonathan Z. Smith's neo-Enlightenment commitment to intelligibility, the contemporary historian of religions has to confront a post-industrial, late capitalist era of hyperreality, a proliferation of simulations, technologically manufactured images, and media signs seemingly without referent in the real world. Rather than a world of coherent belief systems, which can always be rendered intelligible through the aid of disciplined reason, we now face a world of "cultural disorder, the overwhelming flood of signs and images which is pushing us beyond the social," a world not of rational unities but rather of "pastiche, eclectic mixing of codes, bizarre juxtapositions and unchained signifiers which defy meaning and readability."[78]

Against Smith's highly intellectual and utilitarian view of human nature, I would argue that such a rationalist Enlightenment approach to religion is not only inadequate but in many cases quite clearly damaging and destructive. As Wendy Doniger has recently pointed out, Smith's highly rationalistic and utilitarian Enlightenment model could well be accused of a kind of neo-colonialism or intellectual imperialism, perhaps even repeating many of the same errors of the European Enlightenment and the imperialist colonization of the world. For it bears the danger of an eradication of all otherness, a reduction of all cultures, all foreign cultural traditions to our own (post-Enlightenment Western) level of secularism, rationalism, and empiricism—to "what we see in Europe everyday," as Smith puts it.[79] As Michel Foucault and others have shown, the European Enlightenment may well have brought with it the general triumph of reason and the creation of a body of human sciences aimed at the rational understanding of mankind: yet it also brought with it the exclusion, or more accurately, the "confinement" and institutionalization of all that was dubbed the irrational, the mad, all that could not be comprehended in the orderly categories of Enlightenment Humanism.[80] So too, I would argue, phenomena such as Heaven's Gate can never be adequately understood as long as we cling to the Enlightenment ideals of rationality and intelligibility.

Second and more profoundly, however, Heaven's Gate poses a central challenge to all of us in contemporary late capitalist society as we are

immersed more and more in the bewildering new world of hyperspace, global communications, and the expanding network of technological simulations. How do we find meaning, value, or simply a reason to continue living in a world that seems utterly dominated by the logic of the marketplace, the commodity, and the simulated desires of media advertising? Is the only way out of the endless circle of consumption this most extreme act of death—be it mass suicide (as in Heaven's Gate) or Baudrillard's acts of terrorism? As Mark Poster and others have argued, Baudrillard's early solution of death as the only way out of the vicious circle of media simulations in the postmodern world is, to say the least, rather pathetic and hopelessly pessimistic.[81] Indeed, if we take Baudrillard's critique of late capitalist culture seriously, if we accept his pronouncement regarding the domination of the code of technology, media, and consumerism, it would seem to render any kind of political action self-defeating and absurdly redundant.

Thus, perhaps the most important reason to take seriously and to grapple with a group as disturbing as Heaven's Gate is precisely to seek alternative strategies for dealing with this seeming "empire of technology." If we are to find other, more productive ways out of the circle of consumption, other means of fighting the code of the late capitalist world order, we must first grapple with these more extreme reactions such as Heaven's Gate. In contrast to Baudrillard's morbid fatalism, I would suggest we follow the lead of authors such as Jennifer Terry and Melodie Calvert, who point to the subversive and dissident potential inherent in all technology: for the new cyber technologies open both new possibilities for exploitation and new potentials for freedom and resistance. However, the sheer quantitative mass of information and the staggering barrage of imagery with which we are bombarded today demands even more acute critical skills in the scrutinization, analysis, and questioning of this information—what Eco calls a "*guerrilla strategy*,"[82] placing us squarely in front of each TV screen and each computer terminal, asking the critical questions: Where does this information come from? Who is conveying it? Of what are they trying to persuade me? What are they trying to sell me? To what are they attempting to convert me?

It is in precisely this sense—as the greatest challenge to our skills as critical thinkers and educators in the art of critical thinking within the academy—that these hi-tech religions on the furthest fringes of cyberspace demand the most serious attention from contemporary historians of religions.

ENDNOTES

1 *How and When Heaven's Gate (the Door to the Next Level Above the Human) May be Entered: An Anthology of our Materials*, a 200-page self-published book (Mill Spring, NC: Wild-

flower Press, 1997). This was originally available on-line at the now defunct Heaven's Gate Web-site (<http://www.heavensgate.com>), which is now reproduced at several Heaven's Gate Replica and Mirror Websites, such as: <http://www.netcentral.co.uk/steveb/gate/book.html>; <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/digest/daily/march/27/cultsite/index.html>; <http://www.artbell.com/mirror/heavensgate/index.htm>; and <http://homepage.netspaceonline.com/~jonhall/heaven/index.html>.

Hereafter, this text will be cited as HG. The book is divided into six sections, with the following headings, which I have numbered in the body of this article, followed by the page number (e.g., HG I, 8 refers to section I, page 8). They are:

Do's Intro: Our Purpose —The Simple Bottom Line
I. Exit Statements, 1995–1996
II. Early Classroom Materials, 1975–1988
III. '88 Update
IV. Beyond Human—Last Call, 1991–1992
V. USA Today Ad/ Statement and Misc. Documents, 1993
VI. Statements/Posters of Public Meetings, 1994
Appendices

2 Jean Baudrillard, "Hysteresis of the Millennium," in Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 119.

3 Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Devil in Mr. Jones," first delivered as a Woodward Court Lecture at the College of the University of Chicago (1980), reprinted in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 104. Other more recent accounts of Jonestown include the following: Mary McCormick Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998); Wilson Harris, *Jonestown* (Boston: Faber & Faber, 1997); Judith Mary Weightman, *Making Sense of the Jonestown Suicides: A Sociological History of Peoples Temple* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983); Laurie Efrein Kahalas, *Snake Dance: Unraveling the Mysteries of Jonestown* (Victoria, B.C.: Trafford Publishing, 1998).

4 Smith, "The Devil and Mr. Jones," 104.

5 There is to date little scholarship on Heaven's Gate—though there are a number of more popular accounts and anti-cult tracts; see for example, Tom Brown, *The Heaven's Gate Suicide: Unlocking the Answer to Why It Happened* (El Paso: Tom Brown Ministries, 1997); Hayden Hewes, ed., *Inside Heaven's Gate: The UFO Cult Leaders Tell Their Story in Their Own Words* (New York: Signet, 1997); William Henry, *The Keepers of Heaven's Gate: The Millennial Madness, the Religion Behind the Rancho Santa Fe Suicides* (Anchorage: Earthpulse Press, 1997); Rodney Perkins, *Cosmic Suicide: The Tragedy and Transcendence of Heaven's Gate* (Dallas: Pentaradial Press, 1997).

6 On the concept of "late capitalism" or post-industrial society, see Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Fredric Jameson, "Post-modernism and Consumer Society," in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. H. Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985); and *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); S. Lash and J. Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987); W. Halal, *The New Capitalism* (New York: Wiley, 1986); Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1978).

7 See Gill's two on-line articles on "TheStrip" Website, "Burnt Offerings" (<http://www.colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies/TheStrip/Grill/burntofferings2.html>), and "Chips from a Cyborg Workshop" (<http://www.colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies/TheStrip/Features/chips/induction.html>). See also Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semioext[e], 1990).

As Mike Featherstone summarizes, "[I]n late capitalist society, sign and commodity have come together to produce the commodity sign. The autonomy of the signifier, through . . . the manipulation of signs in the media and advertising, means that signs are able to float free from objects and are available for use in a multiplicity of associative relations. . . . The overproduction of signs and reproduction of images and simulations

leads to a loss of stable meaning and 'an aestheticization of reality in which the masses become fascinated by the endless flow of bizarre juxtapositions which takes the viewer beyond stable sense" (Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* [Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991], 15).

8 See especially Jean Baudrillard, *The Evil Demon of Images* (Sydney: Power Institute, 1987); *America* (London: Verso, 1988); Jameson, *Postmodernism*; and Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (London: Picador, 1987).

9 Jennifer Terry and Melodie Calvert, *Processed Lives: Gender and Technology in Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 1997), 4–5.

10 See Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1990); *Fatal Strategies* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1990).

11 Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983), 109.

12 Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, 117; see Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 28, 156; cf. Bryan S. Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism, and Globalism* (London: Routledge, 1994).

13 "The threat to religious faith is the commodification of everyday life. People adopt or reject belief systems not simply on the rationalistic grounds that they are not intellectually coherent. Beliefs are adopted . . . because they are relevant or not to everyday needs and concerns. What makes religious faith . . . problematic in a globalized postmodern society is that everyday life has become part of a global system of exchange of commodities which are not easily influenced by . . . religious leaders" (Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism, and Globalism*, 10).

14 Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, 121. On this point see also Jeff Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology is Changing our Spiritual Lives* (San Francisco: HarperEdge, 1997), and Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* (New York: Harmony Books, 1998): "Technology is neither a devil nor an angel. But neither is it simply a tool, a neutral extension of . . . human nature. Technology is a trickster, and it has been so since the first culture hero taught the human tribe how to spin wool before he pulled it over our eyes" (p. 9).

15 See my article, "Zorba the Buddha: Capitalism, Charisma and the Cult of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh," *Religion* 26 (1996): 161–82; Brian Wilson, "The New Religions: Some Preliminary Considerations," in *New Religious Movements: A Perspective for Understanding Society*, ed. E. Barker (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 23; cf. James Beckford, *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change* (London: Sage, 1986), 395.

16 Terry and Calvert, *Processed Lives*, 4. As Davis argues, "Regardless of how secular this ultramodern condition appears, the velocity and mutability of the times invokes a supernatural quality that must be seen . . . through the lenses of religious thought and the storehouse of the archetypal imagination" (*Techgnosis*, 1; cf. Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace*, 1–26).

17 Nina Wakeford, "Networking Women and Grrrls with Information/communication Technology," in *Processed Lives: Gender and Technology in Everyday Life*, eds. J. Terry and M. Calvert (London: Routledge, 1997), 53–54. See also James Brook and Iain A. Boal, eds., *Resisting the Virtual Life: The Culture and Politics of Information* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1995); Dale Spender, *Nattering on the Net: Women, Power and Cyberspace* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1995); W. Chernaik and M. Deegen, eds., *Beyond the Book: Theory, Text and the Politics of Cyberspace* (Oxford: Office for Humanities Communication, 1996); John Law, ed., *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination* (London: Routledge, 1991); G. Bender and T. Druckrey, eds., *Culture on the Brink: Ideologies of Technology* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1994); C. Penley and A. Ross, eds., *Technoculture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

18 See Gregory Price Grieve, "Imagining a Virtual Religious Community: Neo-Pagans and the Internet," *Chicago Anthropology Exchange* 21 (1995). There are now a number of online Temples and virtual sacred spaces, such as the Kali Mandir (<http://www.kalimandir.org/pujashop/index.html>), Temples of Tantra (<http://

www.tantraworks.com/Shakti.html>), Temple of Jvalamukhi (<http://www.dakinitantra.com/jvalamukhi.html>), The Ultimate Temple (<http://www.grapho.net/temple/>), Ancient Egyptian Virtual Temple (<http://www.netins.net/showcase/ankh/>), etc.

19 See George P. Landow, *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 10, 169. The term "hypertext" comes originally from Theodor Holm Nelson, *Literary Machines* (Swarthmore, PA: Theodor H. Nelson, 1987), preface, 2. See also George P. Landow, ed., *Hyper/Text/Theory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 1.

20 Mitch Kapor, "Where is the Digital Highway Really Heading?" *Wired*, July–Aug. (1993): 53.

21 Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, *Hacking the Future: Stories for the Flesh Eating 90s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 78; cf. Cliff McKnight, Andrew Dillon, and John Richardson, eds., *Hypertext in Context* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

22 Andrea Slane, "Romancing the System: Women, Narrative Film and the Sexuality of Computers," in *Processed Lives: Gender and Technology in Everyday Life*, eds. J. Terry and M. Calvert (London: Routledge, 1997), 77.

23 Quoted in *Time* (7 April 1997), 33.

24 Jean Baudrillard, *La Transparence du Mal: Essai sur les Phénomènes Extrêmes* [*The Transparency of Evil : Essays on Extreme Phenomena*] (Paris: Galilee, 1990), 9.

25 Kenneth L. Woodward, "Christ and Comets," *Newsweek* (7 April 1997), 40.

26 *Time* (7 April 1997), 31, 34.

27 *The New York Post* (28 March 1997).

28 Gustav Niebuhr, "On the Furthest Fringes of Millennialism," *New York Times* (28 March 1997), A1.

29 On Applewhite's homosexuality, see the article by his old friend, David Daniel, "The Beginning of the Journey," *Newsweek* (14 April 1997), 36.

30 *Time* (7 April 1997), 35; Robert W. Balch, "'When the Light Goes Out, Darkness Comes': A Study of Defection from a Totalistic Cult," in *Religious Movements: Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers*, ed. Rodney Stark (New York: Paragon House, 1985), 14–16. See also Robert W. Balch, "Waiting for the Ships: Disillusionment and the Revitalization of Faith in Bo and Peep's Cult," in *The Gods Have Landed: New Religions from Other Worlds*, ed. James R. Lewis (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 137–66.

31 Carey Goldberg, "Heaven's Gate Fits in with New Mexico's Offbeat Lifestyle," *The New York Times* (31 March 1997), A8. According to Goldberg, there were many New Age prophetic characters and centers in that part of New Mexico at the time, including Mike Dew, a preacher of the prophetic group "Voices in the Wilderness," a Hindu retreat, a center for Russian mysticism, at least one survivalist enclave, and various other "New Age encampments for burned out people."

In this respect, Heaven's Gate and their neighbors appear to have been an example of late twentieth-century "American" religion, in Baudrillard's sense—a religion of the *desert*, of the vast expanses of flat, empty wasteland, without depth, history, or tradition, yet surrounded by the glitter and glitz of Las Vegas; see Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1988), 63; Barry Smart, "Europe/America: Baudrillard's Fatal Comparison," in *Forget Baudrillard?*, eds. C. Rojek and B. Turner (London: Routledge, 1993), 55.

32 For a good description of the Rancho Santa Fe community, see Joseph Wambaugh, "Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch. . . ," *Time* (7 April 1997).

33 *People* (14 April 1997), 42, 46.

34 B. Drummond Ayres, Jr., "Cult Members Wrote a Script to Put Their Life and Times on the Big Screen," *New York Times* (1 April 1997), A13.

35 <http://www.cnn.com/...ide/index.html#waco> (7 April 1997).

36 *Time* (7 April 1997), 32.

37 <http://www/cnn.com/...rance.ap/index.html> (2 April 1997).

38 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 96.

39 Kenneth L. Woodward, "Christ and Comets," *Newsweek* (7 April 1997), 40.

40 Here Heaven's Gate explicitly allies itself with other persecuted radical cults, such as the Branch Davidians and the Solar Temple; see the message sent from the Heaven's Gate Website, 20 September 1996, under the title "ARMAGEDDON—WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON? (From: rep@heavensgate.com to Newsgroups: alt.conspiracy): "Examples of how this misplaced judgment is forced upon religious zealots are seen in how the authorities treated the Weavers at Ruby Ridge, David Koresh and the Branch Davidians at Waco, and the actions presently being taken against Saddam Hussein and Iraq."

41 Niebuhr, "On the Furthest Fringes," A18.

42 Henry, *The Keepers of Heaven's Gate*, 88–9.

43 Baudrillard, *La Transparence du Mal*, 30.

44 "Pick n' Mix Spirituality," posted on the Web site <http://net1.netcentral.co.uk/steveb/cults/index.html>.

45 "Just as the biological body is the container for the soul, the soul is the container for Mind ("Spirit"). Mind translates into the brain as information. Information is available to humans from only two sources—the mind of the adversarial space races—or the Mind of the Kingdom. . . . The mind of the adversarial space races yields misinformation (promoting the behavior of this corrupt world). The Mind from the true Kingdom of God yields true information" (HG VI, 4).

46 A list of the "17 Steps," the "3 Major Offenses," and the "31 Lesser Offenses" is given in HG II, 8–9. As Applewhite and Trusdale explained in an interview, "You overcome the need for receiving affection, giving affection, needing people. . . . Your mind . . . cannot really be open until all the fluids in your body contribute to the opening of your mind instead of being spent in sex or socializing or whatever your addictions are" (Steiger, *Inside Heaven's Gate*, 114). At least in some cases, this process of deprogramming the brain involved the actual taping of tuning forks onto the heads of the members, in an apparent effort to dispel all human thoughts. (Steven S. Simmons, "Who They Were," *People* [14 April 1997], 42).

47 Rio DiAngelo, cited in *Newsweek* (14 April 1997), 34.

48 Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of the Decline*, 18.

49 Nick Cooke, quoted in Steiger, *Inside Heaven's Gate*, xxxii. "They have overcome their human way. They are no longer having babies, getting old and dying. They've taken their birth into a body that can transport them into an atmosphere that has no decay" (Applewhite and Trusdale, interviewed in Steiger, *Inside Heaven's Gate*, 128).

50 Rio DiAngelo, quoted in *Newsweek* (14 April 1997), 32.

51 *Newsweek* (14 April 1997), 30.

52 Kroker, *Hacking the Future*, 33. This is what Baudrillard calls the search for "a beyond of castration which is consummated . . . in a perfectly closed system. It is this which includes a fascination like that for a perfectly smooth body, without orifices, doubled and redoubled by a mirror" (JeanBaudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* [St. Louis: Telos, 1981], 96).

53 Kroker, *Hacking the Future*, 41.

54 Gill, "Chips from a Cyborg Workshop" (<http://www.colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies/TheStrip/Features/chips/induction.html>); see Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

55 Chris Rojek and Bryan S. Turner, eds., *Forget Baudrillard?* (London: Routledge, 1993), xiv.

56 Rojek, "Baudrillard and Politics," in *Forget Baudrillard?*, eds. Chris Rojek and Bryan S. Turner (London: Routledge, 1993), 113.

57 Mark Nunes, "Baudrillard in Cyberspace: Internet, Virtuality and Postmodernity," *Style* 29 (1995): 314–27. As Arthur Kroker comments, "A fatal metastasis . . . in which the world

is irradiated by a viral positivity—a hyper-realism of simulation for fractal subjects—that can achieve such a frenzied point of acceleration that it finally reaches escape velocity, leaving the modernist world of material culture behind as pure epiphenomenal implosion in the violent semiurgy of the rationalist eschatology" (Arthur Kroker, *The Possessed Individual: Technology and the French Postmodern* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 57).

58 Mark Poster, ed., *Baudrillard: Selected Writings* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 145.

59 Ibid., 145–46.

60 K. H. Chen, "Baudrillard's Implosive Postmodernism," *Theory, Culture and Society* 3 (1987), 71–88.

61 Thomas Nichols, quoted in *Time* (7 April 1997), 33. As another member, Dennis Johnson put it, "we've been training on a holodeck for roughly thirty minutes and now it's time to stop. . . . It's time to put into practice what we've learned. So we take off the virtual reality helmet. . . . We go back out of the holodeck, to reality, to be with the other members on the craft" (in Davis, *Techgnosis*, 247).

62 Kroker, *The Possessed Individual*, 62.

63 Baudrillard, *The Evil Demon of Images* (Sydney: Power Institute, 1987), 101.

64 Peter Sacks, *Generation X Goes to College* (Open Court: Chicago, 1996), 124.

65 "ARMAGEDDON—WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?" From: <rep@heavensgate.com> to Newsgroups: alt.conspiracy (20 September 1996).

66 Poster, *Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, 33.

67 Roy Porter, "Baudrillard: History, Hysteria and Consumption," in *Forget Baudrillard?*, 1–2.

68 Nunes, "Baudrillard in Cyberspace," 314–27.

69 Kroker, *The Possessed Individual*, 71; cf. Andrea Slane, "Romancing the System: Women, Narrative Film and the Sexuality of Computers" in *Processed Lives*, 77.

70 Kroker, *The Possessed Individual*, 64–5. "An empire of technology . . . which can glimmer so brilliantly because like a massive star at the moment of its death, it begins to expel enormous amounts of matter as a prelude to its demise. A violent expulsion of the image-reservoir, a fantastic acceleration of signs of consumption, a frenzied drive towards the technical perfectibility of sound, images, movement . . . a violent implosion of society that has already taken place" (p. 72).

71 DeLillo, *Mao II* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 157.

72 Poster, *Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, 7.

73 Turner, "Baudrillard for Sociologists," in *Forget Baudrillard?*, eds. C. Rojek and B. S. Turner (London: Routledge, 1993), 83. As Chris Rojek comments, "The greater sophistication and saturation of the global electronic media . . . [mean that] it is no longer a question of the masses being prone to fascist manipulation. . . . Rather the space for political collective political action had disappeared" ("Baudrillard and Politics," in the same volume, 113). See also Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 5.

74 Poster, *Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, 5. On Baudrillard's "nihilism" and terrorism, see his essay "On Nihilism": "If being a nihilist is to take, to the unendurable limit of the hegemonic system, this radical act of violence, this challenge which the system is summoned to respond to by its own death, then I am a terrorist and a nihilist. . . . Theoretical violence, not truth, is the sole expedient remaining to us" ("On Nihilism," *On the Beach* 6 [1984]: 39).

75 Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 3–5. "We will not destroy the system by a direct, dialectical revolution of the economic or political infrastructure. Everything produced by contradiction . . . will only feed back into the machine and give it impetus, following a circular distortion similar to a Moebius strip. We will never defeat it by following its own logic of energy, calculation, reason and revolution. . . . We must therefore

displace everything into the sphere of the symbolic, where challenge, reversal and overbidding are the law, so that we can respond to death only by an equal and superior death" (p. 36).

76 Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 37.

77 Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, 8.

78 Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, 20.

79 "The social sciences, of which history is one, were utilized as a defense against the powerful civilizations colonizing peoples emerging into Western consciousness. To insist on historical context is to deny difference, namely to remain unmoved and in control" (Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics & Theology in Myth* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1998], 52).

80 See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (New York: Random House, 1965); *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970); and Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 166ff.

81 Poster, *Baudrillard: Selected writings*, 7. On this point see also Mike Gane, *Baudrillard: Fatal and Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 1995), 207. As Douglas Kellner comments, "the implosion of meaning in the media; the implosion of the social in the mass; the implosion of the mass in a black hole of nihilism and meaninglessness—such is Baudrillard's postmodern vision. . . . Baudrillard's nihilism is without joy, without energy, without hope for a better future" ("Introduction: Jean Baudrillard in the fin-de Millennium," in *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*, ed. Douglas Kellner [Oxford: Blackwell, 1994], 12).

82 Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, 8ff.

The Persistence of the Millennium: Branch Davidian Expectations of the End after "Waco"

Eugene V. Gallagher

The fire that destroyed the Mount Carmel Center near Waco, Texas, on 19 April 1993 took the lives of David Koresh and most of his Branch Davidian community. It did not, however, put an end to Branch Davidian speculation about God's imminent judgment. Since 1993, surviving members of the Mount Carmel community, as well as some recent converts, have produced their own interpretations of the Bible and other theological tracts. In some of those texts the anticipation of the impending apocalypse is as urgent as it was in Koresh's own teaching. For some survivors Koresh's death and the devastation of the community did not dim their expectation that God will judge a sinful world. While they wait in prayerful anticipation of that coming event, they endeavor to keep alive Koresh's message and to spread it to a largely heedless public.

Within the broad biblical tradition, millennialism involves the interplay of three distinct elements: 1) the sacred text, which grounds the apocalyptic discourse of the teacher or group, 2) the inspired interpreter, who establishes which texts are most meaningful and how they are to be understood, and 3) the fluid context in which the interpreter of the apocalyptic tradition proposes readings of foundational texts, links them to specific events, and strives to persuade others of the accuracy of a particular apocalyptic scenario.[1] Although Koresh's apocalyptic teaching ranged widely throughout the Bible, his grounding text[2] was the book of Revelation, particularly chapter four and five's vision of an enthroned God holding a scroll with seven seals. Koresh, in fact, claimed that he was the "Lamb" mentioned in Revelation 6, the only one permitted to open the sealed scroll. Koresh saw himself not only as an inspired interpreter of the sacred text, but also as a crucial participant in its end-time scenario.

Koresh's focus on Revelation remains steady in the major Branch Davidian theological texts produced after April 1993. The other two elements in the dynamic of biblical apocalypticism, however, have clearly

changed. Because Koresh was able to commit to writing only an introduction and an interpretation of the "first seal" of Revelation before his death,[3] those who see themselves as continuing the Branch Davidian tradition must come to a judgment about the continuing authority of the now departed prophet. Some, I will argue, have raised Koresh's interpretation to virtually canonical status. He is seen as having provided the last word on the meaning of Revelation, and his faithful acolytes have only to spread his message in its original form. Others, however, accord Koresh's teaching a more limited authority; while important, it is not viewed as a final presentation of the meaning of Revelation. As Branch Davidians have come to grips with their new situation, they have turned again to the sacred text and sometimes to inspired interpreters. In particular, two recent texts demonstrate how Branch Davidians are wrestling with the dilemmas posed by their radically changed situation. While some have sought certainty and security in the codification and dissemination of Koresh's teaching, others have embraced a new living prophet whose essential role in the end times is also believed to be outlined in the sacred text itself.

The imprisoned Branch Davidian Livingstone Fagan, who left Mount Carmel on 23 March to serve as a theological spokesperson for the community during the rest of the fifty-one day siege, has composed a number of occasional pieces as well as a short self-published book, *Mt. Carmel: The Unseen Reality* (1994). Fagan's theology, especially in relation to the coming judgment, represents a Koreshian orthodoxy. Clearly subjugating himself to Koresh, whom he understands to be the Lamb mentioned in Revelation 6, Fagan asserts that "to know the seals you're either a servant of the Lamb or the Lamb himself."[4] Fagan's goal in *Mt. Carmel* is to re-present Koresh's teachings in the hope of gaining more adherents before the final judgment.

Another text claiming to continue the Branch Davidian tradition presents a more complicated picture. *Seven Seals* (1998), attributed to an anonymous author identified only as the "Chosen Vessel," is a more ambitious undertaking.[5] Because nearly all of Koresh's teaching was oral and only some of it has been captured on audiotapes, it is virtually impossible to determine *Seven Seals'* degree of theological fidelity to Koresh's original teaching. It is much clearer, however, that the Chosen Vessel (either Renos Avraam or Avraam/"Shekinah Koresh") is lodging an innovative claim to status and authority, based on the contention that *Seven Seals* reveals the *other side* of the scroll with seven seals. In more than six hundred pages it offers a largely implicit critique of both Koresh and the Mount Carmel community, while simultaneously acknowledging Koresh's crucial role in God's plan for salvation. Most importantly, it presents the Chosen Vessel as an inspired prophetic successor to Koresh. The Chosen Vessel intends to rectify Koresh's prophetic failings and unify the devastated community in preparation

for an imminent salvation. Thus, while Fagan is content in his writings to provide rather vague admonitions that the end is still near, the Chosen Vessel is deeply concerned with identifying when God's judgment will be exercised.[6] As a result, *Seven Seals* frequently is given over to bouts of apocalyptic computation and chronology that attempt to demonstrate with unwavering certitude just how close we all are to God's judgment.

Each of these texts, in its own way, offers a glimpse at the attempts of a shattered community to hold true to its apocalyptic faith following the death of its prophet and teacher. They also disclose a community that is seeking to discover meaning in its troubling recent history, cope with the hostility and apathy of an unbelieving world, and prepare for even greater trials in the near future. Neither Fagan nor the Chosen Vessel abandons the millennial expectations that were nourished by Koresh. Neither entertains the possibility that Koresh's prophecy of the imminent judgment could have been anything other than an unprecedented insight into the meaning of the Christian scriptures. Despite the death of the prophet, prophecy itself has not failed. Despite the absence of the teacher, the message remains. In fact, both Fagan and the Chosen Vessel are convinced that the importance of Koresh's teaching after the destruction of the Mount Carmel Center is greater than it was before.

Mt. Carmel: the Unseen Reality and *Seven Seals* display both the persistence and the mutability of an apocalyptic tradition. The gruesome destruction of the Mount Carmel Center has not obliterated the Branch Davidian faith. In Fagan it has evoked an uncompromising steadfastness; in the Chosen Vessel it has given rise to a creative extension of the original message. In both books, the authors strive to make sense of their experience using the conceptual framework provided by their distinctive millennialist commitment. They arrive at positions in which any setbacks are only temporary, apparent defeat is in fact victory, and the ultimate goal of salvation remains tantalizingly close.

LIVINGSTONE FAGAN: *MT. CARMEL: THE UNSEEN REALITY*

Before he moved to the Mount Carmel Center, Livingstone Fagan was a Seventh-day Adventist theological student pursuing a Master's degree at Newbold College in England. The British citizen met Koresh in 1988, when Koresh gave a Bible study at the college.[7] After three hours with Koresh, Fagan was deeply impressed. He recalls that "during that short time, I had perceived more significant biblical truths than I had done, the entire eight years I had been involved with organized religion."[8] After completing his studies in December 1988, Fagan visited the Mount Carmel Center, and he made several more visits during the next four years. In 1992 he decided to move to Mount Carmel. Fagan

leaves no doubt that he found Koresh's teaching about the book of Revelation to be compelling:

> On this last visit, approximately six months into our study, it was in our opinion impossible to leave without doing damage to our grasp of this continuing revelation of truth. We therefore decided to stay.[9]

Fagan dedicated his life to intensive study of the Bible at Mt. Carmel because it was a "place where David Koresh opened the Seven Seals."[10]

Fagan was profoundly affected by his brief tenure as a student of Koresh. Even after the fire, he attests that "I now live and breathe the truth of the Seven Seals and the future it envisions. A future according to the will of God. We have seen it, tasted it, now nothing else will do."[11] As one of the few survivors of the Mount Carmel community, Fagan feels that he has a specific mission. He claims that "I know of a certainty, that I am a recipient of God's saving work for this generation."[12] Concerning his major work, *Mt. Carmel: The Unseen Reality*, Fagan observes that "it has been challenging to find suitable language, in which to house the spirit of Mt. Carmel" but that "its effective communication, in lieu of the high cost of lives, has been something of a sacred concern to me."[13]

In both substance and style, *Mt. Carmel: The Unseen Reality* faithfully reiterates what Koresh taught. Most notably, it incorporates verbatim Koresh's entire unfinished manuscript on the seven seals. Nothing could signal more clearly Fagan's self-understanding as a "servant of the Lamb." Fagan has no desire to add to or in any way transform what Koresh taught; he believes that Koresh's teaching stands as the final word on the meaning of scripture. Whatever clarifying commentary Fagan adds to Koresh's exposition of the seven seals is expressed in a form very close to Koresh's teaching. For example, Fagan includes the entire text of the book of Revelation in his manuscript; yet he offers only minimal commentary on the biblical text, often letting whole chapters or groups of chapters pass before he offers a few observations. Similarly, Fagan incorporates the full texts of Psalms 22 and 40 and shorter excerpts from Psalms 45 (verses 1-4) and 127 (verses 3-5), also with little commentary. Fagan's reliance on Revelation likely stems from Koresh's assertion that "every book of the Bible meets and ends in the book of Revelation."[14] Similarly, Fagan's appeal to the Psalms echoes Koresh's understanding of them as clarifying biblical prophecy in general and the seven seals in particular. Both Fagan and Koresh, for example, use Psalm 45 to explain the meaning of the first seal. Koresh typically assembled much more elaborate mosaics of texts from the prophets and psalms to support his interpretation of each seal, but Fagan at least follows his teacher's lead in beginning to construct a web of supporting references. The heart of Fagan's book, therefore, reproduces with remarkable fidelity both the substance of Koresh's teaching and the

distinctive way that he presented it. Outside of the autobiographical account that opens the book, what Fagan adds to Koresh's teaching is sequestered in a pair of appendices at the manuscript's end. There Fagan offers a series of brief philosophical reflections on religious themes including creation, the kingdom of God, inspiration, and righteousness, among others, and a pair of modern parables designed to reinforce his primary points. By locating his own reflections in appendices rather than in the body of the text, Fagan signals his intention that they be considered subordinate to Koresh's teaching, particularly as it is expressed in Koresh's exegesis of the seven seals.

The organization of *Mt. Carmel: The Unseen Reality* therefore reinforces Fagan's self-understanding as a "servant of the Lamb," one who is clearly secondary to an inspired interpreter. In fact, Fagan asserts that "whatever answers we offer, unless we are the Lamb, they amount to mere opinions and private interpretations."[15] In both form and content, Fagan's representation of the message of the seven seals hews as closely as possible to Koreshian orthodoxy. Fagan never wavers from testifying to the unique role that Koresh has played in the economy of salvation. He writes that, "first of all, *only the Lamb can reveal the book*, whoever or whatever he is. Secondly, *he does reveal the book.* The information contained therein, is shown to His servants."[16] Indeed, Fagan argues, the Lamb himself is the primary subject of the scriptures. Therefore, "the reason the Lamb alone was the only one considered worthy to reveal the book is because it contains God's thoughts about Him. Since He is the only one who knows God's thoughts, being one with God, who but He can reveal the book."[17] Thus, in Fagan's presentation, only Koresh could achieve the status of an inspired interpreter of the text.

The teaching of the Lamb, Koresh, about himself and his role in God's judgment did, however, give Koresh's students a unique insight into human history and God's plans for salvation.[18] Concerning the knowledge of the seven seals, Fagan observes that

> this knowledge was designed to prepare the followers of Christ, living in the days the events in the sealed book come to pass, to cope. It is unfortunate that this truth has been neglected. The seals have indeed been opened, but this generation continues in its ignorance of them. A mere handful of people were present to learn the meaning of the seals. *The events themselves are to shortly come to pass.* They too will come upon the world unawares, consider Luke 21:20-22, 24-27, 34, 35; cf. Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1:3; Zechariah 8:1-3, 20-23; 14:1-12, 16-19; Ezekiel 36; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 5:14; II Peter 3; I Thes 4:14-5:4. It is no wonder under the sixth seal, the world seeks to hide itself from the one on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.[19]

The faithful are to "cope" in these last days by recognizing Koresh as the Lamb and by preparing faithfully for God's judgment by studying the seven seals.

In Fagan's view, then, accepting Koresh's teaching about the seven seals in itself constituted a "victory" for God. He has held to that viewpoint even after the fire. He writes that "the deaths of those who died at Mt. Carmel merely sealed God's victory. Those of us who remain alive in faith, are an open show of that victory. The kingdom of God can now be made manifest in the earth, the next event to shortly come to pass."[20] In fact, Fagan sees Mt. Carmel as having provided an object lesson for all humankind. He proposes that

> in it's (*sic*) principal, the life style and conduct of Mt. Carmel, in addition to our experiences following February 28th, 1993, were a series of tests [. . .] designed of heaven, to address the question, HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE GOD? This is a question to all of humanity, and predicate to receiving the new covenant (The Seven Seals, The mystery of God) reuniting humanity with God.[21]

Far from being demoralized, Fagan remains unshaken in his faith and in his acceptance of Koresh as the Lamb who opened the sealed scroll. He eagerly awaits his coming salvation, even though he refrains from setting a specific date for God's judgment. The heedlessness of sinful humanity is merely a bump in the road to salvation. Fagan holds fast to the conviction that "through our faith in this revealed truth, we are translated—first in mind, then in body—into the Kingdom. Our having to wait for the materialization of this promise, is a result of man's failure to come into the faith of it."[22] Fagan leaves his readers armed with the message of the seven seals and forewarned concerning their imminent salvation.

THE CHOSEN VESSEL: *SEVEN SEALS*

The author of *Seven Seals* has chosen anonymity, preferring the title of "Chosen Vessel" to emphasize the prophet's authority. While the website on which the work appears claims to be the official site of "many" surviving Branch Davidians,[23] it provides no biographical information about the author, and *Seven Seals* itself offers no substantial autobiographical details. It is clear, however, that the Chosen Vessel's understanding of Koresh differs significantly from both Koresh's self-understanding and Fagan's interpretation of Koresh. Unlike Fagan, who accepted Koresh's teaching as the final word on the interpretation of scripture, the Chosen Vessel is not at all hesitant to present necessary "New Light." Moreover, *Seven Seals* presents the Chosen Vessel's teaching as required of all survivors. *Seven Seals* states clearly that

> none are to take these words lightly, for the Chosen Vessel has revealed Truth according to the written Word of the Prophets, and of their testimony which is

recorded in scripture (*Thus saith the Lord*). All of those of the Remaining Bride [surviving Branch Davidians] MUST now support the Revelation of the Chosen Vessel and prophesy again as stated in Rev. 10:11; 11:3.[24]

Given Koresh's long-standing insistence on his unique role in God's unfolding plan of salvation, the Chosen Vessel understandably anticipates that the message of *Seven Seals* may trouble the survivors of Mount Carmel.[25] But the Vessel also warns that "to reject the explanations contained in the Seven Seals . . . is to reject the Holy Spirit."[26] In effect, the Chosen Vessel claims to have replaced Koresh as the prophet and sole authoritative interpreter of scripture for the remnant of the Mount Carmel community. Just as during his life Koresh was the only one who could unlock the mysteries of the sealed scroll of Revelation 5, so now "there is only one chosen Vessel who has the Hidden Manna"[27] that will sustain the faithful until the end.

The Chosen Vessel's claim to succeed and even supersede Koresh is further reinforced by reference to a scriptural precedent. The Vessel asserts that

the Lamb and the Chosen Vessel of the remaining Bride are typified by Elijah and Elisha of the past. When Elijah was caught up to God, he left his mantle with Elisha, and Elisha was given a double portion of Elijah's spirit. In the latter day scenario, when the Man-child (*Lamb*) was caught up to God (*see Rev. 12:5*), the Lamb's wisdom was given in double portion to the Chosen Vessel who is of the Remaining Bride. The Chosen Vessel has the same wisdom of Prophecy within him in double portion, as he understands both sides of the double sided scroll; the one side which was revealed and fulfilled by the Lamb, and the second side which concerns the remaining Bride's destiny.[28]

Throughout *Seven Seals* the Chosen Vessel claims to be both a successor to Koresh and a necessary improvement upon him. In neither instance is there the clear subordination evidenced in Fagan's text.

Seven Seals also enhances the status of the Chosen Vessel by frequently yet obliquely referring to Koresh's own shortcomings. The Vessel flatly states that "the Man-child (*Lamb*) did not fully fulfill the First Seal of Rev. 6:2 because the Lamb being a sinner went froward [*sic*] in the way of his heart, as stated in Is. 57:16-18, to save his people by bearing their sins instead of bringing judgment against them, see Is. 53:5; Ps. 89:50."[29] Certainly, one of the most challenging aspects of Koresh's self-understanding for his followers and outsiders alike was his claim to be a "sinful Messiah."[30] The Chosen Vessel, however, seizes upon that concept as a way of explaining the incomplete success of Koresh's mission. Koresh's bearing the sins of his community had a positive effect on their chances for salvation, but it kept him from fully accomplishing his mission of interpreting and putting into action each of the seven seals. Consequently, the message of the Chosen Vessel is absolutely necessary for salvation.

The Chosen Vessel's authority depends neither on the assent of the surviving community nor on any specific relationship to Koresh. As the name indicates, the Vessel has been singled out by God for a crucial teaching mission. The Vessel's authority is legitimated neither by bureaucratic nor by traditional means, but by charismatic endowment. The Vessel "was the first to receive the Little Scroll (*typified by John receiving it in Rev. 10:8-10*), being the Hidden Manna which are the prophecies that are written on the other side of the scroll that pertain to the remaining Bride's situation (*destiny*)."[31] Although *Seven Seals* acknowledges Koresh's unprecedented accomplishment in opening the sealed scroll of Revelation 5, its acute awareness of what Koresh left undone leads to a reassessment of his status. Koresh remains a prophet and even the Lamb of Revelation 6, but his commentary on the seven seals can no longer stand alone.

The form of *Seven Seals* displays continuities with the written works of both Fagan and Koresh as well as some distinctive departures. It reprints nearly all of Revelation, specifically chapters 1-13, 17, and 19-20. But unlike Fagan, the Chosen Vessel offers extensive, though often repetitive, commentary on the biblical texts.[32] Interspersed with the interpretation of Revelation are prolonged analyses of Ezekiel 1, 4-9, Hosea 1-3, Zechariah 1, 5, 6, nearly all of Daniel, and shorter sections of Isaiah, Ezekiel 47, and the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 31 and 32. The Chosen Vessel rarely resorts to providing large segments of uninterpreted biblical passages. *Seven Seals* is less a mosaic of self-interpreting biblical passages and more a theological commentary.

Seven Seals also signals its departure from Koreshian orthodoxy in two other ways. Most strikingly, it makes little explicit reference to Koresh's own treatment of the seven seals. Where Fagan incorporated Koresh's entire written work into *Mt. Carmel: the Unseen Reality* and clearly subordinated his own interpretation to Koresh's, the Chosen Vessel offers only a brief gloss on the poem "Eden to Eden" that begins Koresh's manuscript. Even then, the three-page consideration of Koresh's poem appears as an afterthought, coming after more than six-hundred pages of interpretations of the biblical texts. In many ways, the significance of Koresh for the Chosen Vessel lies in the past; Koresh's prophetic work is finished. Another inspired interpreter of the sacred text now addresses a new context with a Present Truth.

A second departure lies in *Seven Seals'* prolonged attention to biblical texts about which neither Koresh nor Fagan wrote—although since Koresh committed very little of his oral teaching to writing it is difficult to gauge *Seven Seals'* degree of independence from Koresh's biblical interpretations. Some of the Vessel's choices, however, differ starkly from Fagan's. Where Fagan, through his autobiographical account of his arrest, trial, and continuing imprisonment, offered an unsparing indictment of the U.S. government, the Vessel has little to say directly

about the encounters between the Branch Davidians and the BATF, FBI, and court system. Instead, *Seven Seals* focuses relentlessly on the ignorance of Christendom. For example, with regard to the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25, the Vessel claims that "the leadership of Christendom are as the five foolish virgins having only the knowledge of the Christ of 2,000 years ago; and are without the extra knowledge of the latter day Lamb and the Chosen Vessel who are mentioned in the book of Daniel, Revelation, and in all the writings of the Prophets."[33]

The Chosen Vessel also offers an esoteric interpretation of creation to set God's coming judgment in the broadest possible cosmic context. Although the treatment of creation in *Seven Seals* is complex and sometimes obscure, it hinges on two particular biblical passages. The Vessel asserts that Gen. 1:2's description of the Spirit of God moving over the face of the waters is "a mystery which God kept hidden (*secret*) until the latter days when the Lamb with the Seven Seals would give the correct unfolding of the mysteries contained in the Word of God to his followers."[34] The Vessel expresses the heart of that mystery in a simple set of propositions that "before the world we live in was formed, God had created a previous world. This world is a repeat of that former world. From the time of Adam and Eve and throughout all generations, our world has been a repeat of that former world."[35] The relationship of the two worlds, however, is not that simple. As *Seven Seals* presents it, God's attitude toward that first creation was essentially experimental. After creating Michael and Lucifer as the first beings in the universe, God learned that evil was a truly disruptive force in creation and as a result destroyed that first creation.[36] The second creation, however, involved more than the story preserved in Genesis. According to the Chosen Vessel, the water in Gen 1:2 represents the flood with which God destroyed the first creation, but the Vessel also links the separation of the waters in Gen. 1:6 to the formation of the sea of glass on which God's throne rests in Rev. 4:6. In addition, the Vessel claims that the spirits of all beings on the earth during the first creation were placed in "angelic bodies" and now reside around the heavenly throne on the sea of glass.

Another fateful process took place among the heavenly retinue. The Chosen Vessel reports that "Lucifer, having been re-created perfect from the first creation, began to show signs of rebellion against God."[37] In order to correct Lucifer, God had Michael intervene. *Seven Seals* records that "Michael then returned to the past; to the time when the earth was destroyed and covered by water . . . to re-create the earth and show Lucifer her past"[38] in the hopes that she would come to her senses. What Michael made and Lucifer saw is the world that we have lived in since Adam and Eve.

Lucifer, presumably, has been watching as human history has unfolded up to these latter days. The process of salvation involves a literal

return to the time of creation, as is indicated by the Vessel's second crucial biblical text, Rev. 19:20. The Chosen Vessel claims that

> the lake of fire mentioned in Rev. 19:20 was the first earth's beginning, before the first creation of Michael and Lucifer was created. Our world being re-created at the point when the first earth was destroyed in a flood of waters, means we are heading backwards to the beginning of time. The time of this world is heading towards the lake of fire, as shown in Rev. 19:20. God is able to declare the end (*by a lake of fire*), from the beginning of Adam and Eve's creation, because every thing upon this earth is a repeat of the first creation upon the earth, see Isa. 46:10.[39]

As history returns to its point of origin, "the city New Jerusalem descends at the Sixth Seal to gather the redeemed and leave the earth before the final plague destroys the earth."[40] The descent of the New Jerusalem ushers in a third creation when "God will make all things new. [And] the redeemed, with Michael and the New Lucifer (*Chosen Vessel*) will repopulate the universe from the very beginning again."[41] Unlike the first two creations, the third will be a perfect "eternal paradise."[42]

If the Chosen Vessel's treatment of creation provides a general framework for the understanding of human history, the Vessel's analysis of recent history since the destruction of Mount Carmel strives to identify precisely when the sixth seal will be enacted and God's judgment will be unleashed upon the earth. Identifying Koresh with the daily sacrifice mentioned in Daniel 8:11,[43] the Chosen Vessel argues that his death on 19 April 1993 definitively inaugurated the period of the last days: "from the time the Daily (*Lamb*) was taken away (*killed*) began the 2,300 days (*literal days*) which is how much time remains before the Sixth Seal is fulfilled."[44] That period is further subdivided into two distinct segments. During the first 1,040 days, while the surviving Branch Davidians and their teacher, the Chosen Vessel, remain in spiritual seclusion, the Babylonian beast recovers from the wound inflicted upon it by the Lamb. But after that period the survivors are transformed by the teaching of the new Elisha messenger. As *Seven Seals* describes it,

> the remaining Bride who was taken into Babylonian captivity (*as stated in Dan. 11:33*), is given a Little Help, as seen in Dan. 11:34. The Little Help is the Little Scroll of Rev. 10:2, which the remaining Bride eats (*Hidden Manna of Rev. 2:17*); being the prophecies which are written on the other side of the scroll that prophesy of her (*Remaining Bride's*) destiny. The Chosen vessel (*typified by John in Rev. 10:8-10*) was the first to be given the Little Help (*understanding of prophesies*) that he may feed the Remaining bride therewith.[45]

For the next forty-two months the remaining Bride and the Chosen Vessel spread the message of the seven seals in order to gather the 144,000 who are the first fruits of salvation. Near the end of that period, however, just before the enactment of the sixth seal, the faithful and their teacher

will be killed by the Babylonian beast, repeating what happened at the Mount Carmel Center. But since "the Lamb and the Chosen Vessel are the Two Witnesses who are written on each side of the scroll of Rev. 5:1 and 11:3," they will resurrect after three-and-a-half days along with the 200,000,000 strong army of the saints, an event that will mark the end of the 2,300 day period.[46] The sixth seal will then be opened, five months of torment will be loosed upon the damned, and the redeemed will be gathered into the New Jerusalem. A rough calculation would then put God's judgment early in August of 1999.[47]

The Chosen Vessel stipulates a more precise dating of the end time than Fagan. While such calculations may well contribute to the maintenance of apocalyptic fervor, they can easily fall prey to the frustrations that have beset all other attempts at date setting throughout history. It seems clear, however, that the Chosen Vessel intends to give surviving Branch Davidians and any potential converts two rallying points. First, the Vessel confirms that the message of the seven seals has not lost any of its importance because of the destruction of Mount Carmel. It remains urgently relevant, since the days until God's judgment are literally numbered. Second, the Vessel comforts the survivors who dedicated their lives to study with Koresh, assuring them that they are not bereft of a teacher. The Vessel can do for them now what Koresh did while he was alive: interpret the sacred text. Only the medium of the message about the seals has changed. Koresh relied extensively on oral Bible studies, often of truly prodigious length, and he hesitated to write down his interpretation of the seals until, just days before the final attack on Mount Carmel, he perceived that God had permitted him to commit his teaching to writing. Despite some very vivid pictorial renditions of the apocalyptic beasts of Daniel, the whore of Babylon, and fiery cherubim and seraphim, the Chosen Vessel relies extensively on the printed word, both on paper and in electronic form. In addition to the manuscript of *Seven Seals* the Vessel's website maintains a continually accumulating set of questions and answers about the message of the seals. Each answer restates the message of the *Seven Seals* book.

The Chosen Vessel attempts to reinforce the apocalyptic convictions that led many of his readers to Mount Carmel in the first place. But instead of presenting Koresh as a unique interpreter of the sacred text, as Fagan had, the Chosen Vessel relativizes Koresh's significance, supplements his revelation, and focuses upon a specific date for the impending events. The Vessel's response to the devastation of Mount Carmel sharply differs from Fagan's orthodoxy. For the Chosen Vessel neither the status nor the teaching of Koresh can remain inviolate; change is necessary and innovation is sanctioned by God. The Chosen Vessel's message constitutes yet another revolution in a theological tradition stretching from Victor Houteff through Ben and Lois Roden to Koresh himself.[48] How the Vessel's message and radical claim to

authority will be received, and what will become of the Vessel and the "New Light" on the seven seals since the judgment didn't happen in August 1999 remain to be seen.

CONCLUSIONS

Mt. Carmel: the Unseen Reality and *Seven Seals* demonstrate that Branch Davidian theological speculation about the impending judgment has not only persisted but even flourished after the death of David Koresh. The persistence of the theological tradition, even without its being securely embedded in a social matrix like the Mount Carmel Center, has been supported by changes in the media which expresses that tradition to others. Although shorter messages were circulated to "branches" outside of Mount Carmel on audiotapes, Koresh's lengthy Bible studies were primarily designed for face-to-face encounters with responsive audiences, as the brief moments of his teaching that have been preserved on videotape clearly indicate.[49] The oral nature of Koresh's teaching gave him significant opportunity to change and adjust it as he saw fit. For Koresh, the transition to a written message was a momentous change, one that he could not undertake on his own. As he wrote in his final 14 April letter, only then and only through God's direct intervention was he "being permitted to document, in structured form, the decoded message of the Seven Seals."[50] The subsequent effects on the community of fixing in writing Koresh's teaching about the seven seals can never be known. It is likely, however, that the presence of an authoritative "decoding" of the message of the seven seals would have imposed a potentially serious constraint on further theological innovation by introducing a second, textual, locus of authority in addition to Koresh's own person. Koresh's documenting his interpretation of the seven seals implicitly contained the seeds of the routinization of his own authority.

The way Fagan treats Koresh's manuscript reinforces those impressions. Koresh's written interpretation of the seven seals is the centerpiece of *Mt. Carmel: the Unseen Reality*. Fagan provides introductory and background material, virtually all designed to illustrate the significance of Koresh's final work. Koresh's book takes the place of the prophet himself. In Fagan's presentation, the message of the seven seals is forever fixed. The status which he accords to Koresh's manuscript is literally canonical; it becomes the yardstick by which any expression of the message of the seven seals must be measured. Fagan thus intimates a future in which Branch Davidian theology would be much less fluid and open to improvisation than it was while Koresh was delivering his oral Bible studies. For Fagan, prophetic authority is located securely in the past. Whether Fagan would go so far as to deny the possibility of new

Present Truth being vouchsafed to this or any future generation is difficult to discern from his current writings. But it is clear that even as he looks eagerly forward towards the end, Fagan also looks resolutely backwards to Koresh for the authoritative statement on how, why, and when that end will occur.

The Chosen Vessel presents a different situation. In addition to the Vessel's direct claims to inspiration and authority, the failure of *Seven Seals* to devote any significant attention to Koresh's manuscript signals that a very different sensibility is at work. *Seven Seals* capitalizes on the support for innovation inherent in the Adventist and Branch Davidian notion of Present Truth. From that perspective authority is never securely fixed in the past; the possibility of new revelation is ever-present, and the collection of authoritative texts always awaits new additions. The open-ended nature of authoritative interpretations of the message of the seven seals is further indicated by the constantly growing set of questions and answers on the website. The Chosen Vessel's theological innovation, like Fagan's orthodoxy, takes a textual form, but it is a form that is constantly open to, even eager for, new additions. In fact, there is nothing about *Seven Seals*, as it is currently organized, that precludes the incorporation of new or deletion of old material in successive editions. Just as *Seven Seals* portrays Koresh's "decoding" of the message of Revelation as a partial success, it suggests that its own interpretation is also open to further clarification and improvement. In the vision of the Chosen Vessel, no text from the past can hold final canonical authority because there is always the possibility that an inspired prophet could offer fresh clarifications of Present Truth. Only when human history itself comes to an end will the cumulative process of revelation be finished. *Seven Seals* thus enshrines the revolutionary power of charisma and remains theoretically open to its reappearance. *Mt. Carmel: the Unseen Reality*, on the other hand, evokes the organizing and standardizing power of routinization as it is expressed in the granting of canonical authority to one book only. Each text implies a path that a reconstituted Branch Davidian community could take in the years remaining before the final judgment. But the concrete sociological implications of the competing theological visions have yet to play themselves out.

The dilemmas confronted by Fagan and the Chosen Vessel are distinctive but not unique in the history of new religious movements. For example, at the end of a recent treatment of developments in Christian Science after the passing of its founder Mary Baker Eddy, John K. Simmons poses a provocative question. Noting that the board of directors of Christian Science implied a "rational/legal covenant story" in its interpretation of Eddy's set of bylaws entitled *Manual of the Mother Church*, but that a group that crystallized around Annie Bill's reading of the same document implied a "charisma covenant story," Simmons asks

Could the "two-story model" present in the history of Christian Science be applicable to other new religious movements? Specifically, upon the death of the prophet, does a successful routinization process demand that a sectarian group emerge that attracts those more emotive, innovative, energetic members away from the mainstream adherents? Occupying the "firebrands" of the movement with their own organizational process might facilitate the institutionalization of a rational/legal covenant in the dominant group.[51]

There are admittedly significant differences between the Christian Scientists and Branch Davidians, not least of which is the virtual destruction of the community along with the prophet in the latter case. A vital Branch Davidian community, either along the lines of the Mount Carmel Center or in some new organizational form, has not yet been reconstituted. Accordingly, Branch Davidian theology is not now strongly connected to any form of community life in which the process of routinization could be traced. Nonetheless, Simmons' question remains intriguing. *Seven Seals* and *Mt. Carmel: the Unseen Reality* do imply very different solutions to the dilemmas of a dead prophet and a shattered community. One strongly depends on the continuing eruption of charismatic authority, while the other transfers authority to a fixed text that presents the final teachings of a departed prophet. Concrete interactions between those espousing each of the two options cannot easily be identified in the case of the Branch Davidians, but it is clear that the tensions between charisma and routinization are playing themselves out among the students of the seven seals just as they did among the followers of Mary Baker Eddy. Neither Fagan nor the Chosen Vessel expects those tensions to persist for long, given the imminence of God's judgment, but in the meantime they will continue to shape the lives and expectations of the faithful remnant that awaits the apocalypse.

ENDNOTES

[1] On this understanding of apocalypticism see James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 8–9.

[2] On the notion of a "grounding text" see Barry Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 99–116.

[3] For Koresh's text and a commentary on it by James Tabor and Phillip Arnold, see Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?*, 189–211.

[4] Livingstone Fagan, *Mt. Carmel: The Unseen Reality* (1994), part 2, 6. Fagan's book, along with several of his other writings, is available from Mark Swett's website devoted to the Branch Davidians: <http://home.maine.rr.com/waco>. Swett posts Fagan's book in two parts; I provide references to both the part and the page number within the part. Fagan continues to write in prison, but the failure of a resurrected David Koresh to return in 1996, as many survivors expected, has not yet decisively influenced Fagan's theology.

[5] *Seven Seals* can be downloaded from <www.branchdavidian.com> or <www.sevenseals.com>. A hard copy can also be ordered from either of those sites, which bill themselves as "the official website of many Branch Davidian survivors who were with David Koresh during the 51-day siege at Mt. Carmel center." *Seven Seals* is divided into two books with non-consecutive pagination. References will thus be given to the book and the page within that book.

Although the book itself is anonymous and identification of the author from the text of *Seven Seals* is complicated by the switching back and forth from masculine to feminine pronouns, James Tabor, Mark Swett, and others attribute it to Mount Carmel survivor Renos Avraam, who is now serving a ten-year sentence in Federal prison for his participation in the 28 February 1993 shoot-out between the BATF and the Branch Davidians. Avraam has been aided in the composition of *Seven Seals* by his spiritual "wife," the former Leslie Eddy of Tulsa, Oklahoma, who now identifies herself as "Shekinah Koresh." She met Avraam and converted to the Branch Davidian faith some two years after the destruction of Mount Carmel. Mark Swett notes on his website that Avraam's "work has proved to be divisive among the survivors." Swett posts a letter from survivor Catherine Matteson to Avraam (dated 18 March 1997) in which Matteson informs Avraam and "Shekinah Koresh" that "neither of you understand the 7 Seals. You are not teaching the 7 Seals or any of David's message. You are leading people into perdition who follow your so called message." James Tabor (private communication, 10 March 1999) observes that "none of the core group remaining at Waco, now more or less held together by Clive Doyle, has accepted their message."

[6] In two short essays available in Mark Swett's electronic archive of Branch Davidian materials (see note 4), Marc Breault discusses Davidian calculations of the end and their expectations for the return of Koresh. Breault was close to Koresh until he left the group in September 1989 after Koresh introduced his controversial teachings about the necessity for group celibacy and his personal sexual monopoly over all the women in the group. In "The Return of David Koresh" (1995), Breault reports that "many Branch Davidians expect David Koresh to 'return,'" most likely after a period of 1,335 days as indicated in Daniel 12:12 (p. 1). In "Vernon Howell and the 1995 Deadline" (1992), Breault notes that "Vernon [Breault does not recognize Howell's adopted name of David Koresh] wavered in belief between ending it all in 1995, and starting the countdown to the end in that year. However, in countless studies, especially beginning in 1987, Vernon went over Psalm 90 as I have described it here, leading most to believe that God's kingdom would begin in 1995" (p. 5). In "The Return of David Koresh," however, Breault describes alternative calculations of the time of the end, all based on passages in either Daniel 8 or 12 that range from 12 June 1996 to 6 August 1999 (see pp. 4–5). Breault's essays show that discussion about the time of the end or at least the beginning of the end was very much a part of Koresh's teaching and Branch Davidian speculation. Given his theological training and his status within the group, Fagan cannot have been unaware of such thinking. He has, however, chosen not to take up the topic of dating the end in his theological writings since 19 April 1993. Whether Fagan's refusal to take up the question of the date of the end represents a concern about misunderstanding by outsiders, a split between more private and more public teachings, or the lingering effects of cumulative disappointments is difficult to determine at this point. At any rate, Fagan's reticence in his "published" works stands in stark contrast to the Chosen Vessel's deep involvement in date setting.

[7] On Koresh's Bible Studies see Eugene V. Gallagher, "'Theology is Life and Death': David Koresh on Violence, Persecution, and the Millennium," in *Violence, Persecution, and the Millennium: Historical Cases*, ed. Catherine L. Wessinger (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 82–100.

[8] Fagan, *Mt. Carmel*, 1:5. I retain Fagan's occasionally idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 1:15.

[11] Ibid., 1:2.

[12] Ibid., 1:3.

[13] Ibid.

[14] David Koresh, "The Seven Seals of the book of Revelation," as printed in Tabor & Gallagher, *Why Waco?*, 197.

[15] Fagan, *Mt. Carmel*, 1:25.

[16] Ibid., 2:6. My emphasis.

[17] Ibid., 2:14.

[18] See ibid., 2:35.

[19] Ibid., 2:5. My emphasis.

[20] Ibid., 2:8–9.

[21] Ibid., 2:32.

[22] Ibid., 2:37.

[23] See note 5.

[24] *Seven Seals*, 1:303. I retain all punctuation, emphases, and spellings from the original unless otherwise noted.

[25] See ibid., 1:54.

[26] Ibid., 1:I.

[27] Ibid., 1:274–75.

[28] Ibid., 2:85.

[29] Ibid., 2:4; see also 1:292.

[30] See Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?*, 56–57, 96.

[31] *Seven Seals*, 1:253.

[32] Interspersed with the interpretation of Revelation are prolonged analyses of Ezekiel 1, 4–9, Hosea 1–3, Zechariah 1, 5, 6, nearly all of Daniel, and shorter sections of Isaiah, Ezekiel 47, and the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 31 and 32.

[33] *Seven Seals*, 1:3.

[34] Ibid., 1:13.

[35] Ibid.

[36] See ibid., 1:31.

[37] Ibid., 1:12. The chart on 1:12 presents the complicated account of the two creations in summary form.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 1:33.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 1:28.

[43] The Branch Davidians' understanding of Koresh as the "daily," however, was not specifically sacrificial. In "The Return of David Koresh," Marc Breault reports that "Koresh felt that he was the 'daily'" and that "Koresh believed that the Christ spirit dwelt in him" (p. 3). What was important about Koresh, then, was that he personally enshrined the living spirit of prophecy. As Breault remarks, "Koresh simply followed old Branch Davidian tradition. He saw himself as the true tabernacle, one in a long line of true tabernacles which included the Protestant reformers and the Davidian and Seventh-day Adventist prophets" (ibid.).

[44] *Seven Seals*, 1:82. The sole emphasis on the period of 2,300 days is distinctive in *Seven Seals*, which was, of course, published after all of the possible dates of the end, from 1,150 to 1,335 days after Koresh's death, had already passed.

[45] Ibid., 1:84. My emphasis on "the other side of the scroll."

[46] Ibid., 1:87.

[47] In "The Return of David Koresh," Marc Breault specifies the date as 6 August 1999. In "The 1,335 Day Prophecy of Daniel and Revelation," a recent addition to the www.sevenseals.com website, the Chosen Vessel moves toward a spiritual interpretation of the August 1999 date for the end. The Vessel claims, for example, that "the rebellious Angels are being slain in heaven to cleanse the spiritual sanctuary of heaven after the 2,300 days had expired. This takes place before the cleansing of the spiritual sanctuary on this earth, see Is. 34:5" (p. 5).

[48] On the history of the Davidian and Branch Davidian movements see Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?*, 33–43. See also William L. Pitts, Jr., "Davidians and Branch Davidians: 1929–1987," in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 20–42.

[49] Videotape originally made for the Australian television program "A Current Affair" was widely broadcast at the time of the siege on the Mount Carmel Center. Many of the news programs and films about the Branch Davidians and the siege contain brief snippets of that footage.

[50] As quoted in Tabor and Gallagher, 15.

[51] John K. Simmons, "Charisma and Covenant: the Christian Science Movement in its Initial Postcharismatic Phase," in *When Prophets Die: the Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements*, ed. Timothy Miller (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 122.

The Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God and Its Role in Russian Nationalist Discourse, 1984–99[1]

Eugene Clay

The decline and fall of the Communist regime in the Soviet Union provoked intense apocalyptic expectations even as it opened new possibilities for religious believers. In 1990, a new law on freedom of conscience transformed the religious landscape by legalizing movements that had once existed only underground, by encouraging new interest in old religious institutions, and by creating the conditions for the emergence of many new religious movements. At the same time, the radically new political and social situation of post-Communist Russia provoked a vigorous debate about the future of the Russian nation—a debate that religious believers actively engaged. Orthodox Christians in particular tried to develop a new national narrative that could chart a future for Russian society and make sense of the Soviet past, including the church's ambivalent relationship to the atheist state.

In 1989, a new apocalyptic prophet, Ioann (Veniamin Iakovlevich Bereslavskii), founded the Center of the Mother of God [*Bogorodichnyi tsentr*] and began publicly proclaiming his own national and eschatological narrative, one he had received from Mary herself. Deeply influenced by the literature and methods of the Catholic Marian apparition movement, Ioann (since 1992 Archbishop Ioann) has been receiving his own special revelations since November 1984 when Mary first warned him of an impending divine judgment on the world. Creatively improvising, Ioann has drawn from both the right and the left wings of the political spectrum to fashion his own national narrative for Russia. Like liberal Westernizing democrats, Ioann rejects the official Orthodox hierarchy as hopelessly compromised; he dismisses these bishops as pharisees. Strongly anti-Communist, Ioann also generally supports democratic reform and has sought contacts with the West.[2] But at the same time, like the right-wing nationalists, Ioann insists that Russia has a messianic role to play in the post-Communist world order.[3] Especially favored by the Mother of God, Russia is at the center of an apocalyptic struggle against Communists and Satanists—a struggle that marks the beginning of a new age, the Age of Mary.

According to Ioann, for the past 170 years—from 1830 on the Rue du Bac in Paris to her contemporary appearances in Medjugorje, Bosnia—Mary has been revealing a third testament through her various apparitions. Her latest appearances to Ioann—and her desperate eschatological victory over Soviet Communism—mark the end of the Age of Christ and the beginning of the Age of Mary. It also marks the end of the Christian churches and the rise of a new church, the Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God [*Tserkov' Bozhiei Materi Preobrazhaiushcheisia*] (another name for the Center of the Mother of God), that will replace them.

Ioann has been extraordinarily effective in publicizing his startling message. In the last ten years, the number of his followers has grown to at least ten thousand, and even more by some estimates.[4] He has undertaken an energetic publishing campaign to broadcast Mary's revelations to the world and to reinterpret world history in light of her revelations. The author of scores of books and pamphlets, Ioann has also organized congregations across the former Soviet Union. Using a variety of sources, including Ioann's extensive publications, the reports of the secular press, and the recent works of official Russian Orthodox heresiologists, this article describes the rise of Ioann's significant apocalyptic movement from its origins in 1984 to the present.

Archbishop Ioann's movement draws its inspiration from the cult of Mary in both the Catholic and the Orthodox traditions. At the Council of Ephesus in 431, the Third Ecumenical Council confirmed Mary's title as Theotokos (the God-bearer or Mother of God), an appellation translated as *bogoroditsa* in Russian. Since then, the cult of Mary has played a significant role in both Eastern and Western Christianity. Mary is at the center of four of the twelve major church holidays celebrated by the Russian Orthodox Church, and she is portrayed in several famous wonder-working icons.

The Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God plays two important roles in the discourse of Russian nationalism. First, it has articulated its own vision for Russia. Skillfully drawing on an attractive tradition of charismatic Orthodox spirituality (including the cult of Mary and clairvoyant monastic elders), Archbishop Ioann has created a new national narrative that builds on the eschatology of the Marian apparition movement. As Liah Greenfeld has argued, nationalism does not always take the form of a narrow ethnic particularism; it may also be the expression a religious ideology such as Marianism that attaches a country to a "supra-societal system."[5] Marian ideology has provided Archbishop Ioann with a framework to explain the special place of Russia in God's economy. In this respect, the Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God resembles Marian apparition movements in other countries. In Bosnia, for example, the cult of the Virgin of Medjugorje is closely linked to Croatian nationalism.[6] Likewise, in the United States, Catholic devo-

tees of Mary have often given a special role to the United States in resisting "Russian" atheistic Communism.[7] Just as these Marian movements fashion special purposes for their respective nations, so too Archbishop Ioann makes his own country, Russia, the center of world history and Christian eschatology.

Secondly, the Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God serves as a target for more conservative nationalist and Orthodox forces, who accuse Ioann of leading a dangerous "destructive cult." Despite his belief in Russia's special mission, Archbishop Ioann has alienated the Russian right wing by his attacks on the Moscow Patriarchate and his close embrace of Catholic ideas and rituals.

ARCHBISHOP IOANN, PROPHET OF THE THEOTOKOS: THE EARLY YEARS, 1946-84

Born Veniamin Iakovlevich Iankel'man in 1946, the future Archbishop Ioann grew up as the son of a Soviet officer of Jewish nationality.[8] (In the Soviet Union, Jewishness was an ethnic, not a religious, category; from the 1930s, every Soviet citizen had an official nationality recorded in his or her internal passport.[9]) Like many Soviet Jews, Iankel'man changed his surname to avoid anti-Semitic prejudice; after his marriage, he adopted his wife's surname, Bereslavskii.[10]

Despite a difficult childhood, Bereslavskii succeeded in enrolling in the elite Institute of Foreign Languages in Moscow, where he specialized in the study of Indian languages and also became fluent in English.[11] But he soon fell into serious trouble. According to Russian Orthodox missionaries, Bereslavskii was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic in February 1971 and was twice hospitalized in Moscow psychiatric institutions.[12] This medical diagnosis and treatment may have been a form of political repression, for in the 1970s, Bereslavskii read the forbidden works of the anti-Communist philosopher and theologian, Nikolai Berdiaev, who profoundly influenced him.[13] To eliminate dissent, the Soviet state forcibly hospitalized dissidents in special psychiatric institutions operated by the Ministry of Interior; Bereslavskii may have been a victim of this policy.[14] About the same time, Bereslavskii also ran afoul of the criminal justice system. Citing Archbishop Ioann's own works, the Orthodox journalist Iakov Krotov noted that Bereslavskii served six years in prison for assault.[15]

After he had served his sentence, Bereslavskii began receiving revelations in November 1984 from the wonder-working Smolensk icon of the Mother of God.[16] This remarkable event, the first in an unbroken series of apparitions by the Virgin Mother, led Bereslavskii on a quest to create a religious community obedient to this new divine manifestation.

The Virgin's initial message warned of an imminent judgment and urged Archbishop Ioann to preach repentance and fasting:

> Go and tell the whole world that the time has come and that if they will not pray and fast, then all will perish. Those who are being saved have already awakened, and those who will not awaken, will perish without ever having been born, like a child suffocated in the womb.[17]

She also made specific predictions about the final days:

> The secrets of the icons are hidden from you. In the last days the icons will come alive, and the saints will descend from them. . . . Enoch will come on the second Sunday of September. An invisible army will descend to earth, when it will be dark everywhere. Jerusalem will fall, and Moscow will rise to become the second home of the Antichrist.[18]

When asked whether the end of the world was near, Mary strongly implied that it was: "Strengthen yourself for battle. In the hour of temptation as you testified before the hegemons, you will either glorify or betray Christ. The one who does not pass through the field of battle is separated from God.[19] Likewise, she strongly condemned the official Russian Orthodox Church and promised eternal torment for its priests if they refused to repent. "The priesthood has fallen and there is no salvation for it. . . . Their shame cannot be wiped away. They have blackened the Church and profaned the wounds of the Lord. The blood of many of my righteous ones is upon them."[20]

Yet Mary gave a special encouragement to Bereslavskii. "I will strengthen you and you will be saved for your zeal. I will increase your faith in the Holy Lord and in My Protection so that you will not grumble or grow weary, but will be courageous in spirit." She also identified him as one of the "truly zealous Orthodox" who were "the future church." And she promised him that sometime in the future "many of my saints will come in the flesh."[21]

Armed with this promise, Bereslavskii has spent the rest of his life seeking to create a new church, the church of Mary, that would obey her new revelation and her new prophet. Initially, he sought allies and followers among the small, persecuted, illegal groups of Orthodox Christians who had rejected the Soviet state. In 1985, a few months after his first apparition, Bereslavskii found and joined the True Orthodox Church, an underground religious movement that denied the legitimacy of the official, legal Russian Orthodox Church.

BERESLAVSKII AND THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH, 1985-89

In 1985, Bereslavskii sought out Metropolitan Gennadii (Grigorii Iakovlevich Sekach, 1898-1987), a major leader of the underground True

Orthodox Church [*istinno pravoslavnaia tserkov'*].[22] The True Orthodox Church had broken with the official Russian Orthodox Church in 1927, after Metropolitan Sergii (Ioann Nikolaevich Stragorodskii, 1856–1943), acting as patriarchal administrator after the death of Patriarch Tikhon (Vasilii Ivanovich Belavin, 1865–1925) of Moscow (r. 1917–25), had issued a declaration of loyalty to the atheistic Soviet state. Sergii's statement, which to this day evokes controversy among Orthodox believers, embraced the Soviet Union as the "civic motherland" of the Russian church: "her happiness and successes being our happiness and successes, and her misfortunes our misfortunes."[23] Rejecting Sergii's statement as an apostasy from the true faith, several bishops chose to go underground rather than follow him as their leader. Isolated groups in various places in the USSR declared themselves to be the true successors to the prerevolutionary church, the True Orthodox Church. More of a movement than an institution, the True Orthodox Church remained fragmented, persecuted, and isolated throughout the Soviet period.[24]

Grigorii Sekach (the future Metropolitan Gennadii) spent a decade in Soviet prison camps from 1929 to 1939 for his religious activities before being ordained as a deacon and then as a priest in German-occupied Belarus during World War II.[25] After the war, he served for a time in the officially recognized churches of the Moscow Patriarchate, but his refusal to cooperate with the state antireligious authorities drove him to become a monk in the underground True Orthodox Church, where he took the name Gennadii. He founded twelve underground monasteries and convents in Ukraine, Belarus, and the Caucasus. Consecrated a bishop in 1971 by the mysterious Archbishop Serafim (Mikhail Aleksandrovich Pozdeev) of Novosibirsk, Gennadii assumed the leadership of a secret council of three underground metropolitans, including Metropolitans Feodosii (Gumennikov) of Stavropol' and Epifanii of Mogilev.[26]

According to his own account, Bereslavskii obtained the address of Metropolitan Gennadii's secret monastery from a nun in an underground monastery, the catacomb Pochaev convent. Sometime in 1985, shortly after Mary's initial appearance to him, Bereslavskii traveled to the metropolitan's hideaway in New Athos in the Caucasus Mountains. There Metropolitan Gennadii tonsured Bereslavskii as the monk Ioann and also ordained him first as a hierodeacon and then as a priest.[27]

Although the literature of the Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God emphasizes its connection with the True Orthodox Church, Ioann (Bereslavskii)'s affiliation with Metropolitan Gennadii's group was brief. After his visit to the Caucasus, the newly tonsured monk-priest Ioann returned to Moscow, far from the supervision of his episcopal superior. In the Soviet capital, he served in a monastery of his own creation with his own followers. Mary continued to appear to him and to provide him with new revelations about her special status in the economy of salva-

tion—revelations that went far beyond the traditional Orthodox theology of the underground church. By 1989, Ioann was preaching not only that the world was coming to an end, but that Mary had effectively supplanted Christ, who had become no more than "a memory" and "a symbol."[28] Moreover, Ioann, in his quest for followers, sought out groups that the prerevolutionary church—the church that Metropolitan Gennadii claimed to continue—had condemned as heretics. For example, in 1987, Ioann sought out the Innocentites, followers of the apocalyptic Moldovan monk Inochentie (Ioan Levizor, 1875–1917), whom the Orthodox Church had condemned as a false teacher in 1912.[29]

Such innovations clearly strained his relationship with the conservative underground church leadership. For example, in his 1991 hagiography of Metropolitan Gennadii, Ioann (Bereslavskii) implicitly criticized his hero with an unfavorable comparison to Ioann's new church: "[Metropolitan Gennadii's] qualities, as we shall see, were basically external. He never knew the inner, narrow path. He never knew deep repentance, as the spiritual wing of the True Orthodox Church—the wing that has been transfigured into the Brotherhood of the Mother of God—understands it."[30] In Ioann's view, the Mother-of-God Center was not only a continuation of the True Orthodox Church, but clearly superior to it. Significantly, Ioann recognized his movement was the only branch of the True Orthodox Church; obviously, many underground Orthodox rejected the new revelations and refused to follow him.

Ultimately, Ioann's teachings proved unacceptable to his former mentors; in a General Epistle dated 21 May 1992 (Old Style[31]), the surviving members of Gennadii's council, Metropolitans Feodosii and Epifanii, condemned the doctrine of the Mother-of-God Center and excommunicated the "hierodeacon Ioann Bereslavskii . . . who was earlier banned from serving because he had gone out from his bishops into an unauthorized assemblage [*samochinnoe sborishche*] . . . and for spreading false teaching about a 'Third Testament.'"[32] But for Ioann, obedience to the new revelation superseded any loyalty to the underground church. And this new revelation called for the creation of a new church, the church of Mary.

ESTABLISHING THE CENTER OF THE MOTHER OF GOD, 1989–92

In the extraordinary four years from 1989 to 1992, when the Soviet Union disintegrated, Ioann emerged from the underground to build his movement into the church that Mary had ordained. In this period, Ioann openly challenged the legitimacy of the official Orthodox church and its Patriarch, succeeded in obtaining his own episcopal consecra-

tion from an Orthodox bishop, gained international recognition by joining the U.S.-based International Council of Community Churches, launched an aggressive missionary campaign that attracted thousands of followers throughout Russia and Ukraine, convoked the first councils of his church, and published a series of cheap tracts and books that made Mary's message available to the whole world.

By 1989, Ioann and his followers had decided to emerge from their clandestine existence and to proclaim their message publicly. Changes in Soviet state policy toward religion had made this bold move possible. With the advent of Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev to the position of General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1985, the Soviet state had liberalized its policy toward religion in general and the Orthodox Church in particular. Reversing decades of religious persecution, the Soviet government allowed new congregations to register legally, returned several venerable monasteries to the Church, permitted new religious publications, moderated its antireligious propaganda, and even provided church representation in a new legislature, the Congress of People's Deputies, created in 1989.[33]

This new atmosphere of openness allowed Ioann to open his Mother-of-God Center—not as a church, but as a trade union of monks and priests.[34] At the same time, he placed ads in Moscow newspapers inviting interested inquirers to call the center to learn about the Catacomb Church.[35] In 1990, one of Ioann's companions, Petr (Sergei Iur'evich Bol'shakov) published an article about Gennadii and his secret council in the monthly periodical *Religiia v SSSR* [*Religion in the USSR*].[36]

The available evidence, fragmentary and anecdotal though it is, indicates that Ioann gathered his followers primarily from young, educated spiritual seekers, much like Ioann himself. For example, Ioann's chief lieutenant, Father Petr (Bol'shakov), was originally a Polish Catholic and had been trained as a computer programmer.[37] In 1991, Ioann's first disciples in St. Petersburg were a married couple who had previously promoted spiritualism and the Chinese martial art of T'ai Chi Ch'uan.[38] In 1992, the Mother-of-God Center aggressively proselytized in the universities, including the prestigious Moscow State University.[39] Appearing in their bright blue cassocks, young followers of Archbishop Ioann sold pamphlets and solicited converts on the street corners and metro stations of Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The center also actively sought adherents in the official Orthodox parishes in and around Moscow. According to the Orthodox heresiologist Father Aleksei Moroz, they enjoyed special success in two parishes: the Church of the Joy of All Who Sorrow on Bol'shaia Ordynka Street and the Dormition Cathedral in Kashira, a Moscow suburb. Located near the Tret'iakov Art Museum, the Church of the Joy of All Who Sorrow has long served as a spiritual center for the Moscow intelligentsia, and it was from among such religious inquirers that the Center gained new

disciples. By all accounts, Ioann has been less successful in winning adherents from the underground Orthodox opposition; Metropolitan Gennadii's successors in the True Orthodox Church excommunicated Ioann in 1992. Likewise, the Innocentites apparently refused to join Ioann when he appealed to them in 1987.[40]

In 1990, Ioann's revelations resulted in a major scandal at the Cathedral of the Dormition in Kashira. Ioann's followers gained influence over Father Konstantin Vasil'ev, the cathedral rector. Over several months, priests and monks from Ioann's movement traveled to the cathedral, where they freely preached and celebrated the liturgy. Father Konstantin's sermons became increasingly apocalyptic, warning of a sudden and imminent judgment. On 28 August 1990, the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God (the feast-day of his parish), Father Konstantin announced to his flock that he was none other than a secret bishop of the True Orthodox Church, Bishop Lazar' of Moscow and Kashira. Six days later, his ecclesiastical superior in the official Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Iuvenalii (Vladimir Kirillovich Poiarkov, b. 1935) of Krutitsy (r. 1977–), banned him from serving. Not content to obey the metropolitan, Father Konstantin tried and failed to become independent of the Orthodox hierarchy by registering his parish as a separate religious organization with the city authorities. When the city soviet rejected this tactic, Father Konstantin and fifteen of his parishioners seized the church building and had to be driven out by police.[41]

IOANN'S CONSECRATION AS BISHOP

This clash with the official Orthodox Church convinced Ioann that the Center of the Mother of God needed to establish its own canonical hierarchy, independent of the Moscow Patriarchate. But even as he faced increasing pressure from the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, Ioann also had become isolated from his erstwhile allies in the True Orthodox Church who could have consecrated him. (Although Ioann has never publicly admitted to this break, neither does he explain why the underground synod never made him a bishop.) Unable to turn to the True Orthodox Church to ensure an apostolic succession for his church, Ioann needed to find a bishop who could elevate him to the episcopate.

Fortunately for his ambitions, Ioann found a new ally in Metropolitan Ioann (Vasilii Nikolaevich Bodnarchuk, 1929–94) of L'viv of the newly revived Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC). Originally consecrated as the bishop of Zhytomyr by the official Moscow Patriarchate in 1977, Ioann (Bodnarchuk), a native Ukrainian, broke with the Russian Orthodox Church in 1989 to become the first hierarch of the UAOC. The UAOC, founded as part of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in 1921, had faced severe Soviet persecution and survived

only in the Ukrainian diaspora. By embracing the Ukrainian nationalist cause in October 1989, Ioann (Bodnarchuk) became the first UAOC bishop to reside in Soviet Ukraine in fifty years. He swiftly rose in the hierarchy of the church to take the title of Metropolitan of L'viv.[42]

But the rebel metropolitan's position was far from secure. Inside the revived UAOC, he faced fierce political rivals who wished to remove him from office as soon as a new episcopate could be formed. Desperately in need of allies, the Ukrainian bishop saw an opportunity when he met the Russian visionary. Ioann (Bereslavskii) cleverly proposed that Metropolitan Ioann (Bodnarchuk) create a Russian Autocephalous Orthodox Church that would operate on the territory of the Russian Republic as a rival to the Moscow Patriarchate and an ally for the UAOC. In February 1991, Metropolitan Ioann (Bodnarchuk) and other unnamed bishops from the UAOC consecrated Ioann (Bereslavskii) as the first bishop of this new church, the Russian Autocephalous Orthodox Catholic Church (RAOCC).[43]

Once consecrated, Ioann seems to have abandoned any relationship with the Ukrainian church and to have stopped using the RAOCC name. In his published writings, he never mentioned Metropolitan Ioann (Bodnarchuk) until after the latter's death in 1994. Indeed, Ioann was so discreet about his consecration that one observer concluded he had been consecrated by the Mother of God rather than by any human hand.[44] Even today, Ioann has not disclosed the names of the other bishops who participated in his elevation to the episcopate.[45]

As a bishop, Ioann (Bereslavskii) could ordain the priests necessary for Mary's church. In an address dated 25 February 1991, the new bishop called for a "new priesthood after the order of Melchizedek." Unlike the "pharisaical" priests of traditional Orthodoxy, these "priests of the Mother of God" would be distinguished "not by dogma and external ritual-cultic forms, but by . . . the strength and sincerity of their faith and their relationship to the Theotokos." An ecumenical priesthood, they would exist independent of all religious confessions, "for their goal is to unite all people in the world."[46]

FIRST WESTERN CONTACTS: THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY CHURCHES

Consecration did provide Ioann greater credibility in his efforts to gain Western recognition for his movement. Shortly after his consecration in February 1991, he turned to a Canadian child psychiatrist, Marilyn Zwaig Rossner, who had participated in a two-year exchange in Crimea. Presenting himself as a bishop and a Marian prophet of the persecuted True Orthodox Church, Ioann requested support in his desperate struggle with an increasingly powerful Moscow Patriarchate. A vision-

ary herself, Rossner used telepathy and yoga to treat her patients.[47] Sharing both Ioann's mystical predilections and Jewish ethnic background, Rossner proved both sympathetic and helpful to the Russian prophet.[48]

At the invitation of Marilyn Rossner and her husband, John Rossner (an ordained Anglican priest and professor of comparative religion at Concordia College in Montreal), the new bishop traveled to Canada to speak at a conference entitled "Perestroika East and West" held in Montreal in May 1991. There Ioann publicly called for the formation of a new church based on his revelations. Impressed by Ioann's mysticism, conviction, and ecumenical vision, the Rossners encouraged him to join his new church to the International Council of Community Churches (ICCC).[49]

Originally founded in 1950 as an association of U.S. liberal Protestant churches practicing congregational polity, the ICCC at first blush seemed an unlikely home for a church which claimed the Eastern Orthodox tradition and hierarchy as its own. But membership in the ICCC appealed to Ioann for three reasons. First, since 1974 the ICCC had been a full member of the World Council of Churches (the most important international Christian ecumenical organization, based in Geneva). By joining the ICCC, Bishop Ioann's new church could immediately gain a status similar to that of the Russian Orthodox Church, also a full member of the World Council of Churches. Secondly, although the ICCC had begun as a liberal Protestant group in 1950, it had received a group of independent Catholic congregations (the Christian Catholic Rite of Community Churches) just two years earlier in 1989.[50] Suspicious of Protestantism (because of its rejection of the cult of Mary), Bishop Ioann could nevertheless join the ICCC to find like-minded independent, sacramental Christians. In particular, Ioann formed a warm relationship with Bishop Serge Thériault (b. 1947), the General Superintendent of the Canadian Chapter of the ICCC.[51] Finally, joining the ICCC required a minimal commitment from the Russian movement. Bishop Ioann did not have to surrender any of his authority to a denominational center, submit to any doctrinal test, or make a large financial contribution. Indeed, the ICCC office in Frankfort, Illinois, demanded little more than a completed application form, which Ioann submitted on behalf of the "Mother of God Church and Center of Moscow and All Russia" in May 1992.[52]

Membership in the ICCC clearly had a different significance for Ioann than it did for his new North American friends. According to the ICCC office, only a single congregation, now called the Orthodox Church of Mother Mary located in the town of Mishino (Moscow oblast'), is formally a member of the International Council; none of Archbishop Ioann's many other parishes in Russia and the former Soviet Union have any part in the ICCC. By contrast, for Ioann, ICCC membership represented an affirmation of his entire movement not only by the interna-

tional Christian community but also by the United Nations, which he mistakenly believes has authority over the World Council of Churches. A 1996 publication with the bishop's imprimatur proudly proclaims, "in May 1992 the Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God was accepted as a full member of the International Council of Churches, which is a member of the World Council of Churches attached to the United Nations. The Martyr-Church, having passed through a seventy-year path of sorrow, has entered as a victor into the large family of Christian churches."[53]

Despite this formal relationship with the ICCC, Ioann has not participated in the council's annual conferences. In fact, the U.S.-based council has not exerted much influence over the archbishop. Under pressure from the Russian Orthodox Church, the leaders of the ICCC encouraged Ioann to moderate his attacks on the Moscow Patriarchate, to no avail.[54] Primarily, ICCC membership has helped Archbishop Ioann to obtain local permits to rent buildings or have public demonstrations; at least twice, the ICCC has provided the archbishop with documents confirming his church's status in the council.

THE AUGUST 1991 COUP AND THE FIRST COUNCILS OF THE THEOTOKOS

Bishop Ioann (Bereslavskii) initiated a vigorous campaign to increase his movement's visibility and to gain new followers. On 15 June 1991, he opened the First Moscow Council of the God-Bearer in an electrically charged political atmosphere.[55] Just three days earlier, the former Communist Boris Yeltsin, supported by Russian democrats and nationalists, had won the first direct popular election of a Russian head of state. As president, Yeltsin promised to work for the independence of the Russian Federated Republic from the USSR. At the same time, he faced the determined opposition of the unpopular President of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, who was struggling to save the Soviet Union by negotiating a new Union treaty among its fifteen constituent republics. Both men had to contend with Communist hardliners who wished to put an end to democratic reform and nationalist unrest and return to the pre-1985 status quo.

In this politically tense period, Mary's messages were appropriately apocalyptic. She called on her followers to abandon their families, take vows of celibacy, and pray continually for the sins of Russia, since the judgment was at hand.[56] Christ's Second Coming was already being accomplished: "The appearance of the Mother of God throughout the entire world in the spirit is the Second Coming of the Lord."[57] She provided new information about the Antichrist, including a detailed physical description: "black eyes, unshaven stubble. Dressed in white: white

skirt, white overalls and hat on his head, tall, narrow shoulders. The eyes of a criminal, inhuman, powerful. A confession of faith close to the Muslim one. Principally of Jewish and Latin American descent. European education." An evil genius with supernatural hypnotic powers, the Antichrist would seal his followers with a sign of death resembling the Hebrew letter "tet."[58]

Through her prophet Ioann, Mary also attacked the Soviet family and urged her followers to abandon conjugal life altogether. Ioann condemned earthly mothers as unworthy idols demanding worship that properly belonged to the Theotokos.[59] In these early pamphlets, Ioann pictured earthly parents as vampires, magically sucking life from their offspring so that, like Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray, they could enjoy their lusts and yet remain eternally young. One dead mother possessed her daughter and forced her "to experience sodomitic passion for men." Another mother, an "astral bandit with an axe in her hands, threatening to kill, to crucify," figuratively emasculated her son and pushed him to commit assault.[60] Ioann even blamed Soviet Communism on the mothers of Lenin and Stalin: "Who made the revolution in Russia? Do you want to know? Lenin's mama made it. Oh, these were real mama's boys. Lenin was a worthy son of his very strong mama, who instilled hatred for the father in the person of the tsar."[61] In the heady days of 1991, these angry appeals to the young to rebel against their parents and the Communist social system found a willing audience.

Ioann's apocalyptic predictions found their fulfillment in the attempted coup against Gorbachev, 19–21 August 1991. This abortive coup only accelerated the political, social, and cultural changes that the General Secretary had initiated. The coup also fulfilled—in a figurative sense—Ioann's detailed eschatological vision. Calling the coup "Armageddon over Russia," Ioann claimed that it represented Mary's spiritual victory over Satan and over demonic Communism.[62]

Two months after the coup, on 12 November 1991, Ioann convoked a second council that elaborated on Russia's apocalyptic mission:

> Russia for today is the center of the universe. The fate of the whole world depends on our fatherland, on us, you and me. In 1917 in the tiny Portuguese hamlet of Fatima, the Queen gave her revelation about Russia to the Catholics. "If Russia does not turn to the testament of my heart, it will perish, and with it, the whole world." . . . In Portugal she made the fate of the world dependent on the fate of Russia: if Russia is saved, then the whole world will be transfigured along with it. If the country of the Godbearer's portion perishes, then the end of the world is inevitable.[63]

Calling on his followers to proselytize, Ioann promised them the possibility of rescuing "multitudes of souls who were destined for eternal suffering." In light of the apocalyptic crisis, he encouraged his young recruits to leave their families, wives, and children, and to embrace a

celibate life. Mary herself commanded married couples to refrain from sexual intercourse, since family ties could only burden her "knights of faith" during this last desperate struggle with Satan.[64]

Just as he introduced new doctrine, Ioann also created new vestments and new liturgies. For the most dedicated, the prophet of the Theotokos fashioned a new, bright blue cassock, the color of Mary. This innovation was an obvious borrowing from Roman Catholicism, which introduced blue vestments after the eleventh-century schism with Orthodoxy.[65] He also formulated syncretic liturgies that used Russian (instead of the traditional Church Slavonic of the Orthodox service), included monarchist songs, and imitated Roman Catholic devotions to the Virgin.[66] This new liturgy shocked the leadership of both the Russian Orthodox Church and Ioann's erstwhile allies in the underground True Orthodox Church. An Orthodox journalist described the new liturgy performed on the streets of Moscow in 1992:

> The service was strange: it was all sung very quickly, in the tempo of a march, without the usual "Orthodox" drawling out. At the end of sentences, voices rose up as if singing a march. Most importantly, they sang "God Save the Tsar" and "We Boldly Go to Battle for Holy Rus'." And even then they sang only the first two verses, although they sang those verses ten or twenty times without stopping. The choir leader had a megaphone. Instead of "Amen," they shouted, "It is truly so" as they pierced the air with the extended index fingers of their right hands, just as if they were striking an invisible dragon. They also sang the Lord's Prayer, although rarely.[67]

To broadcast his message as far as possible, Ioann energetically published his revelations and sermons in cheap brochures, tracts, and paperbacks.[68] Inspired by the Catholic apparition movement, he began a serial publication of Mary's messages in September 1991. The following year, he opened a newspaper, *Rytsar' very* [*The Knight of Faith*]. Emphasizing his ties to the underground True Orthodox Church, Ioann began publishing hagiographies of important figures in this movement. At the end of 1991, he opened his headquarters in space rented from a neighborhood public library.

In 1992, Ioann had himself promoted to archbishop and became ever bolder in organizing public demonstrations by his followers. On 20 June, a group of 150 members of the center commemorated the sufferings of the underground church in the Soviet period at an outdoor liturgy held near the Lubianka, the old headquarters of the Soviet secret police. After the service, the crowd marched to Red Square and attacked Lenin's Mausoleum. As the tomb's honor guards locked themselves inside, the center's members hurled anathemas at the founder of the world's first atheist state.[69]

Ioann continued his aggressive stance throughout 1992. In response to a revelation, his followers tried to take over the reading room of the

local public library on Berzarin Street where they had rented space for the center's headquarters. The center had to be driven out by a Moscow SWAT [*OMON–otdel militsii osobogo naznacheniia*] team. Several days later, in January 1993, another SWAT team removed the archbishop's followers from the House of Culture of the Moscow Municipal Transportation system [Mosgortrans].[70]

In addition to these problems, Ioann faced an internal revolt at his fourth council, called at the end of 1992. Several close followers, including Bishop Fedor (Korobeinikov) and Hieromonk Tikhon, left the movement because they objected to Ioann's increasingly strident rejection of family life.[71] Faced with opposition from without and within, Ioann retreated. His blue-cassocked followers disappeared from the metro stations and adopted a less aggressive program of evangelization. Nevertheless, Ioann continued to publish his works and, above all, the latest revelations from the Theotokos (see appendix).

MARY'S REVELATIONS

Over time, Mary has moderated her dire apocalyptic warnings and her condemnation of family life. Although she initially spoke as if the final judgment were immediately imminent, newer prophecies provide one last chance for repentance before the end. Hence the timing of the end depends largely on the response of the world to Mary's call. In a revelation published in 1991, Mary stated that the path to the end of the world was still long and would last many years.[72]

In the early 1990s, the Mother of God opened a new millennium by revealing eternal mysteries heretofore concealed, revelations that served to enhance her position in the heavenly hierarchy. First, she announced that she herself had suffered redemptively for the world:

> It was appointed to Me, the Mother of God Himself, to become the daughter of the Cross. In that terrible hour, He became My Father and I, His daughter under the canopy of the Cross. In that hour, he was close to me as never before, and I achieved His unreachable height. It was as if I had given birth to him a second time, for I suffered so much.

At the crucifixion, Mary experienced an apotheosis of suffering that united her with God. She has only now revealed this secret: "I have still not told anyone on earth what I suffered for the sake of My Son, for the time had not yet come."[73] In a later revelation to Archbishop Ioann, Mary recounted her entire life and explained that she had actually died and risen three times during her Son's execution. Miraculously transformed through this experience, she witnessed both paradise and hell, both the demons who tortured Christ on the cross as well as the angels

who defended him. But Christ instructed her to keep these secrets until the eve of his Second Coming.[74]

Secondly, Mary has declared herself to be the new source of salvation. In a statement that Ioann has placed in bold, Mary baldly says, "Salvation now comes through me." To emphasize the point, she insists that "the path to Christ lies through the Most Pure [Virgin]."[75] The Millennium of Christ, which lasted from 988, the conversion of Rus', to 1988, has now come to an end; the millennium of the Theotokos is beginning.

The Virgin Mother has offered a new, third testament comprised of all her revelations from Rue du Bac (1830) to her latest declarations in Russia. Archbishop Ioann has set aside the traditional enmity between Catholic and Orthodox traditions; he fully embraces the many Catholic apparitions of the Virgin, even when they affirm doctrines, such as papal infallibility, rejected by the Orthodox Church. Indeed, in a special revelation, Mary has confirmed the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception—a doctrine generally rejected by Orthodox theologians.[76]

Ioann has clearly modeled his movement on the Catholic apparition cults he so often cites. In particular, the Marian Movement of Priests, whose founder, the Italian priest Father Stefano Gobbi, has regularly received interior locutions from the Blessed Mother since 1973, has served as Ioann's model.[77] Unlike Ioann or the visionaries of Medjugorje, Gobbi does not actually see Mary, but simply receives her messages in his heart. Every year Gobbi publishes a new edition of his ever-increasing collection of revelations, many with apocalyptic themes. Gobbi has formed a movement of priests who promise to devote themselves to the Virgin Mother and to prayer; his world-wide organization publishes the revelations he has received and distributes them freely.[78] Unlike Ioann, who has been condemned as a heretic by all the other branches of the Orthodox Church, Father Gobbi and his revelations are widely accepted by the Catholic clergy. His many publications regularly receive the requisite ecclesiastical imprimatur, and he is a firm supporter of both papal infallibility and the present pope, John-Paul II. In contrast to Ioann, who has aggressively denounced the Russian Orthodox Church hierarchy, Father Gobbi has been careful not to alienate his ecclesiastical superiors. Despite these important differences in style, theology, and ecclesiastical politics, Ioann has fully embraced Gobbi's writings as part of Mary's new testament. In 1992, for example, Ioann published translated excerpts from Gobbi's supernatural revelations, which he presented as though he fully accepted their authenticity.[79]

Even though he accepts Catholic apparitions, Ioann clearly believes that his apparitions are unique and superior. Only to Ioann has Mary declared her intention to create a new church, the Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God, led by her prophet, Archbishop Ioann. Mary

has also announced the special place that Russia holds in this messianic effort. The Theotokos clearly has a special place in her heart for Russia: "Russia is a ruined country, temporarily given over to the enemy. . . . The Church grieves and I with her. The Church is crucified and I am at her feet (just as I stood at the Crucifixion of the Son of God)."[80] Even though the Mother of God has revealed herself in Catholic apparitions, the Orthodox church is still her favorite church, the "cemetery chapel" where she often prays for "the healing of the living and the easing of the fate of the dead."[81]

She calls Russia her second homeland and extends her protective veil over it.[82] Russia is special because of its extraordinary saints. Mary compares Serafim of Sarov (1754–1833) to St. John the Divine, both of whom are described as seers of the Spirit [*dukhovidtsy*].[83] Moreover, Russia is also the place where the Theotokos has chosen to reveal new secrets never before known. It is the place where she has chosen to establish the church of the coming millennium: "I will stand and bless the Church of the Newest Testament. For I, having borne the Lord Christ, conceiving Spirit from Spirit, even I (listen and attend with trembling) will give birth to the Newest Testament of the eternal Church in heaven and on earth—the Church of the Holy Spirit."[84]

THE THREE FACES OF THE ENEMY

In the early 1990s, Archbishop Ioann identified three enemies seeking to foil Mary's plans to establish a new age: Euroculture, the Orient, and pharisaism. Each of these alternatives to Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God represented a group of religious rivals who, in Archbishop Ioann's view, provided a distorted view of Christ. In Ioann's theological system, only Mary, the Virgin mother, provided true knowledge of Christ. She thus became the mediatrix between Christ and humanity, essentially replacing Christ as the mediator between God and man.

Archbishop Ioann also described these three enemies as Satan's agents. Not surprisingly, Euroculture represented the ideologies and anti-Christian cultural forms of Western Europe and America. The term includes Marxism, the alien European ideology that held Russia enthralled for seventy years, as well as the violent, sexually explicit Western films and television programs that currently dominate the Russian media.[85]

By the term Euroculture, Ioann also condemned almost all intellectual endeavors: poetry, philosophy, literature, music, art, and theology.[86] He attacked poetry in particular as "the lust of the eyes, forbidden by conscience." In his view, the greatest thinkers of the Russian religious renaissance of the late Imperial period lead only to a dead end. He dismissed Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) as a Pelagian, who made a god of

the Good instead of embracing God as all good. The philosophers and theologians Nikolai Berdiaev (1874–1948), Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944), Lev Shestov (1866–1938), and Semen Frank (1877–1950) mistakenly identified the institutional church with Orthodoxy.[87]

The Orient represented a second demonic dead end. By the Orient, Archbishop Ioann included all the Eastern religions (such as Krishnaism and Tibetan Buddhism) currently fashionable in post-Soviet Russia. He also condemned new syncretic movements that incorporate ideas and rituals from Eastern religions. The most notorious of these is the White Brotherhood, which combines elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, Theosophy, the Kabbalah, and Orthodox Christianity. Founded by the Russian Iurii Krivonogov (b. 1941), the White Brotherhood teaches that Marina Tsvigun (b. 1960), a former journalist and Komsomol official, is Mariia Devi Khristos, the mother of the Universe. Archbishop Ioann's use of the term "the East" also includes various thaumaturgical beliefs, including astrology, neopaganism, and witchcraft.[88]

But Archbishop Ioann's third category, "pharisaism," separated him from all other churches, especially the Russian Orthodox Church. As he used the term, "pharisaism" referred especially to the Moscow Patriarchate, but also encompassed all Christian institutions that compromised with Communism before 1990. As one might expect of someone from the True Orthodox Church, Archbishop Ioann repeatedly criticized Metropolitan Sergii's compromise with the state and often explicitly labeled specific Orthodox clergy and bishops as pharisees.[89]

Although it is not surprising that Archbishop Ioann holds these views of the Soviet-era Orthodox Church, he has also sharply criticized the pre-revolutionary state church. In his hagiography of the Moldovan hieromonk Inochentie (Ioan Levizor, 1875–1917), who was arrested and exiled in 1912 for his apocalyptic sermons, Archbishop Ioann condemns the Orthodox bishops and priests who opposed Inochentie. He portrays Inochentie as a holy man whose charismatic gifts (including clairvoyance and prophecy) and ecstatic visions aroused the jealousy of the established church. It is not difficult to see that Archbishop Ioann regards himself as a latter-day Inochentie—a saint whose special revelations have been dismissed and attacked by more traditional religious authorities.[90]

THE NATIONALIST REACTION, 1993-97

Despite Archbishop Ioann's view of Russia's messianic role, the Russian press, including especially the nationalist media, has fiercely attacked him and his theological innovations. The most notorious of these attacks came in 1993 after the murder of three monks of the newly reopened Optina hermitage. On 5 May 1993 *Pravda*, the newspaper of the Communist nationalists, published an article entitled "Satan's Tribe"

suggesting that the murder might have been the work of either a Jewish group, such as the Hasidim (who, the writer argued, ritually murdered Christians), or one of the new religious movements, including Archbishop Ioann's center.[91] In 1994, several conservative Orthodox thinkers, including the film-maker Stanislav Govorukhin, wrote a letter to the Patriarch attacking, among other heresies, the Center of the Mother of God.[92] Critics of sectarian religion have referred to the center, often without any evidence, as a byword for the danger of new religious movements.

The Russian Orthodox Church initially was cautious in its relations with the center. Compromised by their close cooperation with Soviet atheists, Patriarch Aleksii II (Aleksei Mikhailovich Ridiger, b. 1929) of Moscow (r. 1990–) and the other hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate found it difficult to criticize publicly a movement that claimed to originate from the persecuted True Orthodox Church. Archbishop Ioann's public departure from traditional Orthodox teaching and the scandals surrounding him finally moved the Patriarch to anathematize the movement as a heresy in June 1993.[93]

In March 1994, in reaction to the disturbances caused by the eschatological pronouncements of the "White Brotherhood" a few months earlier, the Russian parliament passed new legislation to prosecute "harmful" religious organizations. Those convicted of organizing religious movements that injured the health, personality, or civil rights of Russian citizens could be sentenced to three years in prison.[94] By the end of 1994, Archbishop Ioann faced possible prosecution under this statute, as the government began a preliminary criminal investigation against him. Although this inquest ultimately did not result in prosecution, it marked the beginning of increasing state pressure on these new followers of Mary's "white gospel." The growing Russian anti-cult movement, which organized a conference in St. Petersburg on 11–12 January 1996, classified the center as a "totalitarian sect" and a "destructive cult." In the same year, both the State Duma and the Ministry of Health issued publications that attacked the center as a destructive religious organization.[95]

Fears of such cults helped to win passage of a new law in September 1997 restricting the activities of "non-traditional" religions such as the Center of the Mother of God.[96] The popular media pointed to the center as an example of a totalitarian cult. In June of 1997, for example, the news weekly *Ogonëk* reported that a former follower of Archbishop Ioann's, Slava Vishnevskii, had disappeared without a trace.[97]

RETREAT AND RETRENCHMENT, 1993–99: FROM THE "MOTHER-OF-GOD CENTER" TO THE "CHURCH OF THE TRANSFIGURING MOTHER OF GOD"

In the face of such opposition, Archbishop Ioann beat a strategic retreat. First, in 1993, he changed the name of his movement from the "Mother-of-God Center" to the "Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God." Vilified by the popular press, the legislature, and the Moscow Patriarchate, the original name had become a liability. Although Ioann issued a score of books and pamphlets with the imprint of the "Mother-of-God Center" from 1989 to 1993, today he completely rejects this term and reportedly even claims that the name itself was an invention of his enemies. He has also renamed his publishing house "New Holy Russia" [*Novaia sviataia Rus'*].

Secondly, Ioann ended his most confrontational tactics and began a quieter campaign to consolidate his movement. After 1993, Ioann's followers ceased the provocative public demonstrations against local authorities that had created such a scandal in Russian tabloids. Ioann's blue-cassocked followers disappeared from the metro stations of Moscow and St. Petersburg and stopped seizing churches and libraries. Instead, Ioann quietly established centers in the major cities in Russia and Ukraine. He has also acquired a dacha near Torzhok as well as land in Moscow oblast' where he plans to build a monastery.[98] The paper and binding of Ioann's numerous publications steadily increased in quality from 1991 to 1997 and provide some indication of his success at raising money.

Ioann also moderated his apocalyptic teaching. His early works made specific predictions about the imminent end of the world, including, for example, a physical description of the Antichrist; his more recent publications have shied away from such potentially embarrassing details and have instead emphasized the spiritual struggle between the forces of the Theotokos and those of Satan.[99] Although apocalyptic imagery remains an important part of his message, Ioann is more cautious about foretelling the future. By spiritualizing his eschatology, Archbishop has also relaxed his strident calls for a celibate life.[100]

At the same time, Ioann has continued to seek out allies among other religious groups. Declaring that both the Catholic and Orthodox churches were branches from the heart of the Mother of God, Ioann asked Archbishop Tadeusz Kondruciewicz, the spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Russia, for help in gaining foreign contacts. Although Tadeusz refused, Ioann independently visited Western Europe in the summer of 1992. In Brussels, he met with Father Antony, the director of the Catholic publishers "La vie avec Dieu," which issues works in Russian, including the Russian periodical *Rossiia i vselenskaia tserkov'*

[*Russia and the Universal Church*]. A renegade Italian bishop reportedly also presented Ioann with a statue of Our Lady of Fatima.[101]

Increasingly, he has borrowed from the Catholic apparition movement and has sought to place his own revelations into the broader context of the Marian cult. For example, Ioann's 1995 work *The White Gospel* carefully summarizes over thirty Marian apparitions and notes how each one confirms his own message.[102] Beginning in 1994, Ioann formed an alliance with the Universal Marian Church, a marian movement that has broken with the Roman Catholic Church.[103]

More recently, his efforts to gain foreign support have led Ioann to a strange alliance with the Unification Church. Despite his strong condemnation of Eastern religion, in November 1997 Ioann accepted an invitation from the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, the controversial founder of the Unification Church, to participate in "Blessing '97," a mass wedding and renewal of marital vows. Held in Robert F. Kennedy Stadium in Washington, D.C. on 29 November, "Blessing '97" was the latest in Reverend Moon's series of ritual blessings on marriage and the family that first began in 1960. At this event, Moon claimed that 36 million couples (most of whom were not members of the Unification Church) exchanged or renewed their marital vows.[104]

As part of his commitment to unifying all religious traditions, Moon invited six "religious dignitaries" from other faiths to take part in the ceremony. Representing Orthodox Christianity, Archbishop Ioann, "in gold and black robes, gave a powerful and moving prayer of benediction" in between the chants of a Hindu swami and a Korean Buddhist.[105] Ioann also shared the stage with the Reverend Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam, a Jesuit priest from India, and a Sikh cleric. Clearly, Ioann's desire to gain international recognition has outweighed his critique of Eastern spirituality.

How the new law on religion will affect the Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God is not yet clear. It seems to have slowed or stopped the group's stream of publications; none of Ioann's available works were published after 1997. Still the archbishop remains active; in October 1997 in Kyiv, a month after the promulgation of the new law, Ioann convoked the first All-Ukrainian Council of his church and performed a mass baptism in the Black Sea.[106] The council included fifteen hundred delegates from across Ukraine. By late 1997, one Orthodox source estimated that the center had about one hundred thousand members scattered across the former Soviet Union, especially in Russia and Ukraine, with more sympathizers. This estimate is probably exaggerated; the figure of ten thousand members seems closer to the truth. In the remote city of Perm' alone, the center had 800 adherents.[107]

Despite the new law, Archbishop Ioann has also continued to hold councils in Moscow; the latest, the Nineteenth Council of the Church of the Mother of God, took place in the Russian capital on 16–17 October

1999. In late 1999, with the help of one of its priests, Il'ia Popov, the church created a web page at http://user.transit.ru/~maria.[108] The new page proudly proclaims the church's status as a legally registered religious community in the Russian Federation. It also trumpets Archbishop Ioann's role as an internationally recognized spiritual leader, who has served as a special consultant to the International Association for the Educators for World Peace, earned an honorary doctorate from an unspecified university in Alabama, and received a citation from the Legion of Mary as "a person whose whole life has been a monument to the service of love and peace." Carefully avoiding any mention of the controversial Reverend Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church, the web page notes that in November 1997, the archbishop took part in an interreligious congress "where as one of six leaders of world churches, he blessed forty thousand families"—clearly an oblique reference to "Blessing '97." Just as clearly, Archbishop Ioann continues to champion his religious vision, notwithstanding the legal changes in Russia.

CONCLUSION

Archbishop Ioann's success, achieved with minimal foreign support and despite attacks from church, state, and press, is evidence of the extraordinary changes in Soviet society since the fall of Communism. It also demonstrates the power of his simple message of faith. The Mother of God, he claims, has miraculously reached out to embrace both Catholic and Orthodox, to bring an end to this world, and to provide one last chance for sinners to repent. Purposely de-emphasizing dogmas, doctrines, and theological speculation, Ioann calls for an apocalyptic struggle against evil and demonstrates his power through the miracle of revelation. His connection to the persecuted True Orthodox Church and its head, the miracle-working Metropolitan Gennadii, helped legitimize his movement. In the post-Soviet world, where many citizens were intrigued by religion but few had any theological training, such a simple moral and thaumaturgical message proved appealing.

In fact, the Orthodox Church is making a similar appeal to believers by canonizing charismatic wonder-workers such as Ioann of Kronstadt (d. 1908, canonized 1990) and the "new martyrs" who were persecuted under the Soviets. These canonizations help legitimize the current Orthodox bishops, compromised by their history of cooperation with Bolshevik atheists, by connecting them to divine thaumaturges and holy martyrs. Thanks to its greater institutional resources, the Moscow Patriarchate has an important advantage over the Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God. Yet Ioann's new church has survived nearly a decade; its future success depends on its ability to institutionalize its charismatic message of repentance. Whether Archbishop Ioann, who has

loudly criticized institutional Christianity, will be able to do this is still an open question.

Archbishop Ioann's movement also illustrates the protean character of nationalist discourse in Russia. Using the apocalyptic themes of the international Marian apparition movement, Ioann has fashioned a national narrative that places Russia at the center of world history. In seeking out foreign ideas, Ioann is not so different from more conventional Russian right-wing nationalists who have turned to the European radical rightists such as Alain de Benoist and Jean-Marie Le Pen of France to construct their ideologies.[109] But unlike the Russian nationalists, Ioann supports, for the most part, democratic reforms and the anti-Communist politics of the current Russian government. Ioann's openness to Catholicism has especially alienated him from the Russian right wing.

With his own national narrative disowned by nearly everyone outside his movement, Archbishop Ioann has become the scapegoat of right-wing nationalists. In the discourse of Russian nationalism, the Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God is a prime example of a dangerous alien ideology, a "totalitarian cult" masking itself as Russian and Orthodox. Such attacks proved highly effective in 1997 when conservative forces imposed new restrictions on minority religious movements.

Appendix I

Selected Works Published by the Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God, 1993–97

1993

Ioann (Bereslavskii). *Samoderzhitsa Rossiiskaia, iiul'-dekabr' 1991 g.: Otkrovenie Bozhiei Materi v Rossii (1984–1993) arkhiepiskopu Ioannu [The Russian Empress, July-December 1991: The Revelation of the Mother of God in Russia (1984–1993) to Archbishop Ioann].* Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1993.

Patriarkhiia protiv vsego mira [The Patriarchate against the Whole World]. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1993.

Utrennee pravilo; Rozarii; Krestnyi put' [The Morning Rule; the Rosary; the Way of the Cross]. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1993.

1994

Apokalipticheskii nabat [The Apocalyptic Alarm]. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus,' 1994.

Bogoslovie Neporochnogo Serdtsa po seminaram dukhovnoi akademii "Svet Marii" [The Theology of the Immaculate Heart according to the Seminars of the "Light of Mary" Theological Academy]. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1994.

Ioann (Bereslavskii). *Ia chitaiu v vashikh serdtsakh [I Read in Your Hearts],* Otkrovenie Bozhiei Materi arkhiepiskopu Ioannu, kn. 8. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1994.

Ioann (Bereslavskii). *Moia sviataia mat': mir Marii v literaturnykh i bogoslovskikh obrazakh [My Holy Mother: The World of Mary in Literature and Theology].* Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1994.

Ioann (Bereslavskii). *O zemnykh dniakh Bozhiei Materi [The Earthly Days of the Mother of God*], Otkrovenie Bozhiei Materi arkhiepiskopu Ioannu. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1994.

Ioann (Bereslavskii). *Oko miloserdnoe [The Merciful Eye],* Otkrovenie Bozhiei Materi arkhiepiskopu Ioannu, kn. 25. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1994.

Ioann (Bereslavskii). *Rastsvetai khorugviami, Sviataia Rus' [Bloom in Banners, Holy Russia].* Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1994.

Skazki Novoi Sviatoi Rusi. Skazki startsev Sobora Novoi Sviatoi Rusi [Tales of New Holy Russia. Tales of the Elders of the Council of New Holy Russia]. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1994.

1995

Belyi svet Rossii 1917–1995 gg. [The White Light of Russia, 1917–1995]. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus, 1995.

Ioann (Bereslavskii). *Beloe Evangelie ob unikal'nykh iavleniiakh Bozhiei Materi poslednego vremeni [The White Gospel about the Unique Apparitions of the Mother of God in the Latter Time],* 2nd ed., rev. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1995.

Ioann (Bereslavskii). *The Woman in the Wilderness: The Revelation of the Virgin to Archbishop John in Russia May–June 1994.* Moscow: New Holy Russia, 1995.

Clay: Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God

1996

Gleb (Bessonov), *Novaia era [New Era]*. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus,' 1996.

Gotovo serdtse moe: Molitvy, molebny, akafisty [My Heart Is Ready: Prayers, Molebens and Acathists]. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus,' 1996.

Ioann (Bereslavskii). *Rossiia, ob'iataia vyshnei liubov'iu [Russia Embraced by Love from Above]*. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1996.

Katakombnaia tserkov-muchenitsa [The Catacomb Martyr-Church]. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1996.

1997

Iliia (Popov), and Ioann (Bereslavskii). *Iosif Volotskii 500 let inkvizitsii v Rossii [Joseph of Volokolamsk: 500 Years of Inquisition in Russia]*. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus,' 1997.

Ioann (Bereslavskii). *Tserkov' v katakombakh: IPTs (Istinno-Pravoslavnaia Tserkov') vremen gonenii: 1917–1996 gg. [The Church in the Catacombs (The True Orthodox Church) in the Times of Persecution]*. Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus,' 1997.

ENDNOTES

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[2] In these respects, Ioann's discourse resembles that of the liberal priest Father Gleb Iakunin (b. 1934) (Gleb Iakunin, "The Orthodox Church and the Prospects for the Future," in *Christianity and Government in Russia and the Soviet Union: Reflections on the Millennium*, ed. and trans. Nicolai N. Petro [Boulder: Westview Press, 1989], 107-58).

[3] Right-wing Russian nationalists, such as Aleksandr P. Barkashov (b. 1953), the founder of the neo-fascist Russian National Unity party, emphasize Russia's messianic role in world politics (A. P. Barkashov, "Vospominaniia o diveevskom lete 1991 goda [Reminiscences of the Summer of 1991 at Diveevo]," available at <http://www.rne.org/abc12.htm> [February 1994], accessed 4 May 1999).

[4] *Novye religioznye organizatsii Rossii destruktivnogo i okkul'tnogo kharaktera: spravochnik* [*New Religious Organizations of Russia of a Destructive and Occult Character: A Guide*], 2nd ed., rev. (Belgorod: Missionerskii otdel Moskovskogo patriatkhata Russkoi pravoslvnoi tserkvi, 1997), 320; *Otdel religioznogo obrazovaniia i missionerstva L'vovskoi eparkhii Ukrainskoi pravoslavnoi*

tserkvi [Religious Education and Missionary Section of the L'viv Diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church] <http://orthodox.compclub.lviv.ua/nhtm/bgcentr/badept.htm> (2 Oct. 1997), accessed 14 October 1999.

[5] Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 7-26; Dale E. Peterson, "Civilizing the Race: Chaadaev and the Paradox of Eurocentric Nationalism," *Russian Review* 56, no. 4 (October 1997): 550-63.

[6] Mart Bax, *Medjugorje: Religion, Politics, and Violence in Rural Bosnia* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1995), 78. A number of Catholic videos serve the interests of Croatian nationalists when they mistakenly place Medjugorje in Croatia instead of Bosnia (e.g., *Medjugorje, Croatia, the Year of the Youth: Mary Calls the Young to Turn to Jesus* [Middletown, NJ: A-Plus Keepsake Video, 1990], videocassette).

[7] Michael W. Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 136. As an example of the current link between American nationalism and the Marian movement in the United States, the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, founded in 1947, states on its current web page: "Our National Rosary Crusade is carried out in union with the Guardian Angel of the American people" ("Blue Army Rosary Crusade" <http://www.bluearmy.com/rosarycr.html> [5 October 1998], accessed 20 October 1999).

[8] *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 319; <http://orthodox.compclub.lviv.ua/nhtm/bgcentr/brukovod.htm> (2 Nov 1998), accessed 19 October 1999. The anti-cult Center of St. Mark of Ephesus in Tver' diocese identifies Ioann as "Iankel'man" (A. Ivanitskii, "K otsenke masshtabov rasprostraneniia i deiatel'nosti novykh religioznykh organizatsii v Tverskoi oblasti" [Toward an Evaluation of the Scale of the Distribution and Activity of New Religious Organizations in Tver' Oblast'], <http://pokrov.tversu.ru/MarkEf/Ivanitsky.html> [16 March 1998], accessed 19 October 1999). Dmitry Pospielovsky, "The Russian Orthodox Church in the Post-Communist CIS" in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux, The International Politics of Eurasia, vol. 3 [Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995], 59. Ioann has also used the pseudonym "Iakovlev," taken from his patronymic (Iakov Krotov, *Bogorodichnyi tsentr* [*The Mother-of-God Center*] [Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Irina, 1992], 6).

[9] Mervyn Matthews, *The Passport Society: Controlling Movement in Russia and The USSR* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); Elaine Pomper Snyderman and Margaret Thomas Witkovsky, eds., *Line Five, the Internal Passport: Jewish Family Odysseys from the USSR to the USA* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1992); Leon Boim, *The Passport System in the USSR and Its Effect upon the Status of Jews* (Tel Aviv: Faculty of Law, Tel Aviv University, 1975).

[10] Sergei Borisovich Filatov, "Sovremennaia Rossiia i sekty [Contemporary Russia and Sects]," *Inostrannaia literatura*, no. 8, available from <http://www.chat.ru/~vitaliyk/rus.htm> [10 May 1998], accessed 19 October 1999.

[11] Aleksei Moroz, "Sekta 'Bogorodichnogo Tsentra' [The Sect 'Mother-of-God Center']," in *Pravoslavnaia tserkov', katolitsizm, protestantizm, sovremennye eresi i sekty v Rossii* [*The Orthodox Church, Catholicism, Protestantism, Contemporary Heresies and Sects in Russia*], ed. Ioann, Metropolitan of St. Petersburg and Ladoga (St. Petersburg: Izdanie Sankt-Peterburgskoi mitropolii, 1994), 158.

[12] *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 319.

[13] Ioann (Bereslavskii), *Proshchanie s evrokul'turoi* [*Farewell to Euroculture*] (Moscow: Bogorodichnyi tsentr, 1993), 101.

[14] Theresa C. Smith, *No Asylum: State Psychiatric Repression in the Former USSR* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1996); Robert van Voren, ed., *Soviet Psychiatric Abuse in the Gorbachev Era* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: International Association on the Political Use of Psychiatry, 1988); Sidney Bloch and Peter Reddaway, *Soviet Psychiatric Abuse: The Shadow over World Psychiatry* (London: V. Gollancz, 1984).

[15] Krotov, *Bogorodichnyi*, 9. Since the publication of this work in 1992, Krotov has converted to Eastern Rite Catholicism and now hosts a regular program about religion on

Radio Liberty and writes a regular column for the Far East Broadcasting Company. See his web page at <http://members.xoom.com/krotov/index.htm>, accessed 8 October 1999.

[16] An important symbol of Russian nationalism, the Smolensk icon is in the style known as the hodegetria, in which Mary holds her son on her left hand and points to him with her right. Painted in Constantinople in 1046, the Smolensk icon was given by the Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus (r. 1042-55) to his daughter Anna when she was married to Prince Vsevolod Iaroslavich of Chernigov. Orthodox tradition credits the icon with saving Moscow in 1398 from the ravages of the Muslim ruler Timur (1336-1405) and with the recovery of Smolensk from the Lithuanians in 1524 (*Zemnaia zhizn' presviatoi Bogoroditsy i opisanie sviatykh chudotvornykh ee ikon, chtimykh pravoslavnoiu tserkov'iu, na osnovanii sviashchennogo pisaniia i tserkovnykh predanii, s izobrazheniiami v tekste prazdnikov i ikon Bozhiei Materi* [*The Earthly Life of the Most Holy Theotokos and a Description of Her Holy Wonder-Working Icons Venerated by the Orthodox Church on the Basis of the Holy Scriptures and Church Traditions with Portrayals in the Text of the Feasts and Icons of the Mother of God*], comp. Sofiia Snessoreva, 2nd. ed. [St. Petersburg, 1898; reprint, Iaroslavl': Verkhne-Volzhskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1993], 244-47).

[17] *Otkrovenie Bozhiei Materi v Rossii (1984-1991) proroku episkopu Ioannu: Odigitriia-Putevoditel'nitsa* [*The Revelation of the Mother of God to Russia (1984-1991) to the Prophet Bishop Ioann: Hodegetria-Who-Points-the-Way*], ed. Petr (Bol'shakov), arkhimandrit (Moscow: Bogorodichnyi tsentr, 1991), 5.

[18] Ibid., 11.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 7.

[21] Ibid., 8.

[22] On the True Orthodox Church, see Vladimir Moss, "The True Orthodox Church of Russia," *Religion in Communist Lands* 19, no. 4 (Fall 1991): 239-50; Iona (Roman Viktorovich Iashunskii), "Nashi katakomby [Our Catacombs]," *Vestnik Russkogo khristianskogo dvizheniia* 166 (1992): 243-60; Aleksandr Ivanovich Dem'ianov, *Istinno pravoslavnoe khristianstvo* [*The True Orthodox Church*] (Voronezh: Izdatel'stvo Voronezhskogo universiteta, 1977); William Fletcher, *The Russian Orthodox Church Underground, 1917-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); Dmitri A. Sidorov, "Orthodoxy, Difference, and Scale: The Evolving Geopolitics of Russian Orthodox Church(es) in the Twentieth Century," Ph.D. diss (University of Minnesota, 1998), 138-48, 167-71; Amvrosii (fon Sivers), "'Ot rannei zari' (Germantsy v Rossiiskom pravoslavii) ['From the Earliest Dawn' (Germans in Russian Orthodoxy)]," in *Religiia i demokratiia* [*Religion and Democracy*], eds. A. R. Bessmertnyi, Sergei Borisovich Filatov, and Dmitrii Efimovich Furman (Moscow: Izdatel'skaia gruppa "Progress—Kul'tura," 1993), 373; Amvrosii (fon Sivers), "Gosudarstvo i 'katakomby' [The State and the 'Catacombs,']" in *Religiia i prava cheloveka: na puti k svobode sovesti* [*Religion and Human Rights: On the Way to Freedom of Conscience*], eds. Liudmila Mihailovna Vorontsova, Aleksandr Pchelintsev, and Sergei Borisovich Filatov (Moscow: Nauka, 1996), 99-101; Dasha Progon, "Ne golosuiut tol'ko monakhi: religioznye otshchepentsy delaiut svoi vybor [Only Monks Do Not Vote: Religious Apostates Make Their Choice]," *Segodnia*, 5 July 1996; Aleksandr Sergeev, "Oppozitsiia trebuet ravnopraviia [The Opposition Demands Equal Rights]," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 21 May 1996; Alexander Burtin, "Stations of the Cross," *Moscow News*, 18-23 July 1996, 13; Pavel Protsenko, "Mif ob 'istinnoi tserkvi,' [Myth about the 'True Church']," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 3 February 1999, 15; "Istinno-pravoslavnye v Voronezhskoi eparkhii [The True Orthodox in Voronezh diocese]," ed. M. V. Shkarovskii, *Minuvshee: istoricheskii almanakh* [*The Past: A Historical Almanac*] 19 (1996): 320-56.

[23] "Deklaratsiia Mitropolita Sergiia 29go iiulia 1927 [Metropolitan Sergii's Declaration of 29 July 1927]," in *Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo, 1917-1941: Dokumenty i fotomaterialy* [*The Russian Orthodox Church and the Communist State: Documents and Photographs*] (Moscow: Bibleisko-bogoslovskii institut sviatogo Apostola Andreia, 1996), 226.

[24] Dmitry Pospielovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime, 1917-1982*, 2 vols. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 1: 142-62; 2: 365-86.

[25] Ioann (Bereslavskii) and Il'ia (Popov), *Tainyi skhimitropolit: zhizneopisanie glavy Istinno pravoslavnoi tserkvi vremen khrushchevsko-brezhnevskikh repressii skhimitropolita Gennadiia* [*A Secret Schema-Metropolitan: A Biography of the Head of the True Orthodox Church during the Khrushchev-Brezhnev Repression, Schema-Metropolitan Gennadii*] (Moscow: Bogorodichnyi tsentr, 1991), 1-10. No other account confirms Gennadii's pre-war religious activities (Iona [Iarushevich], "Nashi katakomby," 244-45; Ivan Andreyev, *Russia's Catacomb Saints* [Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Press, 1982], 549-51).

[26] Ioann and Il'ia, *Tainyi skhimitropolit*. Although there is no official record of Archbishop Serafim's consecration, an oral tradition holds that Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow (r. 1917-25) secretly consecrated him several months or weeks before his death (Iona, "Nashi katakomby," 244-47; Irina Reznikova, *Pravoslavie na Solovkakh: materialy po istorii Solovetskogo lageria* [*Orthodoxy in Solovki: Materials for a History of the Solovetskii camp*] [St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Nauchno-informatsionnogo tsentra "Memorial," 1994], 182).

[27] Ioann (Bereslavskii) claims to have first met Metropolitan Gennadii when the latter was 87 years old, i.e., in 1985 (Ioann and Il'ia, *Tainyi skhimitropolit*, 4). He also claims that Metropolitan Gennadii's secret synod ordained him as a priest in the same year. (*Katakombnaia tserkov'-muchenitsa* [*The Catacomb Martyr-Church*] [Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1996], 313). Missionaries from the Moscow Patriarchate dispute Ioann's claim to priesthood; they cite a 1992 document allegedly from the secret synod of the True Orthodox Church that refers to Ioann as a hierodeacon (*Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 319).

[28] Ioann (Bereslavskii), "O zhivoi i trepetnoi vere [A Living and Trembling Faith]," in *Ispoved' ranennogo serdtsa* [*Confession of a Wounded Heart*] (Moscow: izdatel'stvo Bogorodichnogo tsentra, 1991), 60. This sermon is dated 1989.

[29] Ioann and Il'ia, *Tainyi skhimitropolit*, 3-4; Ioann (Bereslavskii), *Nekanonizirovannye sviatye istinnogo pravoslaviia. Innokentii Baltskii (1875-1917)* [*Uncanonized Saints of True Orthodoxy. Innokentii of Balta (1875-1917)*] (Moscow: Bogorodichnyi tsentr, 1992), 4. Hunted down as dangerous anti-Soviet provocateurs and fanatics in the post-war period, the Innocentites nevertheless maintained a community in Moldova at least until the late 1980s (J. Eugene Clay, "Apocalypticism in the Russian Borderlands: Inochentie Levizor and His Moldovan Followers," *Religion, State and Society* 26, no. 3-4 (1998): 251-63.

[30] Ioann and Il'ia, *Tainyi skhimitropolit*, 5.

[31] From January 1700 until February 1918, Russia used the Julian (Old Style) calendar, which remains the liturgical calendar of the Russian Orthodox Church. During the twentieth century, the Julian calendar is thirteen days behind the internationally accepted Gregorian (New Style) calendar. The Soviet government adopted the Gregorian calendar on 14 February 1918 (New Style). Because the Gregorian calendar was originally promulgated by the Catholic Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 and was imposed by the atheist Soviet state in 1918, many devout and conservative Orthodox Christians regard the New Style as a heretical innovation and fiercely oppose it.

[32] *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 319.

[33] Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: Triumphalism and Defensiveness* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), chapters 1–4.

[34] *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 325.

[35] Krotov, *Bogorodichnyi*, 3.

[36] Oxana Antic, "Rare Information about the Catacomb Church," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Report*, no. 11 (16 January 1991), available from <http://solar.rtd.utk.edu/friends/news/omri/1991/01/910116.html>, accessed 13 March 1998.

[37] *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 319.

[38] Moroz, "Sekta 'Bogorodichnogo tsentra,'" 162.

[39] Ol'ga A. Tsapina, Researcher and Rare Book Librarian, Division of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Moscow University Library, 1991–94, personal communication, 5 March 1999.

[40] Moroz, "Sekta 'Bogorodichnogo tsentra,'" 161; *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 319.

[41] Moroz, "Sekta 'Bogorodichnogo tsentra,'" 160–61.

[42] Manuil (Viktor Viktorovich Lemeshevskii), *Die Russischen Orthodoxen Bischöfe von 1893–1965: Bio-Bibliographie*, ed. P. Coelestin Patock, 6 vols. (Erlangen: Lehrstuhl für Geschichte und Theologie des Christlichen Ostens, 1979–89), s.v. "Ioann (Bodnarchuk)"; Bohdan Bociurkiw, "Politics and Religion in the Ukraine: The Orthodox and the Greek Catholics," in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux, The International Politics of Eurasia, vol. 3 (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 140; *Katakombnaia tserkov'-muchenitsa* [*The Catacomb Martyr-Church*], ed. otets Il'ia (Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1996), 178–85, 314.

[43] *Katakombnaia tserkov'-muchenitsa*, 178–85, 314. The creation of this new church body did not save Metropolitan Ioann (Bodnarchuk); just two years later, in 1993, he was expelled from UAOC. A year later, he perished in an automobile accident (Bociurkiw, "Orthodox," 140).

[44] Krotov, *Bogorodichnyi*, 27.

[45] According to the eighth canon of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea (325), a single bishop cannot normally consecrate another bishop.

[46] Ioann (Bereslavskii), "Bogorodichnoe sviashchenstvo [The Priesthood of the Theotokos]" in *Ispoved' ranennogo serdtsa*, 92–93.

[47] Nancy Painter, *Some Implications of Telepathy For Home And School* (Dallas: Akita Enterprises, 1974), audio recording; Marilyn Zwaig Rossner, *Yoga: un nouvel espoir pour les enfants en detresse* (Saint-Zenon [Quebec]: L. Courteau, 1995). Dr. Rossner's husband, John Rossner, describes his wife as "a medium, as a minister in the Modern Spiritualist Movement, as a yogi, as a Vedantist and Judeo-Christian mystic" (John Rossner, *Toward Recovery of the Primordial Tradition: Ancient Insights and Modern Discoveries*, vol. 2: *Essays in the Parapsychology of Religion: The Primordial Tradition in Contemporary Experience* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983], xiii).

[48] John Rossner, personal communication, 8 September 1999.

[49] The International Council of Community Churches <http://www.akcache.com/community/iccc-nat.html>, (27 July 1999), accessed 12 October 1999.

[50] "Fourth Church Board, Quebec Religious Corporation & the Canadian Section of the International Council of Community Churches" <http://ccicc.ca/episcopal_committee/CCCC/CCCS_CCICCC.html>, accessed 13 October 1999.

[51] John Rossner, personal communication, 8 September 1999; "Most Reverend Dr. Serge A. Thériault, Ph.D., Th.D. Fourth CCRC Bishop Ordinary & General Superintendent [*sic*] for Canada, ICCC" <http://ccicc.ca/episcopal_committee/CCCCS_A_Theriault.html>, accessed 13 October 1999.

[52] Donna Sullivan, staff member, ICCC office, personal communication, 7 September 1999.

[53] *Katakombnaia tserkov'-muchenitsa*, 316.

[54] Jeff Newhall, Executive Director of the ICCC, 1991–98, personal communication, 7 September 1999.

[55] *Bogorodichnyi sobor III* [*Mother-of-God Council III*], ed. Petr (Bol'shakov), arkhimandrit (Moscow: Bogorodichnyi tsentr, 1992), 4–19.

[56] Ioann (Bereslavskii), *Ispoved' ranennogo serdtsa*, 13–19.

[57] *Bogorodichnyi sobor III*, 18.

[58] In fact, Mary's description of the sign is closer to the Russian "t" than the Hebrew "tet": "three points with vertical lines and a crossbar above with a bent hook" (Ioann [Bereslavskii], *Antikhrist. Ad i mytarstvo* [*Antichrist. Hell and Publicanism*] [Moscow: Bogorodichnyi tsentr, 1991], 11–12).

[59] Ioann (Bereslavskii), *Ispoved' ranennogo serdtsa*, 55.

60 Ibid., 137–38, 141.

61 Ioann (Bereslavskii), *Istoriia KPSS* [*History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*] (Moscow: Bogorodichnyi tsentr, 1991), 13.

62 Ioann (Bereslavskii), "Armageddon nad Rossiei [Armageddon over Russia]," in *Ispoved' rannenogo serdtsa*, 20–23.

63 *Bogorodichnyi sobor III*, 29.

64 *Otkrovenie*, 43.

65 On Catholic vestments, see Henry J. McCloud, *Clerical Dress and the Insignia of the Roman Catholic Church* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1948). Blue was not used in clerical dress before the twelfth century (*The Catholic Encyclopedia* [New York: R. Appleton, 1907–14], s.v. "Colours, Liturgical").

66 Krotov, *Bogorodichnyi*, 4–5; *Bogorodichnyi sobor III*, 22–25.

67 Krotov, *Bogorodichnyi*, 5.

68 Ioann (Bereslavskii), *Ispoved' rannenogo serdtsa*; idem, *Ispoved' pokoleniia* [*Confession of a Generation*] (Moscow: Bogorodichnyi tsentr, 1991).

69 Krotov, *Bogorodichnyi tsentr*, 4–5; *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 325–27; "Shturm mavzoleia," *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 10 July 1992, 1.

70 Krotov, *Bogorodichnyi*, 4–5; *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 325–27.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid., 15.

73 *Otkrovenie*, 19.

74 Ioann (Bereslavskii), *O zemnykh dniakh Bozhiei Materi* [*About the Earthly Days of the Mother of God*] (Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1994), 74–84.

75 *Otkrovenie*, 15.

76 Ioann (Bereslavskii), *O zemnykh dniakh*, 5.

77 On Gobbi, see the web site of the Marian Movement of Priests <http://www.mmp-usa.net/> (17 June 1999), accessed 22 October 1999.

78 *To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons*, 17th ed. (Toronto: The Marian Movement of Priests, 1996).

79 *Bogorodichnyi sobor III*, 47–71; Ioann (Bereslavskii), *Golgofskie tainstva: sbornik dukhovnykh statei i propovedei* [*The Mysteries of Golgotha: A Collection of Spiritual Articles and Sermons*] (Moscow: Bogorodichnyi tsentr, 1992), 11–15.

80 *Otkrovenie*, 6

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid., 36.

83 Serafim was born in 1754—not 1759, as commonly stated (F. S. Sokolov, "Prepodobnyi Serafim, Sarovskii chudotvorets: Novyia dannyia dlia zhizneopisaniia ego [Saint Serafim, the Wonderworker of Sarov: New Data for His Vita]," *Izvestiia Tambovskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii* 51 [1906]: 9).

84 *Otkrovenie*, 32.

85 Ioann (Bereslavskii), *Proshchanie s evrokul'turoi.*

86 Ibid., 14–17.

87 Ibid., 11.

88 Eliot Borenstein, "The Media Response to Maria Devi Khristos," *Religion* 25, no. 3 (July 1995): 249–66; Ioann, *Golgofskie tainstva*, 71–83.

89 See, for example, Ioann's condemnation of Patriarch Sergii (Stragorodskii) (Ioann and Il'ia, *Tainyi skhimitropolit*, 44–45) and Archbishop Serafim (Sergei Georgievich Golubiatnikov, 1856–1921) (Ioann, *Nekanonizirovannye*, 21,45).

90 Ioann, *Nekanonizirovannye.*

91 Dmitry Gerasimov, "Satanic Tribe–Who Is behind the Monks' Murder?" *Current Digest of the Post Soviet Press* 45, no. 18 (1993): 26.

92 "To the Most Holy Patriarch Aleksy II of Moscow and all Rus," *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 46, no. 10 (1994): 23

93 Aleksii II (Ridiger), patriarkh, "Vozzvanie Patriarkha Moskovskogo i Vseia Rusi Aleksiia II i Sviashchennogo sinoda Russkogo pravoslavnoi tserkvi [Appeal of Patriarch Aleksii II of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church]" *Zhurnal Moskovskogo patriarkhata* 23, no. 5 (May 1993): 5.

94 *Ugolovnyi kodeks Rossiiskoi federatsii s izmeneniiami i dopolneniiami na 1 marta 1994 goda i postateinymi materialami: sbornik spravochnoi i metodiko-pravovoi informatsii* [*The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation with Amendments and Supplements to 1 March 1994 and Clause-by-clause Materials: A Collection of Reference and Legal Information*] (Ekaterinburg: Delovaia kniga, 1994), art. 143–1, 249–52.

95 *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 325.

96 Derek H. Davis, "Russia's New Law on Religion: Progress or Regress?" *Journal of Church and State* 39 (Autumn 1997): 645–55; Marat S. Shterin and James T. Richardson, "Local Laws Restricting Religion in Russia: Precursors of Russia's New National Law," *Journal of Church and State* 40 (Spring 1998): 319–41.

97 Galina Mursalieva, "'Zaum' besië': kak my sozdavali 'destruktivnyi kul't' [Zaum Besië: How We Created a 'Destructive Cult']," *Ogonëk* (2 June 1997): 37–39.

98 Novye religioznye organizatsii, 320.

99 Ioann, *Antikhrist*, 10–12; idem, *Beloe Evangelie ob unikal'nykh iavleniiakh Bozhiei Materi poslednego vremeni* [*The White Gospel about the Unique Apparitions of the Mother of God in the Latter Time*], 2nd ed., rev. (Moscow: Novaia Sviataia Rus', 1995), 212–14.

100 *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 325–27.

101 Krotov, *Bogorodichnyi*, 42, 48.

102 Ioann, *Beloe evangelie.*

103 *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 325–27.

104 Richard L. Lewis, "Blessing '97, a Resounding Victory," *Unification News for December 1997*, available from <http://www.tparents.org/Library/Unification/Publications/UNews/unws9712/Blessing-RFK.htm> (25 March 1998), accessed 14 October 1999.

105 Ibid.

106 "Vse-ukrainskii sobor Bogorodichnogo tsentra proshel v Nikolaeve [The All-Ukrainian Council of the Mother-of-God Center Took Place in Nikolaev]" Blagovest-Info/Pravoslavie v Rossii (10 October 1997); available from <http://www.or.ru>.

107 *Novye religioznye organizatsii*, 320; <http://orthodox.compclub.lviv.ua/nhtm/bgcentr/badept.htm> (2 Oct. 1997), accessed 14 October 1999.

108 "Bogorodichnaia vetv' Istinno Pravoslavnoi (Katakombnoi) Tserkvi. Sobor ottsov [The Mother-of-God Branch of the True Orthodox Church. The Council of the Fathers]," <http://user.transit.ru/~maria/S4-2.htm>, (19 Nov 1999), accessed 17 December 1999.

109 Vera Tolz, "The Radical Right in Post-Communist Russian Politics," in *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties*, eds. Peter Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 190; Walter Laqueur, *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 139–42

A New "Generation" of Jehovah's Witnesses: Revised Interpretation, Ritual, and Identity

David L. Weddle

American religious imagination is frequently inflamed by an apocalyptic desire that is sparked when the Bible is read as a contemporary document. Prophetic visions of a new world purged of injustice and cleared of evil excite pious lust for the consummation of history by the holy wrath of God. Such eager anticipation of the end arises from decisive disillusionment with the human project, supreme confidence in divine intervention, and a thirst for immediate satisfaction. Thus, the longing for the end of the world intensifies efforts to discern the biblical "signs" of its coming. From the notebooks in which Jonathan Edwards traced the fulfillment of prophecy in the defeat of Spanish galleons to David Koresh's reading armored vehicles into the book of Revelation, commentary on the sacred text impresses meaning upon an uncertain present from the coded predictions of a secured future. Such reading supports a strenuous, even sacrificial, effort to remain faithful: "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Mark 13:13). For most apocalyptic believers, the nearer the end, the greater the will to endure. For over a century, no American religious movement has sustained the sense of eschatological urgency more consistently than the Jehovah's Witnesses. Their remarkable fervor, despite periods of disappointment and defection, was grounded in the conviction that the kingdom age would come to earth within the lifetime of the generation of 1914.

Recently, however, that reassuring link between history and prophecy has been broken by an official revision of Witness teaching in which the generation of 1914 is no longer to be "a rule for measuring time."[1] This new interpretation reverses a position consistently restated throughout this century and traced in the first section of this paper. While the revision can be seen as a defense against failed prophecy in light of the advancing mortality of the generation of 1914, it is also an adaptive strategy allowing Jehovah's Witnesses to maintain the apocalyptic dualism between good and evil that impels vigorous missionary activity without committing

themselves to a definite end to the period of waiting for the coming kingdom. But the price to be paid for this change may be two-fold: a confusion about the significance of the Memorial ritual and a weakening of apocalyptic passion among younger Jehovah's Witnesses. In the second part of the paper my observations of a Memorial service suggest that the religious identity of most Jehovah's Witnesses has been defined in relation to the small remnant of the faithful from the generation of 1914. We conclude, then, by considering how the cancellation of the "sign" of that first generation of Witnesses will likely affect the sense of apocalyptic urgency among the present generation.

INTERPRETING THE IDENTITY OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL "GENERATION"

After one of the longest periods of suspense in the history of American religion, the Jehovah's Witnesses finally exhaled. The Governing Body of the Watch Tower Society—composed of a dozen or so aging men whose anonymous publications establish the beliefs and direct the practices of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide—quietly abandoned one of the major doctrinal supports for its proclamation of the imminence of the kingdom of God. In the 1 November 1995 issue of *The Watchtower*, following a cover story on the popular interest in angels, is a two-part study of the term "generation," particularly as used by Jesus in the Gospels. What is at stake in this running commentary on a list of concordance references is the meaning of Jesus' apocalyptic promise that "this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur" (Matthew 24:34).[2] The conclusion of the study is that the term "generation" in this passage refers "to the peoples of earth who see the sign of Christ's presence but fail to mend their ways."[3] Such skeptics and apostates are, of course, present in every age.[4]

Jehovah's Witnesses had long been taught, however, that Jesus addressed these words to a specific cohort, namely those with a living memory of the events of 1914, the date when Jesus was said to have inaugurated the kingdom age by assuming his place of ruling authority in the heavens. Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Watch Tower Society, whose followers assumed the name Jehovah's Witnesses in 1931, derived his interpretation from a complex calculation leading to the conclusion that Christ became present invisibly in the fall of 1874. From that date, he declared, there would be a forty-year period in which the faithful would be separated from the unrighteous in preparation for the final judgment. When the forty years ended in the dramatic events of the First World War, it appeared that Russell had rightly deciphered

the prophetic texts. He thus announced that at least some of his "Bible students" would live to see the destruction of the present world order and the arrival of paradise on earth. Pastor Russell died in 1916 believing that he had seen the beginning of the "millennial dawn."

Russell's successor as president of the society, Joseph Franklin Rutherford, introduced in 1919 the enthusiastic slogan, "Millions Now Living Will Never Die!" Later, in an article which appeared in *The Watch Tower* for 15 October 1923, Rutherford interpreted Jesus' parable of the Son of Man separating the nations of the world into sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31–46) to refer to divine judgment on the fratricidal family of "goat nations" and the reward of the kingdom to the "righteous sheep." The latter are those who assist Christ's needy "brothers," the anointed class of 144,000 faithful witnesses who are prophesied in Revelation to share in the heavenly authority of the Messiah over the earth. The implication of Rutherford's reading for the timing of the kingdom was still being drawn out seventy years later:

> [Rutherford's] article explained why the "brothers" referred to in the parable could not be the Jews of the Gospel age nor humans who show faith during the millennial period of testing and judgment but must be those who are heirs with Christ of the heavenly Kingdom, thus why the parable's fulfillment must be at a time when some of Christ's joint heirs are still in the flesh.[5]

The historical record shows that the Watch Tower Society has clearly and consistently taught that some of the anointed class would survive until the coming of the messianic kingdom.

The anointed class will not, however, be those who enjoy the paradise on earth. Since 1935 that privilege has been assigned to the "great crowd" envisioned in Revelation 7 standing around the throne of the Messiah. In what the society calls "a brilliant flash of divine light, outstanding in the annals of theocratic history," Rutherford revealed that most of the growing body of Jehovah's Witnesses were not numbered among the 144,000 but belong to that "great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples" (Revelation 7:9).[6] In a process of self-discovery that continues to determine religious identity among the Witnesses, Rutherford invited those at the national convention who held a hope of living in an earthly paradise (rather than ruling with Christ in heaven) to declare themselves by standing. "As a large part of the audience stood up, the president declared: 'Behold! The great multitude'! . . . This great crowd is part of the only truly united multinational organization on earth today."[7] Their role is to assist the anointed class in bearing witness to Jehovah's authority as king of all the earth.[8] But the task of assisting requires that there be someone to assist; thus, "at the peak of the tribulation, Jesus will deliver the remaining ones of the 144,000 on earth, together with the multitudinous great crowd."[9]

The first of the anonymous publications the society began to issue as authoritative after Rutherford's death in 1942 sustained the conviction that

there are people still living who were alive in 1914 and saw what was happening then. . . . This generation is getting up in years now. A great number of them have already passed away in death. Yet Jesus very pointedly said: 'This generation will *by no means* pass away until all these things occur.' Some of them will still be alive to see the end of this wicked system.[10]

The claim was repeated a few years later in a reference to "the 'righteous' sheeplike persons who do good to Christ's spiritual 'brothers' down till the outbreak of the 'great tribulation'"[11]—a saving act of charity that is possible only if some of the anointed class survive until the coming of the kingdom.[12] In a widely distributed 1982 work the timing of the kingdom age was again linked to the lifetime of the 144,000 witnesses, who are the only present subjects of Christ's rule. That "heavenly government," begun in 1914, "will end when the last one of these subjects with a heavenly hope dies and joins Christ in heaven. No longer will they be Christ's subjects, but they will then be kings with him in God's long-promised Kingdom government."[13] In unambiguous prose, this official publication states that Jesus "meant the generation of people who were living in 1914. Those persons yet remaining of that generation are now very old. However, some of them will still be alive to see the end of this wicked system."[14] The same view is maintained in a recent commentary on the "sealing" of the 144,000 in Revelation 7: "Evidently, when the four winds of tribulation are unleashed, all of spiritual Israel will have been sealed in finality, even though a few will still be alive in the flesh."[15]

Witness teaching on eschatology eventually developed four possible destinies at death: One could be raised immediately to heaven in a spirit body to rule eternally with Christ (anointed class); annihilated immediately (reprobate); resurrected and pass millennial tests of true faith, earning the reward of everlasting life on a new earth (great crowd); resurrected but fail the millennial tests and so be judged and annihilated.[16] The latter group compose the enemy in the battle of Armageddon and are called: "an irreformable part of this corrupt world of mankind."[17] This elaboration of the apocalyptic dualism of heaven and hell is a strategy of accommodation to the delay of the kingdom. There must be the possibility of salvation for other than the small anointed class or there is no motive for witnessing after they are all "sealed." Further, this scheme allows for the testing of Christians during the "tribulation" of the last days.

In 1993 the Governing Body acknowledged that their teachings had "undergone adjustments over the years" due to "progressive" understanding of the Bible. Specifically, "zeal and enthusiasm for the

vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty have led to premature expectations as to *when* the end of Satan's wicked system of things would come. . . . But Jehovah has not revealed in advance the exact time."[18] Even so, the link of the end-time with the generation of 1914 is strongly implied a few pages earlier: "Jesus also described the anointed members of [the one true Christian] congregation as 'the faithful and discreet slave' and indicated that in the time of the end, they would be dispensing spiritual food."[19] As Rutherford declared in 1923, the very condition of reward and punishment in the kingdom age is the treatment of the anointed class either as subjects of benevolence or objects of persecution. Without at least some of them surviving until the coming of the kingdom, the "other sheep" would have no opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to the "little flock" and the unbelievers would have no occasion for the "goatlike" behavior that brings judgment upon themselves.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, however, the only predictive text that has so far been confirmed is the actuarial table charting the dwindling numbers of the generation of 1914. Jehovah's Witnesses are acutely aware of the near emptying of this human hourglass because each year, at the Memorial ritual on the eve of Passover, millions gather to watch as a few thousand distinguish themselves as members of the anointed class by eating the bread and sipping the wine. Since the Watch Tower Society teaches that they are the only ones to whom Jesus' eschatological words are addressed, only they can symbolically reenter the upper room in Jerusalem and obey Jesus' words to "do this in remembrance of me."[20]

In this context, displacing the generation alive in 1914 as the ones to whom Jesus referred in Matthew 24 may be construed as a pre-emptive interpretive strike by the society in anticipation of their actual disappearance.[21] Since 1972 the authority to revise official teaching has shifted from the president of the society (at that time Nathan H. Knorr) to the Governing Body, which is composed of male elders from the anointed class. *The Watchtower* declared this order to be "closer to the first-century arrangement."[22] As the members of the Governing Body advance in age, however, their work is increasingly delegated to worthy men from the "great crowd." Already in *The Watchtower* for 1 September 1989, the society acknowledged that this process could continue until all the anointed ones have died and been glorified by declaring that it "would not be necessary" for any of the anointed class to be on earth to welcome the resurrected pre-Christian witnesses at the time of the kingdom. Thus, the way was prepared for the Watch Tower Society to maintain its theocratic administration independent of the anointed class. Then in late 1995 *The Watchtower* declared that their life span is no longer to claim the interest of Witnesses, let alone mark the years of their lengthening hope:

Jehovah's people have at times speculated about the time when the "great tribulation" would break out, even tying this to calculations of what is the lifetime of a generation since 1914. However, we "bring a heart of wisdom in," not by speculating about how many years or days make up a generation, but by thinking about how we "count our days" in bringing joyful praise to Jehovah. (Psalm 90:12) Rather than provide a rule for measuring time, the term "generation" as used by Jesus refers principally to contemporary people of a certain historical period with their identifying characteristics.[23]

Witnesses are now directed to notice that everywhere else in the Gospels Jesus refers to "this generation" in pejorative terms, as "sinful," "wicked," or "crooked." Thus, in Matthew 24:34, "[s]urely, Jesus was not departing from his established use of the term 'this generation,' which he consistently applied to the contemporary masses with their 'blind guides' who together made up the Jewish nation."[24]

But if "this generation" is a symbol for the presence of those who resist the truth, then it is a term which will never lack a referent, no matter how much longer the wheel of history turns. Even after the last anointed member of the generation of 1914 has ascended to heaven to await the kingdom, there will still be "this generation," provoking the faithful to energetic evangelism, providing occasions for the noble tragedy of martyrdom, and offering temptation to compromise absolute separation from "the world." The Governing Body refers to "our more precise viewpoint" and argues that it is a more *consistent* reading in light of the entire range of usage. What cannot be claimed, however, is that it is a more *literal* reading. In effect, the term "generation" has been transformed into a potent symbol of evil, resonant with religious threat and opportunity. This new reading has the advantages of sustaining the sense of apocalyptic test and deflecting the threat of failed prophecy. It carries the risk, however, of confusing the sense of religious identity confirmed yearly by the central ritual of the Witness community.

ACKNOWLEDGING IDENTITY IN THE RITUAL OF THE LORD'S EVENING MEAL

In my courses on religion at a liberal arts college, I often invite members of the communities of faith we are studying to discuss their beliefs and experiences with my students. These interchanges inevitably provide helpful insight into the motives, satisfactions, and sometimes reservations of believers in sectarian groups. Among the visitors I have come to rely upon for accurate representation of their tradition, as well as candid conversation with students, are local Jehovah's Witnesses. They have been unfailingly generous with their time and publications. Following the Memorial ritual described below, they even accepted my

proposal to conduct a series of interviews with Witnesses in the area. I may be among the few who have called on Jehovah's Witnesses in their own homes! Again, I was treated with hospitality and honest answers. In what follows I have drawn from some of those conversations as well.

The Memorial ritual commemorates Jesus' last meal with his disciples and is observed annually on the eve of Passover. The invitation I received set the service for "after sundown on Saturday, March 26, 1994, the date corresponding to Nisan 14 on the Bible's lunar calendar." This event is so important to Jehovah's Witnesses that it is an exception to their general rejection of holidays: "For those pursuing a godly life, there is one day each year to be specially observed. It is the Lord's Evening Meal, often called the Memorial of Christ's death."[25] The Kingdom Hall on the southeast side of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was an unassuming building in a modest, but well-kept, neighborhood (the congregation has since moved to a new building). According to the attendance records on the information board in the basement, the three weekly meetings had about fifty participants each. The auditorium seated two hundred and it was three-quarters full for the service. The ceiling was well supplied with fluorescent fixtures as is appropriate for meetings in which members are expected to follow readings in the Bible and *The Watchtower*. Someone explained, "We want people to see for themselves."

The seating was comfortable theater-type chairs. Two batches of flowers, one white and yellow, the other red, stood on the right of the stage. On the left there was a table with a white cloth bearing two plates of flat wheat bread and two goblets of wine, about one-third full. At center stage a podium stood with a microphone for the speaker. The audience was composed mostly of families, including infants. There was no area, such as many churches provide, from which the service could be observed through insulated glass. Children, of whatever age, were expected to be as alert and responsive tonight as in their other weekly duties, frequent and extensive, in the service of the congregation. Despite the ethnic diversity of that section of the city, those in attendance were, with two or three exceptions, white. Their dress and demeanor were typically "middle-class."[26]

Before the meeting people stood in small groups and talked among themselves. The women nearest me discussed special meals they had recently enjoyed. Kingdom Halls have no facilities for the cooking and serving of food that seem essential for standard Protestant fellowship, but people took advantage of the quarter hour before this service for social interchange. The speaker announced that the meeting would "start in four minutes." True to his word, the meeting started right on time and ended promptly one hour later, following directives from the Governing Body which limit official meeting times. But at 9:00 one-third of the audience was still in the hall, talking quite loudly. A half hour

later, when I finally broke off conversation, there were still a dozen or so left.

This unstructured conversation was in sharp contrast to the subdued tone of the service itself, but perhaps the robust greetings and chatter are not so much tangential to the ritual as a necessary element in it. That is, the formal hour of a meeting is not the whole of the religiously significant time Witnesses spend together. From the moment they enter the Kingdom Hall until they leave the parking lot, they are engaged in maintaining communal unity and identity, and so in ritual broadly conceived.

This observation holds not only for the Memorial service, but for other gatherings as well. During an extended interview, a Witness who has been in the organization for twenty years recalled being shocked when she first attended a Kingdom Hall meeting by how loudly people were talking "in church." She was even more surprised when they responded to the presentation by clapping. She and a younger friend agreed that the same was true of district assemblies and national conventions, where "there is a lot of hugging." They both remarked that the feeling of unity on such occasions is a small sample of what life in the kingdom will be.[27] That same theme recurs in the chapter in *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of the Kingdom* (1993) on "Conventions—Proof of our Brotherhood," which celebrates heightened emotion. The large gatherings, while structured, provide a sense of the final unity of the righteous—beyond divisions of race, nationality, language, and economic status—not possible at the local level. On these occasions, addressing each other as "brother" and "sister," Jehovah's Witnesses enjoy a foretaste of the paradisiacal *communitas* to be enjoyed by "the great crowd."[28]

At the same time, the Memorial ritual sustains the dialectical relation between the spirit of the community and its order. Victor Turner argues that ritual breaks through stultifying institutional structure by revitalizing the common spirit: "structural action swiftly becomes arid and mechanical if those involved in it are not periodically immersed in the regenerative abyss of *communitas*."[29] In light of Turner's claim that the boundaries of *communitas* are "ideally coterminous with those of the human species," however, the separation of Jehovah's Witnesses from larger society seems to make the term *communitas* inappropriate in describing them.

But two reflections suggest otherwise. First, according to the doctrine of the "great crowd," every person in the world is free to join the multitude of the faithful who will enjoy the earthly paradise. In principle, the entire human race could become Jehovah's Witnesses. The strenuous missionary efforts after 1935 have proceeded on the assumption that there are "sheep" to be called in every language, from every nation. On

this point the Witnesses operate on the same principle as the revivalists: although God has sovereign control over history, each individual is free to choose whether or not to submit to the divine government. On the relation of predestination and free will, the doctrine of the Watch Tower Society leaves open the logical possibility that every individual would choose freely to accept salvation.[30] Yet, while the *communitas* of faith could be universal, prophetic scripture infallibly foresees that some will resist the truth to the end. They constitute that "generation" whose opposition is both lamented and required.

After we sang a hymn, the speaker gave a detailed explanation of the Memorial. His talk was precisely worded and followed the interpretation of the ritual in standard Watch Tower Society publications.[31] Following a careful account of the fixing of the date of Passover, the speaker pointed out that, of the 11.4 million who attended the Memorial in 1993, only 8,693 partook of the bread and wine. Regarding this curious fact he posed three questions: (1) Who is qualified to partake? (2) How do they know who they are? (3) Why should those who do not belong to the anointed class attend the Memorial? His answers to these questions provide insight into the ways this ritual occasions a complex acknowledgment of religious identity.

(1) *Who is qualified to partake?* Those who partake declare that they are part of the 144,000 who will rule with Christ in the heavens over the coming paradise on earth. Although the speaker denied that members of this class of "priests and kings" enjoy any special status, he continued to describe them in a biblical vocabulary of authority and privilege. It is they alone, and not the Christian congregation as a whole, who constitute the "spiritual Israel," the heirs of the new covenant envisioned by the prophet Jeremiah (31:31–33). What is surprising is not the traditional Christian claim that the church replaced Israel in the history of salvation, but the restriction of the beneficiaries of that displacement to a tiny fraction of the body of Christians. Even more unusual is the analysis of Jesus' words in Luke 22:20—"This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood, which is to be poured out in YOUR behalf." The referent of "YOUR" is identified in verses 28–30 as those with whom God has made a covenant "for a kingdom" in which they will "sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel." Jehovah's Witnesses argue that the specific calling to be "co-rulers" with Christ could not possibly apply to all Christians, but only to those who are gathered from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation . . . to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth" (Revelation 5:9–10). They are numbered at 144,000—"We would expect an orderly God to have a specific number," the speaker said—in Revelation 7:4. They constitute the "little flock" who will administer the coming kingdom on behalf of the "great crowd" enjoying paradise on earth. This division of the redeemed into two classes distinguishes Jehovah's Witnesses from other

Christian apocalypticists and leads them to the radical view that only those "with a heavenly hope" are addressed by Jesus' command to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him.

(2) Speaking carefully from his manuscript, the speaker turned to the question that most naturally follows: *How do the 144,000 recognize their heavenly calling?* The answer is consistent with other references to the sacred time of the apostles as a model for the present. Just as the apostles knew they were chosen at Pentecost by the appearance of "holy spirit," so the elect in the "modern revival of Christianity" become aware of their calling through the divine inner witness Paul describes in Romans 8:15–19, identifying the adopted sons of God whose revealing the entire creation eagerly awaits.[32] The speaker noted that virtually all of the first Watch Tower Society members took the elements; but when the society announced in 1935 that a "great multitude" would be called to live in the kingdom on earth, some Witnesses ceased partaking because they lacked the conviction of a heavenly hope.[33]

This story was clearly intended to sound a cautionary note as the time to pass the elements approached. Several times the speaker observed how very unlikely it was that anyone in the audience would belong to the anointed class. But he did not entirely rule out the possibility since to do so would pose a dilemma. On the one horn, the kingdom proceeds from God's sovereign power alone and the identity of the 144,000 is known only to God and their own hearts; therefore, it would be presumptuous to say that someone else does or does not belong to the "sealed class." On the other horn, the latter-day members of that class are designated as belonging to the generation alive in 1914; therefore, anyone declaring a heavenly hope at this point would seem to be deluded and in need of correction.

To resolve the dilemma posed by self-declared ritual status requires some delicate psychological balancing. For someone to decide to partake in the elements, the speaker explained, would mean that one of the heavenly class had proven unfaithful and been cast away. On this point Jehovah's Witness theology is consistently Arminian; the seal of election can be broken from the inside. Thus, until the actual arrival of the kingdom, it is possible that some among the 144,000 would need to be replaced.[34] Anyone newly claiming to be anointed in this context, therefore, would also be making a judgment that one of the "little flock" had fallen into apostasy. One could enter into the joy of the heavenly hope, at this late date, only with a sense of grief that one of God's chosen had failed and with an attendant concern about one's own capacity to stay the course.[35]

The prospect of surprising defections from the "little flock" and compensatory promotions from the "great crowd," however, raises the possibility of mistaken conviction by the latter and of what Ronald Grimes calls "infelicitous performance" of the ritual.[36] Gary and Heather Botting

suggest that the first was present in dissenting younger Jehovah's Witnesses who began in 1980–81 to partake of the Memorial elements as a last-ditch act of protest against the Brooklyn leadership.[37] In such a case, the effect on others in the congregation could be considered "infelicitous" because the identity of the "true remnant" is rendered ambiguous, and the observers themselves must decide who are the legitimate objects of observation. But even without intentional confusion by dissenters, the ritual requires discernment of religious identity by both those who partake and those who observe.

(3) The speaker had come to the final question: *Why should people attend a "memorial" in which they abstain from the actions of remembrance?* In the case of the Cedar Rapids Kingdom Hall, no one was expected to take the elements; therefore, there would not be even a single act of commemoration to observe. The speaker was faced with a problem in the logic of ritual: how can a group observe a ritual if no one in the group is qualified to perform it? As first the unleavened bread and then the wine were passed silently down the rows, everyone touched a plate and a goblet; but the ritual elements themselves returned to the front undisturbed.

The speaker's reason for our being present, even when all qualified participants were absent, recalls Turner's remark: "Liminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low."[38] These words can be read as a gloss on the ritual of the Memorial, in which the structural distinction between two "classes" of Witnesses is affirmed in the anti-structural spirit of *communitas*. Speaking as someone with an earthly hope, the speaker said, "Our lots are tied together. We need them to administer the paradise on earth, but their rulership is meaningless without us." The ideal society of the future will be ordered by laws administered by heavenly judges; but even the kingdom of God is empty without subjects.

Furthermore, all the subjects are perfected moral beings, spontaneously fulfilling all divine commands joyfully and immortally embodied in a paradise from which all evil has been banished. Thus, the "rulers" in heaven would have no function and no authority apart from what is accorded them by the "great crowd" on earth. With a deft touch the speaker exposed the vulnerability of the higher levels in any hierarchy: dependence on continuing affirmation by those occupying lower levels. It is that dependence which, in this world, "makes uneasy the head that wears the crown." The suspicion of earthly rulers grows out of their awareness that few subjects are entirely free from jealousy or resentment. Yet the Witnesses check the tendency of any hierarchical system to create alienation by an ideology and ritual which symbolically disclose the mutual dependence of the two "classes."

In the Memorial ritual the time in which the elements pass among the congregation is marked by the tension of uncertainty at the individual

level: each year, in principle, each person in the congregation is free to decide one's own identity, to define the character of one's hope. It may be that few on that spring evening in eastern Iowa seriously considered declaring a new religious identity, but the ritual offered that possibility.[39]

At the communal level the Memorial is a ritual acknowledgment of the absence of presence: the kingdom, represented by the anointed ones, is not yet here, just as it was not visible to the first apostles. Yet that absence is transformed into presence—more precisely, it becomes objective—by the observation of the "great crowd." Jesus told his disciples to "keep on the watch" (Matthew 26:41). At the Memorial the Witnesses fulfill those words literally by watching, whether a few elderly members take the elements or no one partakes. What is important is that the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses maintain their observation of the surviving fraction of the anointed class.[40] Through well-known psychological dynamics, the deferential watching of the "great crowd" makes objective the conviction of ruling authority present in the slowly vanishing subjectivity of the "little flock." But what happens if they disappear altogether?

REVISING IDENTITY IN THE NEW GENERATION

The first issue of *The Watchtower* in 1996 offered a conventional acknowledgment of the generation of 1914: "There are still 'old men and old women' among Jehovah's people, anointed ones who remember the early triumphs of Jehovah's organization. Their faithfulness and endurance are greatly appreciated."[41] While the Governing Body seems here to trade the eschatological significance of the anointed class for the value of their exemplary devotion, a few pages later the doctrine of the elect 144,000 is restated in a way that requires a few to remain to represent the "new Israel" on earth. In an ingenious reading of the prophecy in Zechariah 8:23—"in those days . . . ten men out of all the languages of the nations will take hold of the skirt of a man who is a Jew, saying: 'We will go with you people for we have heard that God is with you people'"—the Governing Body interprets "a Jew" as the entire anointed class, "chosen from among mankind to reign with Jesus in his heavenly Kingdom."[42] The identification of the remnant of ancient Israelites returning to Jerusalem from exile with the final vestiges of the Witnesses who survived the persecution of their organization following World War I is a daring move in biblical typology. Even so, it does not entirely succeed in shifting attention from the "anointed class" to the "great crowd." For there must be at least "a Jew" left to whose skirt the "gentile" worshippers of God may cling as they ascend Mount Zion. The logic even here is that the anointed class cannot entirely disappear until the kingdom comes.

What is of interest is how that implication is passed over in order to emphasize the present enjoyment of security within the Witness community: "let us, then, stay safe within the land of his people, zealously praising him publicly and helping as many as possible to 'soften the face of Jehovah.' If we do so, we will always enjoy Jehovah's peace."[43] Does this emphasis indicate a shift to a version of realized eschatology in the face of continuing postponement of the arrival of the kingdom? If so, there is already ample ground for speaking of "Kingdom life" in the *communitas* experienced by the observers of the Memorial.

Further, the reinterpretation of the significance of the oldest Jehovah's Witnesses comes at the same time that the youngest adults in Kingdom Halls are beginning to raise their own families in a world that gives every indication of persisting. For those in relatively comfortable circumstances, with parental interest in securing a similar future for their children, the high level of commitment to publishing work and to radical separation from "the world" could well diminish. Witnesses of the present generation may send their children to college more often, purchase life insurance, be less responsive to stringent demands for uniformity and less willing to sacrifice their children's health to uphold the prohibition of blood transfusions.[44] Once symbolic interpretation has been introduced to change a major point of doctrine—and by no less an authority than the Governing Body—can other changes be long resisted? What difference will it make to this generation of Witnesses that the fading lives of their great-grandparents no longer signal the *terminus ad quem* of human history?[45]

The usual dynamics of generational change, however, may be somewhat offset by factors which lead Ronald Lawson to speculate that Jehovah's Witnesses will remain an "established sect" with a high level of tension with prevailing society. First, Jehovah's Witnesses have a relatively small proportion of "hereditary members especially in the Developed World." As a result, new members are mainly converts in developing countries who continue to bring fresh zeal to the movement. Second, Lawson is impressed that "the urgency of the Witnesses' apocalyptic has changed very little over time. The intellectual isolation of the Witness leaders has allowed them to retain their traditional position, and it is they who continue to be the chief purveyors of the radical eschatology."[46] It is certainly true that the public discourse of the Watch Tower Society is as incendiary as ever. A recent *Watchtower* likens the "present world system" to a rundown tenement, "fit for only one thing—demolition and replacement." The book of Revelation symbolizes the end of Satan and his supporters in a "lake of fire, consuming and removing from existence everything that is evil and contaminated. No one, neither man nor demon, will be allowed to continue doing things that threaten universal order."[47]

In the meanwhile, the society urges Jehovah's Witnesses to be active in preaching to all sorts of non-believers, but also warns the faithful against forming friendships with outsiders, even if they possess "decent qualities": "though not considering ourselves superior, we must bear in mind that *all* 'bad associations' spoil useful habits."[48] Both parts of this admonition should be taken seriously. It is not arrogance that requires separation from the world; it is fear of pollution. Here we arrive at the heart of Witness spirituality. Avoiding association with "contaminated" non-Witnesses is one with refusing blood transfusions (first introduced in 1945). The society demands both as obedience to clear divine commands, but Richard Singelenberg demonstrates that both are also rooted in the religious desire to maintain a communal state of purity worthy of divine favor: "rules of pollution and purity are instrumental in creating structural boundaries around group members. And, the more distinctive when formulated into divine precepts, the clearer the dividing lines between the faithful and those excluded."[49]

The question which faces Jehovah's Witnesses in this millennium is: Which will prove stronger, the pressure to accommodate to the present "contaminated" world as it moves into an ever-extending future or the passion to remain "without spot from the world" (James 1:27)? The Governing Body, speaking through the pages of *The Watchtower*, continues to demand absolute conformity to its system of biblical interpretation, enforcing its "rules of pollution and purity." As Stephen J. Stein points out, however, any canon requires both commentary and community: "Commentary and translation are devices for manipulating scriptures. And all of these processes require the existence of a supportive, interactive religious community."[50] What will be the nature of the interaction between the Watch Tower Society and the next generation of Jehovah's Witnesses? Will the society be obliged to make further adjustments in its radical apocalyptic beliefs and practices in order to retain authority, or will it risk disillusionment and rebellion among the "great crowd"?

Will the "more precise version" of eschatology continue the trend in *The Watchtower* to confine apocalyptic discourse to the criticism of existing religious and political institutions rather than offer it as the divine clue to the timing of the kingdom? If so, Jehovah's Witnesses could avoid the trauma of failed prophecy while at the same time maintaining their separate religious identity and rigorous morality.[51] Such a compromise may render the urgency of witness in the "last days" less compelling, however, and weaken the dramatic power of the Memorial ritual.

In these matters, even more than is usual in human affairs, only time will tell. For the final irony in all apocalyptic scenarios is that history becomes not the servant, but the judge, of prophecy. Jehovah's Witnesses began this century with "Millennial Dawn," but found themselves facing

"Millennial Sunset" as the eschatological generation of 1914 began fading. But "new light" in the form of revised interpretation of the Bible has shone just in time to reconcile prophecy with history by showing the way for Jehovah's Witnesses to retain their apocalyptic identity well into the disconcertingly indeterminate future.

ENDNOTES

[1] *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom* (1 November 1995), 17.

[2] From the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, first published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in 1961 and most recently revised in 1984. In the *New Revised Standard Version* the text reads: "this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place."

[3] *The Watchtower* (1 November 1995), 19.

[4] Jehovah's Witnesses have also drawn pejorative comment in many published studies. Among general works that include consideration of the Jehovah's Witnesses, some typical polemical attacks by conservative Protestants are A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963); J. K. Van Baalen, *The Chaos of Cults*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962); Ronald Enroth, *The Lure of the Cults and New Religions* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1987). Marcus Bach in his popular *Strange Sects and Curious Cults* (New York: Dorset Press, 1961) is less paranoiac and more amused by new religions. Royston Pike provides a clear presentation of Watch Tower teachings, but grows increasingly sarcastic as he proceeds into speculations about the last days in *Jehovah's Witnesses: Who They Are, What They Teach, What They Do* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954). Herbert Stroup received no cooperation from the Watch Tower Society in writing *The Jehovah's Witnesses* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1945), but still managed to produce a study more analytical and scholarly in tone that many later works which list his book in their bibliographies. Jehovah's Witnesses have evoked particularly harsh criticisms from ex-members, such as William J. Schnell in the sensational *Thirty Years a Watch Tower Slave* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1956), the less vengeful but thoroughly disillusioned W. C. Stevenson in *The Inside Story of Jehovah's Witnesses* (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1967), and Gary and Heather Botting in their forebodingly titled *The Orwellian World of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984). Two accounts by former members which provide more balanced reflections on the nature of their original commitments and eventual disappointments are: Barbara Grizzuti Harrison, *Visions of Glory: A History and a Memory of Jehovah's Witnesses* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978) and M. James Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985). For a revealing look inside the Watch Tower Society, see Raymond Franz's account of his "disfellowshipping" as a member of the Governing Body in *Crisis of Conscience: The Struggle Between Loyalty to God and Loyalty to One's Religion* (Atlanta: Commentary Press, 1983). For a recent academic study, including assessment of contemporary scholarship, see Melvin D. Curry, *Jehovah's Witnesses: The Millenarianism World of the Watch Tower* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994).

[5] *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1993), 164. In this and subsequent quotations underlining is added for emphasis. This compendium of the history, teaching, and organization of Jehovah's Witnesses is the most complete report of their history produced by the Governing Body to date and is remarkably free from the polemical tone of earlier writings.

[6] *Revelation—Its Grand Climax at Hand!* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1988), 119.

[7] *Revelation*, 122–23.

[8] Cf. *Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1965), 254: "These sheeplike people with earthly hopes have til now been faithfully joining with the anointed remnant in giving the final Kingdom witness before the war of Armageddon."

[9] *Revelation*, 126.

[10] *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1968), 95.

[11] *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached!* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1973), 29.

[12] The timetable was made explicit a few pages later: with the rise of the League of Nations as the sinister "Eighth World Power" (later revived as the United Nations), "the desolating of unfaithful Christendom and the rest of Babylon the Great was approaching and was due to occur during this generation." (*God's Kingdom*, 315).

[13] *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1982), 136. In the subsequent decade, Jehovah's Witnesses reported distributing 62,428,231 copies of this book in 200 languages.

[14] *Paradise*, 154.

[15] *Revelation*, 116. In the two-volume reference work also published in 1988, however, the article on "generation" avoids such explicit statements: "Jesus was using the word 'generation' with reference to humans whose lives would in some way be associated with the foretold events." (*Insight on the Scriptures* [Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1988], 1:918). The following paragraph lists the "terrifying events" corresponding to Jesus' predictions which the generation living since 1914 experienced, but leaves the reader to make the identification. The same interpretive technique is used in a later tract which correlates the signs of the "last days" in Matthew 24 with catastrophic events initiated by World War I (*Will This World Survive?* [Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 1992]).

[16] *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1995), 181–90.

[17] *Revelation*, 286.

[18] *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 709. The Watch Tower Society has a long history of revising its teachings on the principle of "new light" drawn from Proverbs 4:18. While official doctrine denies that these changes constitute new revelation, in fact at any given time the biblical interpretations in official publications claim the authority to establish the *meaning* of Scripture.

[19] *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 707. The Watch Tower Society interprets the "faithful and discreet slave" in Jesus' allegorical parable of the end-time (Matthew 24:45–51) as a literal reference to the anointed class as a whole. Lynn D. Newton defines the term as "the entire composite body of [spirit-anointed] Christians on the earth at any given time," then adds this "NOTE: The faithful and discreet slave is *not* any single individual, and it is *not* the [Governing Body], which is only a mouthpiece of the greater composite slave." See his *Hyperglossary of American English Hacker Theocratese, Version 6.7* at http://www.eecs.umich.edu/~lnewton/glossary/hyper/=F.html (first accessed summer 1998).

[20] *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 243.

[21] William J. Whalen anticipated a move of this sort a generation ago: "[D]rawing on the experience of both the Watchtower and similar cults, we have a pretty good idea of what will happen if and when Armageddon does not materialize and the term 'generation' can hardly be stretched any longer. A few Witnesses will give up the movement in disgust and disappointment. But the majority will no doubt accept whatever revised interpretation the Society's theologians devise to meet the situation" (*Armageddon Around the Corner: A Report on Jehovah's Witnesses* [New York: The John Day Co., 1962], 228).

[22] *The Watchtower* (15 May 1997), 20.

[23] *The Watchtower* (1 November 1995), 17.

[24] Ibid., 14. Here Witness commentary reflects the anti-Jewish sentiment embedded in the New Testament Gospels. It is not unusual for religious groups devoted to a "literal" interpretation of the Bible to adopt such rhetoric.

[25] *Knowledge*, 127. Newton notes that the "Memorial season" is "as close as Jehovah's Witnesses come to celebrating a holiday" (*Hyperglossary*).

[26] Given their forceful rhetoric of the impending end of the world, one might expect Jehovah's Witnesses to be more colorful, or at least less conventional, in their personal style. But Victor Turner comments that in "apocalyptic communitas" one finds "a characteristic polarization . . . between, on the one hand, a rigorous simplicity and poverty of elected behavior . . . and, on the other, an almost febrile, visionary, and prophetic poetry as their main genre of cultural utterance" (*The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969; 1977], 153).

[27] Interview by author, 6 April 1994.

[28] Brenda J. Mann found that Jehovah Witnesses employ a precisely defined set of terms of address and reference. She concludes that "[m]embership in part is based on the ability to use and interpret these identity terms appropriately" and in the proper contexts of in-group and out-group ("'The Great Crowd': Ethnography of Jehovah's Witnesses," in *The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society*, eds. James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy [Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1972], 157–68).

[29] Turner, *Ritual Process*, 139.

[30] Mary Farrell Bednarowski demonstrates that many sectarian groups reject notions of original sin in favor of a self-determination of religious identity in *New Religions and the Theological Imagination in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 45–74.

[31] For example, *Insight on the Scriptures* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), an encyclopedia of topics, doctrinal and historical, devotes almost four pages to the "Lord's Evening Meal" (2:268–71).

[32] To any recent members in doubt about their calling, *The Watchtower* for 15 February 1985 cites this passage and adds that "anyone genuinely begotten by God's spirit is not continually disturbed with doubts."

[33] Cf. testimony of a member of the anointed class in Norway in *The Watchtower* (1 October 1997).

[34] According to *The Watchtower* for 1 February 1982, "the full number of 144,000 would have been nearly completed. Of course, any individuals proving unfaithful would need to be replaced." But the "heavenly hope" would most likely not be "held out to unproved newly dedicated ones."

[35] After the Memorial, I asked an older man who had given his life to being a "pioneer" whether Raymond Franz, a member of the Governing Body who was disfellowshipped in a case that drew the attention of *Time* magazine (22 February 1982), might be an example of someone who fell from the anointed class. "Yes," he replied quietly. In fact, he was acquainted with an earlier instance of such an exchange in the ranks of the "little flock." His own sister-in-law had become convinced of a heavenly hope and began taking the elements some time in the 1950s, although she was not yet born in 1914. The clear implication of her conviction was that somewhere a member of the anointed class had failed. She is now in poor health, and he and his wife are planning to visit her in Florida soon because, once she dies, they believe they will never see her again. (Those in heaven remain spirits, like Jesus, and do not receive resurrected bodies, as do those in the earthly paradise.)

[36] Ronald L. Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 109–205.

[37] Gary and Heather Botting point out that the number of Memorial partakers increased in 1973, 1974, and 1981. They attribute the earlier increases to reactivations of older members inspired by the high expectations of the kingdom coming in 1975. But "the increase from 1980 to 1981 was not so much the result of ignorance or self-aggrandizement,

as an indication of dissent, for the easiest way to give a protest vote that the Governing Body will have to recognize is to partake of the elements" (*The Orwellian World*, 146).

[38] Turner, *Ritual Process*, 97.

[39] It is significant that the society banned the practice of ushers standing at the end of the rows and serving only those who indicated they were of the elect: "The actual passing of the bread and the wine from one to the other . . . enables each one to go on record as indicating what his hope of life is—heavenly or earthly" [*The Watchtower*, 15 February 1985), 20. Emphasis added.].

[40] In 1980 the average number of publishers, or members in good standing, was 2,175,403 of whom 9,564 or 0.43% of the total membership were "Memorial partakers." The 1997 Service Year Report lists the average number of publishers as 5,353,078, with 8,795 or 0.164% of all living Jehovah's Witnesses, "Memorial partakers worldwide." That number represents 6.1% of 144,000.

[41] *The Watchtower* (1 January 1996), 16.

[42] Ibid., 22.

[43] Ibid.

[44] For an account of the magnitude of such sacrifice, see David A. Reed, *Blood on the Altar: Confessions of a Jehovah's Witness Minister* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996).

[45] I can offer some anecdotal evidence on this point. A Jehovah's Witness whom I have known for twenty years brought his son with him to visit my class in the spring of 1998. The son is now married, with children of his own, and is a faithful member of a Kingdom Hall. In the course of their presentation, it became clear that the change in the timetable for the coming of the kingdom disturbed the father far more than the son. To take one small but telling example, the father was puzzled that the Watch Tower Society chose to plant fruit trees during the recent renovation of the headquarters in Brooklyn. "Do you know how long it takes fruit trees to grow?" he wondered aloud. When the son was asked about the change, however, he candidly admitted that it "did not matter" whether the kingdom came in his lifetime. He continued as a Witness because of the "moral teaching" and the stability of the family promoted by Kingdom Hall programs. That is, he is a Jehovah's Witness for roughly the same reason many of his contemporaries are Methodists or Roman Catholics.

[46] Ronald Lawson, "Sect-State Relations: Accounting for the Differing Trajectories of Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses," *Sociology of Religion* 56, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 372.

[47] *The Watchtower* (1 November 1997), 6–7. This rhetoric is what led Gary and Heather Botting to compare the Watch Tower Society to Orwell's "Big Brother"; it does little to "soften the face of Jehovah" toward non-Witnesses.

[48] Ibid., 25.

[49] "The Blood Transfusion Taboo of Jehovah's Witnesses: Origin, Development and Function of a Controversial Doctrine," *Social Science and Medicine* 31, no. 4 (1990): 521–22.

[50] "America's Bibles: Canon, Commentary, and Community," *Church History* 64, no. 2 (June 1995): 183–84.

[51] Mathew N. Schmalz argues that the Witnesses' motive for proselytism has never been to justify their beliefs in the face of failed prophecy, as Leon Festinger speculated, but rather to confirm "their rejection of the world" and to enforce "their claim to privileged knowledge. . . . Watch Tower reactions to disconfirmation seem primarily directed toward re-establishing group cohesion through revision, denial and purge" ("When Festinger Fails: Prophecy and the Watch Tower," *Religion* 24, no. 4 [October, 1994]: 304).

Scholarship, Aum Shinrikyô, and Academic Integrity

Ian Reader

In a volume about the criminal activities of the Japanese new religious movement (NRM) Aum Shinrikyô, the Japanese lawyer and social activist Takimoto Tarô[1] expressed his contempt for the conduct of scholars of religion during the Aum affair by putting the Japanese word *shûkyôgakusha* ("scholar of religion") in quotation marks to suggest that this was a misnomer rather than a valid title or profession. Moreover, he asserted that such scholars had operated as a "support team" for Aum Shinrikyô in its activities. Takimoto's criticisms were directed most particularly at Shimada Hiromi and Nakazawa Shin'ichi, two Japanese scholars of religion who had made positive statements about Aum prior to the Tokyo subway attack of March 1995 that brought Aum to international notice. They had, Takimoto claimed, failed to produce an accurate analysis (by which Takimoto meant a critical and condemnatory account) of the movement. Instead they had whitewashed it, thereby contributing to Aum's criminality and subjecting many people in Aum to what Takimoto called "mind control."[2] It was not only Japanese scholars of religion who came under fire, however, for although Takimoto did not state it in so many words, the activities of a group of scholars who visited Japan from the U.S. soon after the subway attack also received immense criticism in Japan.

Takimoto was not a detached observer of the Aum affair, for he had for some time prior to the subway attack been a prominent campaigner against Aum Shinrikyô, acting as an advocate for the parents of young people who had severed family relationships and joined Aum's communes. He also organized support groups whose aim was to persuade Aum members to defect and to renounce their faith, and he repeatedly issued criticisms in the press about Aum, reserving particular scorn for its leader and founder Asahara Shôkô and his claims to have acquired the power of levitation through his ascetic practices.[3] Takimoto publicly ridiculed such claims by publishing photographs of himself leaping in the air as if levitating, thereby suggesting that Asahara's levitation was nothing but a fraud.[4]

Takimoto's attitude towards, and charges against, Aum were not dissimilar to those voiced against other NRMs by "anti-cult" campaigners in other parts of the world. In his attacks on Aum one finds the usual roster of charges, from trickery, manipulation, financial abuse, and snatching "children" (usually of adult age) from their parents, to brainwashing, mind control, and sundry criminal activities. However, what gave Takimoto's campaign against Aum a particular resonance was that it was driven by his belief that the movement had been involved in the disappearance of another lawyer, Sakamoto Tsutsumi, along with his wife and child, in November 1989. At the time, Sakamoto had been prominent in a campaign against Aum and was acting as the legal representative for a number of people, including families who had voiced complaints after their sons and daughters had joined Aum. Takimoto's suspicions on this score were proven correct in September 1995, when senior Aum members arrested after the sarin attack confessed that they had killed the Sakamoto family on Asahara's orders and disposed of the bodies. Takimoto had in many respects taken over Sakamoto's anti-Aum campaign after his disappearance. He also had reason to fear for his own life in the months prior to the Tokyo sarin attack and had been put under police protection in November 1994 because of concerns that the movement harbored aggressive intentions towards him. Indeed, as various accounts of the Aum affair have shown, by this time the movement had become locked into an escalating cycle of violence directed at external enemies and at suspected defectors. Eventually this violence claimed at least twenty-five lives outside the movement (as well as numerous deaths within it), culminating in the subway attack and other atrocities in the spring of 1995.[5]

Takimoto was therefore not a detached observer of events, and his criticisms of scholars of religion were by no means impartial. Nonetheless, they broadly reflected the public mood in Japan after the full horror of the Aum affair had come to light in 1995, and they particularly illustrate how the integrity of scholars of religion came to be publicly questioned in its aftermath. This public questioning and criticism, albeit from highly partial sources, is important for a number of reasons. While it demonstrates a misunderstanding of the role of scholars of religion (who, Takimoto clearly thinks, should criticize rather than analyze NRMs), it brings to light the problems that arise when scholars of religion are perceived by the public to be sympathetic to movements that are in conflict with mainstream society. Indeed, Takimoto's criticisms go right to the heart of the issues raised in a recent symposium in *Nova Religio* (*Nova Religio* 2, no. 1 [1998]) that examined questions of academic integrity in the study of NRMs. One of the issues that was highlighted in the symposium related to the problems that arise when scholars appear to get too close to the movements they study. For example, by accepting

a NRM's hospitality or making public statements of support, scholars open themselves to charges of partiality.

Despite the polemical ways in which they have been expressed, Takimoto's criticisms are of interest because they illustrate that the types of discussions, debates, and polarities indicated by the various articles in that edition of *Nova Religio* are, like the incidence of cult controversies themselves, not confined to the Western world. They are also the subject of major debate in non-Western countries such as Japan. Takimoto's comments alert us further to the ways in which the activities of scholars can at times inadvertently compromise not only their own position but also that of their colleagues in the field. As such it is worth exploring the background to these criticisms for the lessons the Aum case has for those who study new religions in any part of the world.

AUM AND SCHOLASTIC MISADVENTURES

Aum Shinrikyô had, for a number of years prior to March 1995, received very critical press coverage in Japan. It had been widely accused of civil rights violations and infringements of Japanese law, and was suspected of involvement in the disappearance of noted opponents of the movement. Although all these charges have subsequently proven to be accurate, the movement adamantly denied them, aggressively dismissing any accusation against it as religious persecution and as the product of a corrupt media.[6] In its counter-offensive against the media, Aum gained the support of academics as well as public personalities. Asahara gave interviews to a small number of Japanese scholars and television personalities in the early 1990s, winning them over with his charm and impressing them with the strength of his convictions and the dedication of his followers. The fact that Aum's followers engaged in strict ascetic disciplines of a level rarely found in modern Japan impressed some observers and convinced them that Aum was a benign and sincere religious movement. As a result, Aum was able to use the supportive comments of scholars such as Nakazawa Shin'ichi, a specialist in Tibetan Buddhism who had met Asahara on occasion, to counteract critical media reports.[7]

Another scholar who developed contacts with Aum was Shimada Hiromi, a professor at Nihon Women's University in Tokyo. Shimada, who specialized in the study of modern Japanese religion, wrote widely about the types of religious groups that attracted contemporary Japanese youth and paid particular attention to Aum. In these writings he compared Aum favorably with some other new religions and in particular with Kôfuku no Kagaku, a similarly Buddhist-oriented new religion established in 1986. Kôfuku no Kagaku had been involved in various conflicts with Aum and was regarded as a bitter rival. Shimada

contrasted the austerities performed by Aum members and the levels of knowledge of Buddhism they appeared to have with what he saw as the lack of ascetic practice and a weaker understanding of Buddhism among followers of Kôfuku no Kagaku. His work, in effect, favored Aum.[8] Moreover, he encouraged some of his seminar students to conduct fieldwork at Aum centers, met Asahara on a number of occasions, and allowed photographs to be taken of himself smiling alongside Aum's leader. These were used by the movement—as were similar photographs of Asahara with Nakazawa and various religious leaders such as the Dalai Lama—as proof of its legitimacy. Shimada's public support was also used by Aum in publications aimed at raising the movement's profile and prestige.

In January 1995, when hints were made in the Japanese press that Aum had been responsible for a sarin gas attack in the town of Matsumoto in June 1994 and that one of the buildings at its commune might house a laboratory for making chemical weapons, the movement invited Shimada to inspect the facility. He did so, proclaiming that it was in fact a temple whose sole purpose was for worship. Shown a newly constructed statue and told that behind it was a temple open only to initiates, he had not demanded access but had posed by the statue for photographs. Besides giving the movement a public endorsement, he hinted that another group might have been responsible for the earlier Matsumoto poison attack.[9] Shimada was wrong—it was later revealed that the statue had been hastily constructed and placed there to conceal the entrance to the laboratory which was used to make Aum's chemical weapons. He had committed the arch folly of trusting in the sincerity of his informants and believing that his guides were telling him the unvarnished truth. As a result of this incident Takimoto later accused Shimada of "not even trying to know" what was going on in Aum.[10]

After the sarin attack, Shimada appeared on television programs discussing the Aum affair and was widely criticized as a defender of the movement. Eventually, he came under pressure from his own university and was forced to resign his position. Shimada has since responded to these criticisms by admitting some errors of judgment, criticizing other scholars in Japan for their failures in the affair, and claiming that he had been deceived by Aum and hence was something of a victim himself.[11]

The apparent complicity, at least in the public mind, of Shimada and Nakazawa with Aum was damaging to the general reputation of scholars of religion in Japan. This problem was further compounded when two scholars of NRMs, accompanied by a scientist and a human rights lawyer—all four American—visited Japan in April 1995 at Aum's invitation and expense. At the time, Aum was protesting the charges leveled against it and claiming this was yet another part of a massive conspiracy against the movement that involved the Japanese and U.S. governments, the Japanese Imperial family, the Freemasons, the Jews,

and numerous other groups and individuals.[12] Besieged by the authorities and with hundreds of its members being arrested and held without charge, Aum appealed for help to the Association of World Academics for Religious Education (AWARE), an American organization established "to serve as a kind of religious Amnesty International."[13]

AWARE's founder, James R. Lewis, was one of the group that visited Japan under the association's auspices. The visit was well-intentioned, and the participants were genuinely concerned about possible violations of civil rights in the wake of the extensive police investigations and detentions of followers. At the time, while there was widespread public certainty about Aum's guilt in the subway attack and other crimes, there was no absolute proof, and Aum's vociferous protestations of innocence might have suggested to an outsider that it had been set up. The visit, however, had the unfortunate effect of simply reinforcing the public view that scholars of religion were naïve support teams for dangerous religious groups.[14]

Moreover, the scholars' defense of a movement that had been linked to a number of terrible crimes offended Japanese sensibilities and suggested a lack of judgment on the part of the visitors. The public was concerned about its safety, and yet—so it appeared to many Japanese—the Americans had come to protest possible violations of the civil rights of a movement that had committed mass murder.[15]

J. Gordon Melton, one of the NRM specialists involved, shortly afterwards concluded that Aum had in fact been involved in the attack and other crimes.[16] Lewis, however, was clearly impressed by his hosts and their allegations of conspiracy. He went so far as to publish an article that suggested that the Aum affair was "Japan's Waco," an attempt by the authorities to crush a problematic religious movement. In suggesting that Aum had been framed, Lewis outlined his hypothesis that it "was being made to play the role of scapegoat for the incompetence of the authorities at the highest levels of the Japanese government."[17]

Lewis's misjudgment and the scholars' ill-fated visit compounded the mistakes that had been made by Japanese specialists in the field. They appeared to further reinforce the impression that scholars of religion lacked critical judgment or, indeed, any real knowledge of the subject about which they were speaking. As Watanabe Manabu, a noted scholar of Aum, commented, the scholars from outside Japan "had no prior knowledge of the Aum Affair, nor of the incidents prior to the Tokyo sarin gas attack."[18] According to Watanabe, the visit, along with the Shimada affair,

> served to make scholars of religion look like credulous fools, a negative image reinforced by the mass media and anti-cult activists who have portrayed the scholars as persons insensitive and naïve to the dangers of "destructive cults." Thus it is no wonder that scholars of religion consider the Aum Affair as a crisis for religious studies at large.[19]

MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Why, one should ask, were such basic mistakes made in this matter? How did scholars give an apparent seal of approval and a clean bill of health to a movement that had committed a number of appalling crimes? While space does not allow for a detailed and thorough analysis of the reasons why a number of scholars from different backgrounds were misled by Aum, I think that one point needs to be stressed. This is that none of those who appeared to speak up for Aum had sufficient knowledge of the movement at its grassroots to gain a thorough recognition of how the movement functioned. Without close and lengthy contact with its members, time spent in its commune observing day to day life, or discussions with former members, they were unable to see beyond the surface veneer that Aum presented to the outside world. They were speaking from superficial knowledge gleaned from stage-managed interactions and contacts with specific highly-placed figures in Aum's hierarchy—precisely the people who were involved in Aum's criminality and cover-up.

This is where the importance of fieldwork needs to be stressed along with the shortcomings of scholarly attempts to deal with large numbers of NRMs. General overviews tend to create a mind-set in which all NRMs are seen in a similar light and their problems as universal. Put another way, they create the assumption that if some new religions are being harassed or oppressed, then any new religion might be. In a sense, this parallels the assumptions made by anti-cultists that if one NRM commits crimes or indiscretions, then all do. It is equally fallacious, of course, to assume that just because one new religion may be falsely accused of atrocities then all new religions suspected of criminal behavior must be falsely accused.

In the case of Japanese scholars the tendency has been to study new religions through a range of general contacts with high-ranking movement officials. Conversely, they have focused far less on intensive fieldwork and close observations of a particular group, or on gaining knowledge of a specific movement by living for lengthy periods with its members. This situation has arisen partly because of the small number of specialists of new religions in Japan relative to the large number of movements that are active there. On that score alone it is perhaps more striking that some scholars had at least looked at Aum than that none of them had done any in-depth studies of the movement.

The situation is also a product of the Japanese academic system, which rarely provides the opportunity for scholars to spend long periods of time conducting fieldwork. This in turn means that contacts tend to be transitory and located at the upper echelons of movements. Scholars

who looked at Aum encountered senior officials skilled in handling outsiders or were introduced to Asahara, who met them under controlled circumstances in which he was at his most charming.[20] While such an approach allows scholars to have a broad knowledge of a number of movements and to develop some overviews of the field in general, it is too "top down" in focus to probe adequately the inner dynamics of such movements. Nor, of course, does it provide the opportunities or even the skills to look beyond the picture that is presented to scholars by the movements in question. Looking at the upper echelons and talking to the senior figures in a movement without longer-term observations and close contacts with the ordinary members, as the Aum case shows, is not a formula for developing a deep understanding of the workings of NRMs.

The Americans who visited Japan at Aum's request were even more hampered in their activities. Linguistic barriers prevented them from gaining access to the rank and file and from ascertaining what really was happening in Japan at the time. The scholars were, in effect, dependent on the English-speaking members of the movement's elite who had invited them. This clearly appears to have affected Lewis' judgment. Invited by a movement that was denying that it had committed any crimes, he appears to have been swayed by impressionistic feelings towards his hosts and their talk of conspiracies. He exonerated them because, it would appear, they were simply too nice to be mass murderers.[21] They may indeed have come across as nice, decent people, but they were also lying rather skillfully. In April as in January 1995 (when it invited Shimada to speak up for them), Aum Shinrikyô was engaged in a process of deception, denying responsibility for crimes it had committed, playing on the sympathies of scholars, and using them as a defense against its accusers. It was, however, not long before the façade cracked. By early May 1995, senior members of Aum had begun to confess in great detail, admitting involvement in the subway attack and leading the police to all manner of evidence that demonstrated how wrong Lewis and Shimada had been. As further details of Aum's criminality emerged throughout the summer of 1995, the errors committed by those who spoke up for Aum became increasingly obvious, adding further to the crisis that, as Watanabe has noted, surrounded religious studies in Japan.

THEMES AND CONSEQUENCES

The above is a very brief outline of problems that have arisen as a result of interventions in the Aum affair by academics from Japan and from the West. Some of the lessons to be learned are fairly obvious.

The experiences of the scholars discussed here alert us again to the necessity for caution in how one relates to a movement and how one conducts research into them. Whatever the reasons for their misjudgments, the fact that these scholars had some form of association with Aum—in the one case receiving expenses and an airfare—clearly compromised them in the eyes of public critics for whom any positive comment on Aum, or any acceptance of gifts from them, was taken as a sign of complicity in the movement's crimes. Although, as Massimo Introvigne has argued, receiving funding from religious groups "may *influence* but does not necessarily *control* the results of research,"[22] this point is rarely going to be acknowledged by critics of new religions or by the general public in a crisis atmosphere such as that of Japan in 1995.

The problems encountered by the Japanese and American scholars mentioned above also came about because they appear to have accepted in a trusting way the assurances of their guides who, while acting as *public relations officers* for the movement, were treated as *informants*. These scholars were not skeptical enough about what they were being told: Shimada was too willing to accept Aum's assurances that the building was not a chemical weapons laboratory, and Lewis similarly was too willing to accept Aum's claims of oppression. As I have noted earlier, this type of problem may be linked to the ways in which scholarly investigations of movements occur. If one works only at the higher levels of a movement and deals too much in their *generalities*, the potential for misreading what is happening is liable to be increased. And, as Stephen A. Kent and Theresa Krebs have commented, "superficial research can have very real and harmful effects."[23]

Scholars also need to question whether and to what extent the conflicts that have raged between scholars and anti-cult activists have led them to abandon a properly objective position for one that is implicitly partial. Put another way, is there not a danger that, in responding to appeals from religious movements, academics might unwittingly assume the mantle of a defender of religious freedoms—a mantle that might not sit easily with the objectivity that is presumed to be an academic's chief tool of trade? It is, of course, important for scholars to speak out when the civil rights of religious movements are in danger. However, the importance (and necessity) of such activities should not lead scholars into the assumption that new religions against which accusations have been made are always or necessarily *victims*. Researchers need to remind themselves that, as the Aum case shows, religious groups might also be skilled at knowing how to construct a cover-up for their activities.

Michael Pye, a leading scholar of the religions of Japan, has addressed these questions in an article entitled "Aum Shinrikyô: Can Religious Studies Cope?"[24] Pye's basic point is that religious studies scholars need

to adopt a more analytical and critical stance towards the interpretation of religions and towards the religious movements they study.[25] He argues that the Aum affair demonstrated a basic failure by scholars to penetrate beneath the surface of religions and develop adequate critiques of them, especially when they made extravagant claims—as, he argues, Aum Shinrikyô did when it claimed to be a movement striving to revive what it called "original Buddhism"—or behaved in anti-social ways. He is also critical of religious leaders such as the Dalai Lama for their apparent readiness to allow themselves to be co-opted by other religious movements and to provide them with positive endorsements without a closer investigation of their activities.[26]

This echoes the argument made by Kent and Krebs when they point out the problems posed to objective scholarship when money comes into the equation and when they assert that scholars can compromise their work by not taking adequately critical stances towards the religions they study.[27] Religious movements that seek positive press coverage can be adept at using academics for their ends and may utilize their public relations skills and their hospitality to create a good feeling in the minds of the scholars they invite. If scholars fail to consider the intentions of their hosts, then errors of the sort made in the Aum affair may well proliferate.

I am not saying that adopting a critical stance means taking the line Takimoto and others would like—a condemnatory one. However, I do emphasize how important it is for scholars to recognize that, as well as having the potential for activities that are honest, law abiding, and respectful of individual rights, NRMs may engage in criminal activities.[28] Problems occur when those who respond to the appeal of a religious movement for a clean bill of health overlook this point. Equally, a critical understanding of religions demands a wider recognition that NRMs in dispute with the law need not only be victims; as Aum has shown, they can also be perpetrators of crimes.

CONCLUSION

I have discussed here a few of the ramifications of a case in which scholars have unwittingly compromised themselves and their colleagues. In so doing I have amplified the charges made by activists campaigning against NRMs—that scholars of religion in general may be lacking in objectivity. This aspect of the Aum affair is not something of only marginal relevance to scholars apart from those who specialize in Japanese NRMs or who work in Japan. Its messages should resonate throughout the field. Just as the Waco tragedy has rightly impinged on the consciousness of every NRM scholar, so too should the Aum affair

and what it has to say about academic integrity. In Japan, as Watanabe has shown, scholarship on new religions has been very much thrown into question, and this has strengthened the hand of those who would like to see all "deviant" new religions (I use this term as it is used by campaigners such as Takimoto) proscribed or restricted.[29]

What makes the Aum affair especially worth considering is that it was—almost from the moment the sarin gas was released on the Tokyo subway—an open and shut case, in which direct evidence existed to link the movement to a number of related crimes. Unlike so many of the controversial issues that have been at the epicenter of debate over NRMs, there was little possible doubt about what had transpired in this case. Police raids on Aum had already been prepared prior to the subway attack as a result of earlier Aum violence.[30] As the evidence uncovered by the Japanese police in its raids and the confessions of many of its leading figures have shown, Aum Shinrikyô had committed numerous criminal acts.[31] In other words, this is a case in which scholars have spoken out on behalf of a religious movement or portrayed it as a victim of governmental conspiracies at a time when it was engaged in criminal activities and when substantial evidence was already available to confirm this fact.

It is a case in which scholars who studied and wrote about Aum prior to 1995 failed to detect or give credence to alleged evidence indicating that the movement might have committed atrocities. This undermines any assumptions that scholars can be necessarily trusted to report more accurately about new religions than can journalists. Even allowing for media excess, there was more accuracy in the reports on Aum by journalists such as Egawa Shôko[32] prior to the sarin attack or in the partial accounts of anti-cultists such as Takimoto than in the scholarly denials of Aum's involvement.

An important lesson that should be learned from the Aum affair is that scholarly examinations of NRMs must be more thorough. As academics we take pride in what we see as the scientific objectivity of our profession, especially when compared with that of journalists whose primary concern is whether the story will sell rather than with the long-term analysis of events. Indeed, it is not uncommon to hear scholars talking about the necessity of prodding journalists to publish more solid information about new religions, but also bemoaning the difficulties of this task because of the mind-set that prevails in the media about new religions.[33] While it is important to educate journalists, it is also worth reflecting that the implicit assumptions that guide many scholarly attitudes towards the media—they are wrong and need educating, and we can teach them—may not always stand up to scrutiny.

After Waco much was said about how law enforcement agencies listened to the wrong set of "experts." That affair might well have alerted law enforcement officials to the dangers of listening to one particularly

opinionated group of experts and helped to persuade them to take more notice of the analyses and perspectives provided by NRM scholars. There is a danger, however, that due to the miscommunication and resulting overreaction by the authorities at Waco, a form of scholastic triumphalism—"if you had listened to us, Waco would not have happened"—has developed in the field. I believe that scholars of religion have valuable things to say to law enforcement agencies and that we can be of use in helping to broaden their understandings of key issues in the study of NRMs.[34] However, I also feel that if scholars of religion are to play such a role they need to exhibit a note of caution by taking stock of the lessons of the Aum affair and the academic failings that it exposed.

The Aum affair should at the very least temper any sense of triumphalism that Waco may have engendered by reminding us that scholars do not always display accurate understandings of religious phenomena. Flying to the defense of religious movements is an exercise fraught with danger, especially when one is not in full possession of the data surrounding such groups. These are actions that can have disastrous consequences for one's colleagues and the field in general, especially if those who make errors of judgment are slow to acknowledge them. We need to recognize that when scholars operate primarily as defenders of religious movements they are following a particular agenda and as such run the risk of compromising their position as objective scholars. Moreover, they are handing ammunition to those who demand that scholars take a condemnatory rather than an analytically objective tack on religious movements.

The Waco affair was an important and traumatic milestone in the development of the field and in the interactions between scholars and authorities. It has influenced the debates about the role of scholars and will continue to do so for a long time. However, there is a danger that it may remain too dominant a marker in these areas. I suggest it is time to move on from Waco with regard to the ways in which scholars interact with law enforcement agencies and to reassess how Waco has colored opinions about the relationships between scholars, the media, and law enforcement agencies. History moves on, and in a sense we are no longer in the post-Waco era so much as the post-Aum era of the study of NRMs. Aum, I would suggest, serves as a potential counterweight to the conclusions many of us had drawn from Waco. While that affair may serve as a reminder to the authorities about the ways *not* to deal with religious movements and of the importance of listening to scholars, the Aum affair issues a cautionary warning to scholars about the dangers of making hasty conclusions about the nature of NRM controversies. It is essential that we take a critical stance towards the movements we study so that we can maintain the degree of objectivity that will be most beneficial to all concerned—from the media we so

often criticize, to the new religions we study, to the civil authorities who may seek our advice from time to time. Otherwise there remains the danger that scholars of religion will continue to be seen more as apologists than as analysts of the movements they study.

ENDNOTES

[1] All Japanese names given in this article are in standard Japanese form, with the family name preceding the given name.

[2] Takimoto's comments are found in a dialogue between himself and a former member of Aum, Nagaoka Tatsuya, with whom Takimoto has worked on anti-Aum campaigns, in Takimoto Tarô and Nagaoka Tatsuya, *Maindo kontorôru kara nigerete: Oumu Shinrikyô dakkaishatachi no taiken* [*Escape from Mind Control: The Experiences of Former Members of Aum*] (Tokyo: Kôyû Shuppan, 1995), especially 205–208. All the translations of Japanese titles given in this and subsequent endnotes are my own.

[3] Asahara first made this claim in 1985 and was photographed at that time in a popular Japanese magazine, *Twilight Zone*, which was concerned with spiritual and occult matters. His claims relating to levitation and the acquisition of other such powers played a part in first attracting an audience to his movement and featured prominently in his early writings, such as Asahara Shôkô, *Chônôryoku himitsu no kaihatsuhô* [*The Secret Way to Develop Psychic Powers*] (1986; reprint, Tokyo: Oumu Shuppan, 1993).

[4] See, for example, the photograph in Takimoto and Nagoka, *Maindo kontorôru kara nigerete,* 61 and also Takimoto Tarô and Fukushima Mizuho, *Habôhô to Oumu Shinrikyô* [*The Anti-Subversives Prevention Law and Aum Shinrikyô*] (Tokyo: Iwanami Booklets, 1996); see also Asahara, *Chônôryoku himitsu no kaihatsuhô,* 16–21, where Asahara denies these accusations.

[5] For overviews of the Aum affair see, in English, Ian Reader, *A Poisonous Cocktail? Aum Shinrikyô's Path to Violence* (Copenhagen: NIAS Books, 1996) and Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyô* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 2000, and Honululu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), and, in Japanese, Shimazono Susumu, *Gendai shûkyô no kanôsei: Oumu Shinrikyô to bôryoku* [*The Potential of Contemporary Religion: Aum Shinrikyô and Violence*] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1997).

[6] In its rejection of the ethos and mores of the present material world, Aum was especially critical of the mass media, which it portrayed as a corrupt force of evil that perverted and manipulated the minds of the public by reporting masses of incorrect data. Aum regarded the mass media and journalists as special enemies engaged in a conspiracy to destroy it. These comments were made by Asahara Shôkô in numerous books as well as in various sermons to his disciples: see, for example, Asahara Shôkô, *Vajrayâna Kôsu kyôgaku shisutemu kyôhon* [*The Vajrayâna Course: A Systematic Teaching Manual*] (Aum Shinrikyô: unpublished Xeroxed collection of Asahara's sermons to Aum initiates between 1988–1994), especially Sermon 41 (p. 271), which claims Aum was prevented from gaining converts due to what Asahara called "Aum bashing by the media," and Sermon 49 (p. 315), which claims that the mass media had swamped the country with bad data that affected everyone, destroying their spiritual balance and leading them to ruin.

[7] An account of a discussion (originally published in a popular Japanese youth magazine entitled *Brutus* in 1991) between Nakazawa and Asahara in which Nakazawa is complimentary to Asahara is published by Aum in Oumu Shinrikyô, ed., *Risô shakai* [*The Ideal World*], special supplement No. 20, and Oumu Shinrikyô, ed., *Sonshi taidanshû* [*Collected Conversations with the Master*], 1993, 12–20.

[8] Among Shimada's publications on Aum are Shimada Hiromi, "Oumu Shinrikyô: sonshi to shukkeshatachi" ("Aum Shinrikyô: the Master and his Disciples"), in *Shinshûkyô jidai*

[*The Age of New Religions*], ed. Shimizu Masato, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Daizô Shuppan, 1996), 99–160, and Shimada Hiromi, *Shinjiyasui kokoro* [*Minds that Find it Easy to Believe*] (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyûsha, 1992).

[9] This suggestion was contained in Shimada's article "Sarin seizô kôjô ka? Giwaku no shisetsu dai nana satian" ["Is it a factory for making sarin? Satian Number Seven, the facility in question"] in the magazine *Takarajima Sâti* 3 (1995). See Watanabe Manabu, "Reactions to the Aum affair: the rise of the 'anti-cult' movement," *Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture* 21 (1997): 32–48.

[10] Takimoto and Nagaoka, *Maindo kontorôru kara nigerete*, 208.

[11] Shimada Hiromi, *Shûkyô no jidai to wa nan datta ka* [*What is meant by the "religious age"*] (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1997), 9–33.

[12] For discussions of Aum's conspiracy theories, see Reader, *A Poisonous Cocktail?*, 54–70 and Fujita Shôichi, *Oumu Shinrikyô jiken* [*The Aum Shinrikyô Affair*] (Tokyo: Asahi News Shop, 1995), 60–64.

[13] James R. Lewis, "Japan's Waco: Aum Shinrikyo and the Eclipse of Freedom in the Land of the Rising Sun," *Prevailing Winds* 2 (1995): 52–58.

[14] One should note here that, in the immediate aftermath of the Tokyo sarin attack, much of the public discussion, media, and rhetoric relating to new religious movements centered on the notion that religious movements with differing agendas from the mainstream were either potentially or inherently dangerous. See Watanabe, "Reactions to the Aum affair."

[15] As Massimo Introvigne ("Blackmailing or Greenlisting? A European Perspective on the New Cult Wars," *Nova Religio* 2, no. 1 [1998]: 16-23) notes, both of the scholars of religion on this trip denounced the human rights violations that appeared to have occurred after the sarin attack, when hundreds of Aum members were rounded up and held for long periods without charge even though (in Introvigne's words) they, "unlike the leaders, were certainly neither guilty nor aware of any criminal activity." A number of points are worth noting here. One is simply that the Japanese police, despite their massive raids and mass arrests, acted within the law in Japan which allows them to hold people for up to twenty-eight days without charge. I do not want to engage here in a discussion of a legal structure that I find oppressive and more concerned with social norms than with individual human rights. However, in pragmatic terms—as many Japanese friends have said to me subsequently—it was through the extensive questioning of Aum members in this way that the police were able to bring the perpetrators to court and to find out the extent of Aum's weapons stockpiling.

A second point is that the situation in April 1995 was an extreme one. To put it into some perspective, the chemical weapon attack right at the heart of Japan (the subway trains attacked were converging on the station beneath some of the main government ministries) caused many deaths and injuries, and the public wanted the perpetrators caught as soon as possible, especially as they clearly had the means to cause further destruction. It should be noted that barely veiled threats that further atrocities would occur had emanated from Asahara after the attack, and that a series of other violent acts, including the attempted murder of the Japanese chief of police and various other failed uses of chemical weapons, took place in the immediate aftermath of the sarin attack and raids on Aum. A number of those believed responsible for Aum's atrocities (such as Inoue Yoshihiro, one of Asahara's chief lieutenants) had evaded arrest and were on the run. There were serious public fears that further atrocities might be committed, a fear that materialized most potently when an attempt to release cyanide into the ventilation system of a major station in May 1995 was only just foiled (if it had been successful, many thousands might have perished), and when a bomb was sent to the Tokyo governor's office on the day that Asahara was arrested in May 1995. Both these attacks were committed by Inoue and other fugitive members of Aum. In such contexts the message that American scholars brought relating to human rights' violations had little positive impact on a public more concerned about the dangers posited to its

basic freedoms—including the freedom to go about its daily business and ride its capital's transport networks without fear or constraint. It was perhaps unsurprising, then, that the basic public reaction was of some annoyance. The Americans were seen as defending a movement that posed a severe public danger and that appeared to be placing the individual rights of the members of that organization, which had been responsible for numerous atrocities, above the needs and security of the public in general.

Balancing the needs of the general public as compared to the demands of individual civil rights is, of course, a very difficult issue, and it is an especially difficult one at a time of social danger and crisis such as that which existed in Japan in April–May 1995. While I agree that the behavior of the Japanese police at that time—and the laws of detention of suspects in Japan in general—raise serious concerns, it is also important to note that, from the perspective of Japanese public opinion, the voicing of such concerns over the rights of Aum members at this point was probably the wrong complaint at the wrong time.

[16] See Introvigne, "Blackmailing or Greenlisting," 19. At the 1996 SSSR conference in Nashville, Melton subsequently informed the author of this article that he had few doubts by the end of his visit to Japan of Aum's complicity.

[17] Lewis, "Japan's Waco."

[18] Watanabe, "Reactions to the Aum Affair," 47.

[19] Ibid.

[20] On these issues see two review articles on the sociology of religion in Japan and the study of Japanese new religions (both focusing on Japanese scholarship): Ian Reader, "Review article: Recent Japanese Publications on Religion," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 16, no. 4 (1989): 299–315 and Ian Reader, "Recent Japanese publications on the New Religions: The Work of Shimazono Susumu," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 20, nos. 2–3 (1993): 101–120.

[21] Lewis, "Japan's Waco," 55.

[22] Introvigne, "Blackmailing or Greenlisting," 19. Introvigne uses the aforementioned case of Lewis and Melton in Japan as evidence. As he points out, the former published something saying Aum had been framed and the latter that it was involved. That two scholars paid by the same organization could produce wholly different results is, Introvigne suggests, evidence that the money paid does not necessarily condition the results produced. I do not find this argument especially plausible: the case in hand certainly shows that some scholars are capable of saying what those who call on them want them to say, even when the evidence points the other way.

[23] Stephen A. Kent and Theresa Krebs, "Academic Compromise in the Social Scientific Study of Alternative Religions," *Nova Religio* 2, no. 1 (1998): 44–54.

[24] Michael Pye, "Aum Shinrikyô: Can Religious Studies Cope?" *Religion* 26 (1996): 261–70.

[25] One should note that Pye did not comment directly on the scholars discussed in this article, but the general tenor of his article suggests a general critical awareness of these cases.

[26] Pye, "Aum Shinrikyô: Can Religious Studies Cope?," 268.

[27] Kent and Krebs, "Academic Compromise," 47–49.

[28] See Mark Juergensmeyer, ed., *Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World* (London: Frank Cass, 1991), especially David C. Rapoport, "Some General Observations on Religion and Violence," 118–40, and Mark Juergensmeyer, "Sacrifice and Cosmic War," 101–17, and Shimazono Susumu, *Gendai shûkyô no kanôsei.*

[29] For further discussion on this point see Watanabe, "Reactions to the Aum Affair."

[30] This fact alone, widely known and reported in Japan at the time, blows Lewis' "conspiracy theory" out of the water. Lewis claims that the issuing of gas masks to the Japanese police prior to the subway attack meant that the authorities knew the attack was imminent and hence that they somehow were involved in it (Lewis, "Japan's Waco,"

54). In reality, the gas masks were issued because the raids on Aum had already been planned (as a result of earlier Aum crimes) and the authorities suspected that Aum possessed, and might possibly use, poison gases.

[31] The overwhelming weight of evidence that has been presented in the various Aum trials currently still in progress, coupled with the confessions and guilty pleas of the large majority of those charged with such crimes, has been reported in numerous Japanese publications including Egawa Shôkô, *Oumu Shinrikyô saiban bôchôki* [*Record of Observations at the Aum Shinrikyô Trials*], vols. 1 and 2 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjû, 1996–1997) and Kyôdô Tsûshin Shakaibu, ed., *Sabakareru Kyôso* [*The Religious Founder on Trial*] (Tokyo: Kyôdô Tsûshinsha, 1997).

[32] Among such accounts by journalists one should especially cite the work of Egawa Shôkô, herself a friend of the murdered lawyer Sakamoto, who pursued Aum for several years and produced numerous criticisms and accounts of the movement that indicated her belief that it was dangerous. See Egawa Shôkô, *Kyûseishu no yabô* [*The Ambitions of a Messiah*], (1991; reprint, Tokyo: Kyôikushiryô Shuppankai, 1995).

[33] See, for example, James T. Richardson, "The Accidental Expert," *Nova Religio* 2, no. 1 (1998): 31–43.

[34] The case of the Freemen in Montana might well be a case where the authorities not only sought but listened to the advice of specialists of new religions, with positive results.

[35] This has clearly been the case in the Aum affair. For this reason I remain unhappy not only about Shimada's rather equivocal responses (see above, note 11), which seek to portray him as something of a victim of the affair, but also those of Lewis. While it is interesting to note (Introvigne, "Blackmailing or Greenlisting," 23) that Lewis has informed several colleagues in private conversations that he has changed his mind on the affair subsequent to his article, it seems that some more open acknowledgment of this change—with a refutation of the article in question—might be in order.

Field Notes: ISKCON's Extensive Reform Efforts

John M. Bozeman

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is one of the best-known new religious movements in America; currently the group has over 300 temples and 40 rural communities in operation around the world. The group is particularly noted for its distinctive public chanting of the "Hare Krishna" mantra; also noteworthy are the core members' practices of wearing distinctive saffron robes, following a strictly vegetarian lifestyle, and aggressive recruitment, particularly on college campuses. While the group enjoyed a period of rapid growth during the late 1960s and early 1970s, ISKCON experienced a number of setbacks in later years due to allegations of brainwashing and the loss of several court cases. While these challenges have been examined quite thoroughly within scholarly journals and the general press, less attention has been given to internal problems within the Hare Krishna movement. This article will focus upon two of the most critical of these issues—namely a schism and recent allegations of chronic child abuse—and examine the way that ISKCON has dealt with them.

ISKCON was founded in 1966 by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Prabhupada had come from India to the United States to preach a message based in bhakti-oriented Vaishnavism—a spiritual path centered on total devotion to the Godhead, particularly as incarnated in the person and example of Lord Krishna. After a brief period in New York, Prabhupada expanded his ministry to California, where his movement grew rapidly for a number of years. ISKCON also appeared to survive the death (or, in the words of the group, the "disappearance") of Prabhupada in 1977; the founder had instituted the GBC, or Governing Body Commission, a group of the guru's senior-most disciples, to administer the organization after his passing. This plan appeared to shield the group from internal strife connected with the problem of leadership succession.

By the mid-1980's, however, the organization was beginning to have significant internal problems. The various leaders within the group had

begun to practice a "zone" system in which single gurus became responsible for most Krishna activity and fund-raising in a particular geographical region. This development tended to undercut the general governing ability of the GBC over the movement as a whole. A manifestation of this was a schism that took place within ISKCON in 1986–1987. At this time, one of Prabhupada's earliest disciples, Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada, broke with ISKCON to form the West Virginia-based League of Devotees International. While a variety of issues contributed to the split, one prominent issue was the role of the guru within ISKCON. Kirtanananda believed strongly in maintaining a traditional relationship between an individual guru and his disciples. In this view, the disciple has a special bond with the guru who initiates the devotee, and upon the death of the guru, this bond tends to pass to the senior-most disciples of the guru. Kirtanananda also encouraged the practice of *guru puja*, or the veneration and worship of one's guru as a form of divine manifestation.

Broadly speaking, ISKCON's leadership did not reject either the zone system or *guru puja*, at least not at this time. However, many felt that Kirtanananda's practices simply ignored the role of the GBC (and thus Prabhupada's final wishes) altogether. Furthermore, the leaders of ISKCON were uncomfortable with the degree to which Kirtanananda allowed *guru puja*; members of the GBC felt that such intense devotion should be reserved primarily for ISKCON's founder, Prabhupada, rather than for his successors. Members of the GBC regarded the West Virginia guru's practices as undermining Prabhupada's role as Founder-Acarya of the movement. Finally, the GBC was becoming concerned about rumors of illegal activity taking place in the guru's religious community. The result was Kirtanananda's departure from ISKCON, an event which coincided with his nearly simultaneous expulsion from the GBC. The guru took with him a number of disciples, as well as control of New Vrindaban, at that time the largest of all the ISKCON farming communities. Relations between Kirtanananda and ISKCON deteriorated even further when the guru began to introduce Christian worship forms; the swami was also investigated by law enforcement officials for fund-raising fraud and conspiracy to murder two dissident ex-members.

In addition to these internal political problems, ISKCON also faced another, perhaps even greater, challenge as it considered the place of family life. ISKCON had drawn most of its early followers from disaffected single youth, a group ideally suited for the group's unconventional lifestyle. As the original devotees grew older, however, they tended to marry and have children. Many of the members began to feel torn by their conflicting responsibilities: as parents, members often wanted to settle down in order to provide a stable home life for their children; on the other hand, membership in ISKCON strongly encouraged a

highly mobile, yet highly structured, public lifestyle centered around distributing devotional literature and canvassing for funds. In an attempt to solve this problem, ISKCON established gurukulas (religiously-oriented boarding schools) for the devotees' children. Unfortunately these tended to be underfunded and staffed by often unenthusiastic appointees lacking formal educational training. Krishna parents began to complain about the quality of their children's education. At times the children were neglected. Worst of all, however, were allegations of widespread child abuse, both physical and sexual, that had taken place within the schools during the 1970s and 1980s.

Over the past few years, ISKCON has begun to address many of these problems. During the mid-1990s, efforts were made within ISKCON to build bridges with members of the New Vrindaban community, many of whom had grown disillusioned with their guru. Soon after Kirtanananda's August 1996 conviction and twenty-year sentence (later shortened because of the guru's failing health) for racketeering, serious plans for reconciliation began. By the middle of 1998 an agreement was reached whereby New Vrindaban would rejoin ISKCON after completing a one year probationary period.

As for the question of child abuse, ISKCON has made significant efforts toward making amends. In 1998, ISKCON published a pair of reports detailing the abuse that had taken place; these reports were published in one of ISKCON's most prestigious publications, the *ISKCON Communications Journal.* One of the articles was penned by the noted sociologist of religion and author E. Burke Rochford at the request of the journal's editor.

ISKCON had taken steps against child abuse before the publication of the reports. In 1990 the GBC passed resolutions requiring that investigations take place where allegations of abuse surfaced. Unfortunately, inadequate provisions were made for enforcement, and little attention was given to incidents that had taken place in the past. In 1996, however, a panel of former victims addressed the group's leadership about their past experiences. ISKCON quickly established an ISKCON Central Office of Child Protection (IOCP, also abbreviated to CPO for "Child Protection Office) in Alachua, Florida, the site of one of the larger Hare Krishna settlements in the United States. This office was established to help Hare Krisha temple leaders, both American and worldwide, identify past cases of abuse and also to establish policies and programs to prevent future occurrences. When the office receives a report of possible abuse, it advises the local group to contact local police and social service agencies; the office also provides guidelines for actions that should be taken to protect the children. Where a claim is made of past abuse, the case is given to "a panel of trained devotee child protection arbiters" that determines the validity of the accusations. If the allegations turn out to be true, the panel then determines a sentence and/or

rectification plan for the perpetrator, including the degree to and circumstances under which the individual can continue to participate in ISKCON. In one year the office provided over $70,000 in grant money to assist devotees with educational and vocational activities as well as therapy expenses. Furthermore, in April of 1999, the GBC pledged an additional $250,000 per year to the IOCP over the coming three years. Most of this money will be in the form of direct assistance to victims of abuse; the balance will be used for educational and training programs in child protection and also to fund investigations of abuse.

ISKCON's reunion with New Vrindaban and the GBC's new policies concerning child abuse are each significant milestones in ISKCON's history. However, a new guru reform movement is underway within ISKCON's leadership that could go a long way toward preventing such problems from arising in the future. In 1999, the GBC passed a number of resolutions aimed at reforming the guru system. For example, the roles of the different types of guru were defined more clearly. The GBC stated that the differences had been exaggerated between the more authoritative "initiating" guru (i.e., those with the ability to initiate Hare Krishna members into higher monastic orders within the movement) and the traditionally less prestigious "instructing" gurus responsible for more routine forms of spiritual instruction. The GBC resolved that the two forms of guru should be seen as complementary to each other, rather than viewing one group as subordinate to the other. Both types of guru—and, indeed, *all* members of ISKCON—should recognize Prabhupada as the primary initiating guru of all ISKCON devotees both past and present. Indeed, the past misunderstanding of this nature had, in the opinion of the GBC, led to a situation in which Prabhupada's unique role as the founder of the movement, as well as his continued personal relationship with each member, had been unintentionally obscured. Furthermore, the GBC stated that this long-running misunderstanding supported the zone system of gurus, a system which had led to a fragmentation within ISKCON's leadership and a consequent inability to address questions of abuse and malfeasance. The zone system was thus ordered abolished.

In addition to clarifying the roles of gurus within ISKCON, the GBC is establishing a Task Force for Spiritual Leadership. This group will be responsible for developing systems for regular financial accounting and reporting within ISKCON. The Task Force is also charged with establishing a standardized curriculum for new Hare Krishna devotees, as well as for improving vocational education and training within the movement. Furthermore, the GBC is strongly recommending that the worship of gurus "should be conducted on a more modest scale." Gurus should focus their attention primarily upon spiritual tasks and "brahmanical activities" such as spiritual instruction, curriculum development, and "ministering to individual devotees," while generally avoid-

ing managerial duties. Finally, the GBC has recognized the need for increased community discussion within ISKCON so that communication between the leadership and the laity may be enhanced, thereby creating an environment in which all devotees may "live together as one wonderful spiritual family," filling the world with love and devotion for God.

In spite if its difficulties, ISKCON continues to be a dynamic religious movement. Over the past few years the group has been taking on an increasingly diverse, even international, flavor. In the U.S., for example, devotees no longer consist almost totally of young, white, mid- to upper class American converts as they did in the group's early years. Currently, many adherents are Indian immigrants and their children who have been raised in the Vaishnava tradition from birth. ISKCON has also been working for some time at increasing its presence in Germany, Eastern Europe, and Russia; furthermore, a number of projects have been undertaken in India, with a Vedic planetarium planned in Mayapur. The group's recent efforts at internal reorganization and reform may be crucial to its continued health and success. The reunion of New Vrindaban with ISKCON, for example, marks the end of a long-running feud that has been a source of confusion and bad feeling within the group. The GBC's forceful (if long-delayed) action on the issue of child abuse may mark the beginning of a period of healing for both first and second generation members of the group. Even more significantly, the GBC's recent actions may signal the start of a new, more family friendly era within ISKCON as the leadership recognizes the needs of the devotees' families and children. Finally, the guru reform effort, if successful, will have the effect of stabilizing ISKCON's leadership, allowing the society to act as a unified, coherent whole rather than as a loose confederation of idiosyncratic regional gurus. The success of these reforms is particularly critical to ISKCON's maturation as a worldwide religious organization.

The author wishes to thank Anuttama Dasa of the ISKCON Communications Office for correcting several errors of fact in an earlier draft of this article.

BRIEFLY NOTED:

CHURCH UNIVERSAL AND TRIUMPHANT APPOINTS NEW LEADERSHIP: On 30 July 1999, Gilbert Cleirbaut announced that he was stepping down as president and chief executive officer of the Church Universal and Triumphant [CUT]. He will be replaced by a team of three

persons: Neroli Duffy, Kate Gordon, and Kenneth Frazier. In his announcement, Cleirbaut emphasized that his departure had been planned and that he would continue to be an active member within the church.

During his tenure as president, Cleirbaut was responsible for instituting a series of sweeping organizational reforms within CUT (see the "Field Notes" column of *Nova Religio*'s April 1998 issue). The reorganization process will continue under the new leadership and has the approval of the group's spiritual leader, Elizabeth Clare Prophet.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES:

American Academy of Religion (AAR): 18–21 November 2000. Opryland Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee, USA. General questions can be sent to Tammy Adams, Annual Meeting Coordinator, 825 Houston Mill Road NE, Suite 300, Atlanta, GA 30329-4211. Phone: (404) 727-7920. E-mail: aar@emory.edu. More information can also be found at the AAR website at http://www.aar-site.org or http://www.aarweb.org.

Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR): 10–13 August 2000. Omni Shoreham, Washington D.C., USA. This year's guiding theme will be the future role of religion in an increasingly global society. Topics to be addressed include religion in the modern world order, civil society and globalization, world religions and transnationalism, religion in multiethnic societies, immigrant religion, religion and science, religion and the environment, secularization and fundamentalisms, and apocalyptic and millenarian movements. Peter Berger will deliver the annual Paul Hanley Furfey Lecture. For more information, contact the program chair, Randal L. Hepner, at the Department of Anthropology, 354 Baker Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48224-1118. E-mail: hepnerr@pilot.msu.edu. Phone: (517) 646-8437. Information can also be found at the ASR website at http://www.sociologyofreligion.com.

Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR): 29–31 August 2000. Riga, Latvia. Organized jointly with the University of Latvia's Institute of Philosophy and Sociology/Academic Center for the Study of Religions, this will be a multidisciplinary conference in the human and social sciences focusing on the theme of "New Religiosity in the 21st Century." Papers will be presented on new religious movements (NRMs), new religiosity, and esoteric and New Age groups in the new millenium; social institutions (governments, health services, justice, media, schools)

and their reactions to NRMs; the interaction between NRMs and mainline religions; NRMs' adaptation to social and cultural contexts, particularly in Eastern Europe; NRMs and the "social contract"; and NRMs and the search for common values in society. For more information contact CESNUR Lativa, c/o Dr. Solveiga Krumina-Konkova, Post Box 409, Riga, LV-1001, Lativa (E-mail: konkova@latnet.lv), or CESNUR, Via Juvarra 20, 10122 Torino, Italy. Phone: 011-39-541950 (Monday to Friday, 10 AM to 1 PM); fax: 011-39-541905. E-mail: cesnurto@tin.it. Website: http://www.cesnur.org.

Communal Studies Association (CSA): 28–30 September 2000. Ephrata, Pennsylvania, USA. This year's CSA meeting will focus on the provocative theme, "Charismatic Leaders and Family Relations: Promise or Problem?" Questions that may be addressed include the extent to which the charismatic founders of historic and contemporary communal groups are responsible for marital or celibate policies; the degree to which societal pressure (whether religious or secular) may have influenced these policies; the degree to which celibacy enhances or decreases communal longevity; and the effect of alternative sexual practices upon public acceptance or rejection of communitarian groups. In addition to the presentation of papers, CSA meetings normally include tours of nearby historical communal settlements. The society welcomes participation of scholars from all disciplines who are researching communal groups, as well as museum curators and historic site managers, members of current communities, and descendents of communal members. For more information contact Dr. Donald Durnbaugh, Juniata College, P.O. Box 948, Huntington, PA 16652. Office: (814) 641-3484. Fax: (814) 641-3435. Home and fax: (814) 658-3222. E-mail: durnbaughd@juniata.edu.

International Communal Studies Association (ICSA): 25–27 July 2001. ZEGG Community, Germany. The ICSA is currently soliciting papers for its upcoming conference, "Communal Living on the Threshold of a New Millenium: Lessons and Perspectives." Suggested topics include diversity (gender, class, sexual, etc.) and postmodern values; do-it-yourself cultures, especially in non-Western countries; new communications technologies and virtual communities; "cults" and "cult-busting"; researching communal groups; communal children, youth, and the elderly; communal ecology and sustainability; the political importance of communal living; communal economics; and communal history. Persons interested in presenting a paper at the conference should contact the ICSA c/o Dr. Bill Metcalf, c/AES, Griffith University, Nathan, Q. 4111, Australia. E-mail: w.metcalf@mailbox.gu.edu.au. Please send

a 100 to 200 word outline of the presentation, and indicate how the paper will fit into the conference's overall theme and one or more of its sub-themes. The location of the conference is the ZEGG Community, located about one hour by train southwest of Berlin. Further information about ZEGG can be found at http://www.ecovillages.org/germany/zegg. There will also be a post-conference tour of nearby urban and rural communes and ecovillages. Furthermore, immediately after the conference ZEGG will host a major international gathering of members of intentional communities from around the world; it is hoped that some of the attendees of each conference will visit the other.

North American Labor History Conference: 19–21 October 2000. Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, USA. The theme of the Twenty-Second Annual North American Labor History Conference will be "Labor and the Millennium: Class, Vision, and Change." Topics covered by the conference may include class and the millennium; utopianism and utopian communities; historical analysis of utopian socialist movements; labor and the future; working classes and millennial movements (including religious and fundamentalist millennial movements); globalization and national economies; shifts in the character and nature of work; gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, and millenarianism; science fiction's vision of future labor and class; gender, race, sexuality, and class ideologies and their effect on science fiction and fantasy genres (both written and filmed); and the future of labor history and the future of academia. For more information contact Elizabeth Faue, Coordinator, North American Labor History Conference, Department of History, 3094 Faculty Administration Building, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202. Phone: (313) 577-2525. Fax: (313) 577-6987. E-mail: ab3697@wayne.edu or ad5247@wayne.edu.

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion/Religious Research Association (SSSR/RRA) joint meeting: 19–22 October, 2000. Doubletree Hotel, Houston, Texas, USA. The SSSR program's guiding theme this year will be "Religion and Transnationalism: Challenges of the 21st Century." Topics will include the global dimensions of religious systems; transnational ties among religious organizations; immigrants and transnationalism; women in a comparative translocal perspective; new religions worldwide; mass media in modern religion; theories of global religion; religion and civic cultures; religion and public policy; and human rights and religion. For more information contact Peter Beyer, Department of Classics and Religious Studies, University of Ottawa, 70 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1N 6N5. E-mail: Pbeyer@uottawa.ca.

Telephone: (613) 562-5800, Ext. 1178. Fax: (613) 562-5991. Website: http://fhss.byu.edu/soc/sssr/index.html.

As is customary, the Religious Research Association's annual meeting will take place concurrently with the SSSR. This year's RRA conference will focus on "Gender, Religious Organization, and Practice," and will examine questions such as how gender relations are negotiated within religious organizations, the significance of gender for analyzing and understanding contemporary religious life, and the directions that gender relations appear to be taking on the eve of the twenty-first century. For more information contact Paula D. Nesbitt, Department of Sociology, University of Denver, 2040 S. Race St., GCB 433, Denver, CO 80208. E-mail: pnesbitt@du.edu. Phone: (303) 871-2058. Fax: (303) 871-2090. Website: http://rra.hartsem.edu/annual.htm.

Society for Utopian Studies: 19–22 October 2000. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The society is an international, interdisciplinary association dedicated to the study of utopianism in all of its forms, with a particular emphasis on literary and experimental utopias. Scholars representing a wide variety of disciplines are active in the association, and approach utopian studies from such diverse backgrounds as American Studies, architecture, the arts, classics, cultural studies, economics, engineering, environmental studies, gender studies, history, languages and literatures, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, and urban planning. To organize a panel or to present a paper, submit a 1–2 page abstract by 15 May 2000 to the program chair: Nancy Sloan Goldberg, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures #79, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 37132. E-mail: goldberg@mtsu.edu. Phone: (615) 898-2281. Website: http://www.utoronto.ca/utopia.

Correction: The article, "New Religions in Latvia," by Solveiga Krumina-Konkova (*Nova Religio,* vol. 3, no. 1), had a coauthor whose name was inadvertently left off the first page. The coauthor's name is Nikandrs Gills.

Book Reviews

Blessed Anastacia: Women, Race, and Popular Christianity in Brazil. By John Burdick. Routledge, 1998. 246 pages. $80.00 cloth, $21.99 paper.

Continuing in the same vein as his earlier book about liberation theology in Brazil, anthropologist John Burdick now narrows his focus to examine the intersection of race, religion, and gender in three contexts of Christianity that are relatively new to Brazil's religious landscape: the inculturated Mass of the Catholic Church with its African music and dance; the worship of the slave martyr Anastacia; and the burgeoning Pentecostal movement.

However, Burdick implicitly adds a fourth context to his research: the secular black activist movement, including its contingent of anthropologists. He provides almost as many quotations and accounts of experiences with activist leaders as he does of the religious participants. The inclusion of this fourth context is due to Burdick's stated mission to bridge the enormous gap that exists between the black identity movement and large percentages of the very constituents the movement seeks to mobilize, i.e., black members of religious communities. He discusses his efforts at bridge-building in detail in the final chapter of the book, "in the expectation that I will be criticized for my naivete and audacity" (p. 23). Burdick's writing style is intimate and non-threatening, however, and his data base of 166 lengthy interviews is eloquent and persuasive enough to defuse most counterattacks.

He begins with a description of racism and women in Brazil: the color caste system sharply distinguishes between *negras* (women who are undeniably black), *mulatas*, *morenas*, and *blancas* (whites, the most envied). Burdick includes heartrending accounts of how women strive to move "up" the ladder by straightening their hair or trying to date lighter colored men, only to find that light men will only date *negras* or *mulatas* for their supposed promiscuity. In this grim world of competition and humiliation, the religious contexts of Pentecostalism, the inculturated Mass, and devotion to Anastacia provide a sense of self-worth and meaning for dark women that they have found nowhere else.

For instance, Burdick includes numerous examples from interviews with Pentecostals such as the following from Adalva: "I must love myself as God made me. If you ask me today what my color is, I will tell you: 'I am *negra*.' I like my color. For I am truly converted" (p. 131). Such

attitudes easily become compatible with goals of black activism, such as Cristina's assertion: "If I think someone is discriminating, I will recall to that person what is written in the Bible. I don't let that pass. I assume this in a very clear way, because it is biblical! I assume this as a woman, and as a black woman" (p. 145).

By addressing the way many academics and black activists dismiss and marginalize black pentecostal communities, Burdick is tackling a bias as old as the Enlightenment, yet he persists. Appealing to the pragmatism of the leaders of the black movement, he notes that "Pentecostalism is now the single most demographically important religious movement in Brazil" (p. 120), and a large percentage of its adherents are blacks who could be politicized. It is unusual and refreshing for a scholar to acknowledge openly a motivation for a publication beyond that of pure research. Burdick's beautifully-written ethnography is strengthened by his candor.

Anne Motley Hallum, Stetson University

Postbellum Pursuit of Peace, Power, and Plenty. By Dale H. Simmons. Scarecrow Press, 1997. 349 pages. $62.00 cloth.

Essek William Kenyon (1867–1948) exercised an international ministry as an itinerant evangelist in the United States and Canada and through his books, magazines, correspondence courses, and schools. His influence on large tributaries of the Pentecostal movement was profound, though he never fully placed himself within these waters. Thanks to the wide-scale plagiarizing and reprinting of his books, that influence continues to this day. In fact, Simmons considers Kenyon to be "the primary source of the health and wealth gospel of the independent Charismatic movement" (p. xi).

Despite Kenyon's prominence, outside several polemical/pastoral works published by evangelical presses—most notably D. R. McConnell's *A Different Gospel: A Historical and Biblical Analysis of the Modern Faith Movement* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988)—he has remained largely unnoticed by scholars of religion. Simmons' book goes a long way towards remedying this situation by tracing the historical development of Kenyon's thought. In the process, he reveals how deeply Kenyon drew from two loosely defined movements—New Thought and Higher Christian Life—and how these oppositional movements were embedded in the same cultural milieu.

Herein lies the greatest significance of Simmons' book. Over a decade ago, Grant Wacker lamented the fragmented condition of "higher life" historiography and the tendency "to lose sight of the extent to which

those liberal and evangelical stirrings were in fact similar responses to common problems." He believed that "both movements emerged from the same religious womb and, like biological twins, matured in formally comparable ways precisely because they inherited similar genetic blueprints" ("The Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Age in American Protestantism, 1880–1910," *The Journal of American History* 72, no. 1 [1985]: 49). Simmons supports this view (p. 284), yet adds a layer of complexity by carefully comparing New Thought with Higher Christian Life and Keswick teachings, revealing an important esoteric dimension in Kenyon's ministry which bridged the two.

Just how much of this esoteric side was unique to Kenyon or shared by other Keswick leaders needs further exploration. Yet, Simmons drops several hints along the way (pointing, for instance, to the fascination of some Keswick leaders with Swedenborg, a shared intuitionist epistemology, and a spiritualized hermeneutic) which makes an exceptionalist interpretation seem unlikely. That said, Simmons does not hide the fact that Kenyon was outwardly opposed to New Thought and Christian Science throughout his ministry.

If Simmons' book alters "higher life" historiography, it suggests even greater revisions for Pentecostalism. Historians of the Pentecostal movement have long attributed the "finished work of Christ" teachings (which split early Pentecostalism between Wesleyan-Holiness and non-Wesleyan understandings of Spirit baptism) to William Durham. However, Kenyon had been teaching the doctrine as early as 1899 and, besides Durham, had contact with Pentecostal luminaries such as Maria Woodworth-Etter, Aimee Semple McPherson, Finis Yoakum, Ern Baxter, and F. F. Bosworth (pp. 28–29, 34, 174, 292–96). It is difficult to say how much of the theology behind this teaching, with its distinction between "Revelation Knowledge" and "Sense Knowledge" (pp. 96–103), was understood or transmitted by Durham and those who carried on his "finished work." But implicit to Kenyon's understanding of that doctrine was his teaching on positive confession which he emphasized so much in later years. It was through prayer and positive confession that one could attain by faith the blessings that Christ had already secured through his atoning death and descent into hell (pp. 28, 170–74, cf. 148–53). Such blessings included healing, which figured so prominently in his ministry (pp. 234–42). Sickness indicated a lack of faith.

> Satan could tempt the believer to be sick by producing false symptoms of a given disease. Whether or not these false symptoms developed into a real disease depended on the verbal confession of the Christian. . . . when the Devil brings a bundle of sickness to our door, we should answer him by saying, "Our diseases were borne by Jesus. If you have any diseases, sir, they are your own; and in the Name of Jesus, I command you to take them away." Having made this positive confession, all that remained was to make sure your actions corresponded to your confession—in other words, act faith (pp. 239–40).

Such was the relationship between sickness, confession, and faith for Kenyon. It was through this emphasis on positive confession later in life that Kenyon had a direct influence on "Word of Faith" teachers such as Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland (pp. x, 296–304). Anyone trying to understand these kinds of new religious movements, or important elements of the religious vitality and ferment which marked the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in North America, should read this book.

Douglas Milford, Wheaton College

Selling Fear: Conspiracy Theories and End-Times Paranoia. By Gregory S. Camp. Baker Books, 1997. 287 pages. $15.99 paper.

In recent years the shelves of evangelical bookstores have come to groan with the weight of conspiracy writings. While already evident before George Bush's public musings on the New World Order, Christian conspiracism gained an undoubted boost from the Gulf War, and speculation about a hydra-headed plot to destroy America continues to enjoy remarkable sales figures. Outside the evangelical world, a number of critics have attacked the popularity of such theories. These attacks, originally aimed at the Christian Right, have more recently concentrated their fire on the less numerous but more radical militias. In addition to a regrettable tendency to assume that conspiracy theory is always anti-Semitic, such attacks have also paid little attention to some of the most widely distributed material, originating from ministries independent of both the Christian Right and Christian Patriots.

Camp's study has the potential to address the issue from a particularly useful vantage point. Written by a conservative Christian and produced by a Christian publisher, it recognizes the attraction of the material it is discussing and seeks to provide a more grounded understanding for those who might be tempted by its claims. Unfortunately, the approach the author has taken in attempting to dispute how conspiracists explain the events of the last two centuries is to provide his own alternative account. Even if he was equipped with a thorough knowledge of recent scholarship on the French Revolution, Communism, the Second World War, and much else, to produce a persuasive account of such an extended period while rebutting a myriad of other writers is probably beyond the reach of any one writer or one book. Certainly this account, which appears to believe that the Tsar was killed before Trotsky's return to Russia and also partly accepts conspiracist premises (most notably those concerning international capitalism's supposed backing of the Russian Revolution), has proved unable to achieve what it intended.

Camp's bibliography is impressively wide-ranging, including books, videotapes, audiotapes, and web-sites. With such material to hand, the

possibility existed of both providing an informed account of what modern conspiracists argue and, through carefully chosen case studies, to challenge how they attempt to explain particular *key* developments in modern history. Instead, while this book may well succeed in gaining access to evangelical bookstores, it is ill-equipped to challenge the conspiracist contentions that hold dominion over their shelves.

Martin Durham, University of Wolverhampton

Like Bread on the Seder Plate: Jewish Lesbians and the Transformation of Tradition. By Rebecca Alpert. Columbia University Press, 1997. 214 pages. $24.50 cloth.

Jewish lesbians are said to belong in Judaism as much as leavened bread belongs on the seder plate. Rebecca Alpert, who was ordained a Reconstructionist rabbi in 1976, sets out to show the way to make Judaism a comfortable home for Jewish lesbians. Alpert's approach is scholarly, and she expresses often radical-sounding ideas in moderate and balanced language. Alpert's thesis is that for Jewish lesbians to participate fully in Jewish life, "not only Jews but Judaism and its sacred texts must be transformed from a lesbian perspective. This transformation must include new readings of ancient texts, an effort to find or rediscover Jewish texts from other eras that incorporate a lesbian sensibility, and the creation of new sacred texts that are affirmatively Jewish and lesbian" (pp. 7–8).

Alpert first examines biblical texts that condemn homosexuality by three means: interpreting the text to change its meaning (*Midrash*); examining the text as a historical document; and confronting the text with lesbians' anger. She assumes that Jewish law (*halakhah*) is flexible and changes to reflect historical concerns and values. Alpert argues that the concept of Torah ("teaching") must be expanded to include lesbian texts and lives. She suggests that the story of the love between Ruth and Naomi is expressive of lesbian love. Alpert discusses Micah 6:8 in terms of how Jewish lesbians today can love and accept themselves and God, love others well, and work for human justice.

Alpert describes Jewish lesbian rituals that are being created, the deep meaning that Passover has for Jewish lesbians, and the pain Passover brings when lesbians are estranged from their families of birth. She also searches twentieth-century literature for affirmations of Jewish lesbians and holds up Jewish lesbians such as Pauline Newman (1889–1986) and Charlotte Wolff (1897–1986) as role models. Finally, she discusses the themes expressed in contemporary Jewish lesbian fiction.

Alpert's goal is to promote dialogue between Jewish lesbians and "other segments of the Jewish community" (p. 164) in order to incorporate

lesbian experiences and perspectives into Judaism and thereby enrich and invigorate Jewish life. The author claims Judaism as home for herself and other Jewish lesbians, and does the work to make it so with courage and intelligence.

Catherine Wessinger, Loyola University, New Orleans

The Quest for Utopia in Twentieth-Century America, Volume I: 1900–1960. By Timothy Miller. Syracuse University Press, 1998. 254 pages. $34.95 cloth.

Early historians of American communitarianism believed that its significant episodes had ended with the nineteenth century. Now, Timothy Miller, professor of theology at the University of Kansas, contends that the history of twentieth-century efforts merits not one but two volumes, this first one concentrating on the decades prior to the 1960s. Miller is not alone in demonstrating that communitarianism has continuity and has flourished since 1900, but his is the first documented summary of these six decades. An introduction argues that concepts of communitarianism adapted to underlying changes, and Miller wrestles with familiar problems of definition, inclusion, exclusion, and sparse information. The chapter provides valuable clues to the author's thinking and anticipates the case studies that follow.

The first chapter summarizes several nineteenth-century communities that continued into the 1900s. Then Miller presents capsule accounts of a hundred or more others that emerged across the American landscape. The non-religious examples include socialist, anarchist, and other politically inspired groups, art colonies, government-sponsored communities, and some that are difficult to classify. Much of the book, however, concerns a variety of religious groups (but rarely of mainstream denominations): Hutterite, Jewish, Mormon, East Asian, Theosophical, and Spiritualist, and an intriguing mix of small, esoteric assemblages. Roman Catholic orders are not included.

Inevitably, such a volume must skim the surface, but Miller's eye for detail and for the unique, and his skill at telling lively stories, extends the accounts far beyond mere encyclopedic listings. Philosophical underpinnings are noted but muted as the author concentrates on the history, leaders and followers, and problems and issues involved in the communities. A few accounts are so brief that one might wonder why they were included, and some scholars will note the omission of yet additional obscure groups. This merely confirms that twentieth-century communitarianism remains a fertile area for serious investigation.

The book includes neither a single listing of colonies, such as similar volumes often include, nor illustrations. But such lists are often so abbreviated as to be superficial, and photographs would pose major issues

of selection, size, and cost. This book relies successfully on word pictures.

Even readers familiar with twentieth-century communitarianism will be astonished at the numerous, diverse communities Miller has uncovered and described, and no one is better qualified or more adept at recounting their histories. This valuable book leaves the reader awaiting the next volume which will continue the account through the active sixties to century's end.

Charles P. LeWarne, Edmonds, Washington

A Buddhist Life in America: Simplicity in the Complex. By Joan Halifax. Paulist Press, 1998. 45 pages. $6.95 paper.

Joan Halifax is an internationally active speaker, conference leader, and anthropologist. She is currently Executive Director of the Project on Being with Dying. An ordained Buddhist teacher, she previously founded the Ojai Foundation, a Buddhist educational and wilderness community in California. Her earlier works include *The Human Encounter with Death* (1977), *Shamanic Voices: A Survey of Visionary Narratives* (1979), and *Shaman: The Wounded Healer* (1982).

A Buddhist Life in America is a transcript of the Wit Lecture at Harvard Divinity School. In keeping with the aim of the lecture series, Halifax offers an extended reflection on what it means to be spiritual in the modern world. In order to clarify the meaning of "simplicity," she recounts far-ranging events in her life: in the Sahara she lived among the Dogon; in Miami she experimented with LSD and suffered a breakdown; and in New York City she worked with Joseph Campbell and found recovery in the meditative practice of Buddhism.

Meditation breaks down the barriers between self and others and allows Halifax to pursue "essential altruism," a goal of her religious quest. Her work over the years with the Project on Being with Dying has provided her with an outlet for the "joining of service and contemplative practice." The end result is a richly layered illustration of how ancient wisdom can be adapted successfully to the worst and best of modern exigencies.

Lee Burchfield, Louisville Free Public Library

Women, Abuse and the Bible: How Scripture Can Be Used to Hurt or Heal. Edited by Catherine Clark Kroeger and James R. Beck. Paternoster Press, 1998. 235 pages. $14.99 paper.

In 1956 a young pastor's wife made the difficult decision to help a young female member of her husband's congregation escape an abusive home. Because of this choice she was faced with a disturbing dilemma. She was sure that her actions saved the woman's life. Yet she was troubled because her actions flew in the face of the prevalent biblical interpretations of the meanings of headship and submission. A desire to understand things previously accepted without question fueled a passion for learning about biblical equality and inspired a lifetime of study on the topic for Catherine Clark Kroeger.

The problems of abuse of power in Christian congregations and violence in Christian homes are confronted directly in this compelling collection of essays. Editors Catherine Clark Kroeger and James R. Beck, founding members of an evangelical organization called Christians for Biblical Equality, recently convened a conference on women, abuse, and the Bible. The published essays are representative of the papers read by scholars and professionals from many Christian denominations and academic disciplines.

The essays are divided into two categories. In Part I, "To Hurt," contributors deal with the way certain biblical passages are used to protect the perpetrators of sexual abuse rather than the victims. One writer argues that misunderstandings of biblical teaching on leadership and hierarchy have done more harm than simply protecting perpetrators by actually promoting abusive situations. Part II, "To Heal," focuses on interventions and remedies. In both parts, the need to revise traditional understandings of headship and submission is a central unifying theme. Additionally, Christian leaders and laypeople, for whom the volume is written, are urged to emphasize and obey scriptural mandates about equality and accountability.

The closing essay by James R. Beck synthesizes the ideas of both the biblical scholars and the secular clinicians who contributed to the project. He argues that a "Theology for the Healthy Family" would interpret explicit biblical sayings regarding the family through the lens of the teachings of Jesus found in the Gospels. He shows that well-known models of the "cycle of violence" all contain the notion of domination as a central element. He links this theme of domination with the common misunderstanding of biblical teachings about headship and submission. Beck concludes that therapeutic prescriptions for improving family relationships (communication, confession, conciliation, and contrition) made by secular counselors actually line up with the teachings of Jesus.

Delmarshae Sledge Tinsley, University of Pittsburgh

Financing American Religion. Edited by Mark Chaves and Sharon L. Miller. Altamira Press, 1999. 196 pages. $52.00 cloth, $24.95 paper.

Growing out of the Lilly Endowment's Financing American Religion initiative, this work attempts to "bridge the chasm between research and practice, between scholarship and organizational leadership." Each chapter presents primary findings of research sponsored by the Lilly Endowment, highlighting practical conclusions which will be of particular use to clergy, laity, and others involved in financing religious organizations. Selections are brief, providing a cursory overview of methodology and adumbrating primary findings and conclusions in a manner which will appeal especially to the reader interested in workable applications. The work will also appeal to scholars and others interested in a concise introduction to recent research regarding religious financing.

Presented in four parts, the work examines individual contributions to religious congregations (Part I), congregational management of financial resources (Part II), financing of religious organizations other than congregations (Part III), and theological and academic considerations in understanding religious giving and management of resources (Part IV). Among other things, the work examines denominational differences in giving, skewness of religious giving and explanations for skewness, the relationship between giving and income, explanations for differences in giving between Catholics and Protestants, the relationship between religious culture and levels of giving, financing of predominantly African-American churches, historical articulation of reasons for giving (especially "systematic benevolence" and "stewardship"), and the relationship between religious involvement and religious giving.

Of particular interest in the volume are discussions of the extent to which religious institutions face financial crisis or are merely undergoing changes in the ways in which they are financed, the extent to which and the ways in which theology influences religious giving, and similarities and differences between funding for religious non-profit and non-religious philanthropic institutions. Although the work addresses a myriad of issues pertaining to money and religion, Chaves and Miller provide a well integrated, systematic, cohesive, and unified discussion of various aspects of religious financing. As such, this work will take its place as both a practical guide for religious leaders and laity, and as a brief but thorough introduction to research regarding finance and religion for scholars.

Laura Vance, Georgia Southwestern State University

Messianic Revolution: Radical Religious Politics to the End of the Second Millennium. By David S. Katz and Richard H. Popkin. Hill and Wang, 1999. $26.00 paper.

Amid the rising din of millennialism studies being released to coincide with the new millennium, *Messianic Revolution: Radical Religious Politics to the End of the Second Millennium* strives hard to strike a distinctive note. A collaboration of David Katz, a Tel Aviv University historian, and Richard Popkin, a specialist in the history of philosophy, the authors draw upon their respective fields to tackle one of the more intriguing aspects of millennial phenomena: the persistent recurrence of revolutionary messianic motifs in disparate historical epochs. In the introduction, the authors declare their intent to provide a history of the beliefs that motivate messianic revolutionary groups. In the eight chapters that follow, Katz and Popkin cover approximately five hundred years of messianic ideas beginning with Renaissance messianism at the end of the fifteenth century, and concluding with messianism at the close of the twentieth century.

The book has many strengths, including refreshingly clear and forthright prose, plus chapters that consistently present the big messianic ideas of the Western millennial tradition—so much so that it could accurately be subtitled "the greatest hits of Western messianism across the centuries." Of the book's eight chapters, the one that most fully delivers what the introduction promises, (i.e., presents convincing evidence to explain how a messianic idea which emerged in one place and time subsequently was adopted and adapted by others) is chapter seven on British Israelism. While there is little in this chapter with which millennial scholars will not already be familiar, Katz and Popkin do an exemplary job in telling the complex story of how an obscure idea that arose in seventeenth-century England—that the English were the lost tribes of Israel—survived to become a motivational belief of the late twentieth-century American racist right.

Yet almost as if to counterbalance the historical high point it reaches in chapter seven, *Messianic Revolution* plunges into a troubling dénouement in its concluding chapter. Turning to address contemporary messianic activity, Katz and Popkin trot out a string of examples such as Swedenborgianism and the Reverend Sun Myung Moon which they fail to relate to the book's revolutionary messianic theme. Then, they close with the unwarranted and highly dubious assertion that the postmillennialism of late twentieth-century Christian Reconstructionism is an irenic development in millennial messianic thought.

Still, overall this is an immanently readable text. Although not didactic enough to readily serve as an introduction to the topic for newcomers and lacking the thick novelty of information and insight indispensable for experts, *Messianic Revolution* is an excellent middle-range

book whose engaging historical survey probably will be most appreciated by those who have done some preliminary reading in millennialism, but yearn for a better understanding of the linkages among messianic ideas in the Western Christian tradition.

Brenda E. Brasher, Mount Union College

Spokesmen for the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East. Edited by R. Scott Appleby. The University of Chicago Press, 1997. 429 pages. $19.95 paper.

The contributors to this edited volume deserve high marks for steering clear of the all too common shoals of comparative studies on fundamentalism—superficiality and tendentiousness. Each chapter offers an insightful scholarly analysis of a fundamentalist leader who has reinterpreted the sacred past for modern political purpose. The range of Middle East figures covered here includes Khomeini of Iran (Daniel Brumberg), Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah of Lebanon (Martin Kramer), Hassan Turabi of the Sudan (Judith Miller), Shaykh Ahmad Yasin of Palestine (Ziad Abu-Amr), Shaykh Ahmad Isma'il of Egypt (Partick D. Gaffney), Abraham Isaac Kook and Zvi Yehuda Kook of Israel (Gideon Aran), Moshe Levinger et. al. of Israel (Samuel C. Heilman), and Jan Willen van der Hoeven of Israel (Yaakov Ariel).

The fundamentalism that holds these leaders together is rather loosely conceived. In his introductory remarks, editor R. Scott Appleby, who along with Martin Marty coedited the multi-volume Fundamentalism Project, characterizes fundamentalism as "the blending of traditional religion and its politicized, ideological defense," a method of approaching modernity rather than a fixed ideological mind set (p. 4). Working easily within this framework, the essayists focus their critical attention on the specific historical and social dynamics that transformed these men into charismatic religious leaders. Like fundamentalism, the idea of charisma receives more attention in the theoretical comments of the editor than in the individual biographical sketches. Yet despite the lack of a common theoretical language on the part of the essayists, an impressive degree of analytic consistency emerges in this volume.

The importance of charismatic authority is nowhere more apparent than in Khomeini's rise to power. By radically transforming traditional Shi'ite understanding of the role of the imam in history and using his moral voice to undermine the existing power structure, Khomeini helped to create the conditions for his own leadership in the 1979 revolution. Perhaps the most striking aspect of his religious will to political power, Brumberg points out, was his willingness to change ideological direction. Fundamentalists are often thought to be

absolutists who maintain an ideal, uncompromising vision throughout their lives. But Khomeini and the other leaders under consideration here were successful precisely because of their pragmatic, utilitarian view of religion. Indeed, shifting historical tides and changing social circumstances compelled these religious leaders to be flexible in their thinking and social action, at least if they wanted to maintain a following among the despised.

Kramer's superb portrait of Husayn Fadlallah is testimony to the circuitous path that many leaders take before achieving the status they long desired. Gaffney's study of the master rhetorician Shaykh Ahmad highlights the populist impact and political limitations of fundamentalist preaching under an authoritarian regime. Aran's analysis of the Kooks, father and son, demonstrates the free-wheeling interpretive style that enables fundamentalists to shape ancient and modern history to their liking, and Ariel's work on van der Hoeven provides insight into the international character of fundamentalism.

If there is one weakness in this collection, it is that the "despised" of the title, the masses supposedly left behind in the process of economic and cultural modernization, can appear as little more than props on a stage dominated by their "spokesmen." This criticism aside, these biographical case studies make an important contribution to the study of fundamentalism and religious leadership. They will no doubt capture the interest and imagination of academics and non-academics alike.

Jeffrey T. Kenney, Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis

Earth Community, Earth Ethics. By Larry L. Rasmussen. Orbis Books, 1997. 354 pages. $20.00 recycled paper.

In 1992, 1,500 of the world's concerned scientists warned in open letter to humanity that "if vast human misery is to be avoided and our global home on this planet is not to be irretrievably mutilated . . . [a] new ethic is required." If they are correct, Larry Rasmussen's plea for fidelity to earth in *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* is a great step forward in heeding their warning. For all its grounding in history, science, economics, and political science, it is fundamentally a work in ethics, an assertion that "our most basic impulses and activities must now be measured by one stringent criterion—their contribution to an earth ethic and their advocacy of sustainable earth community" (p. xii).

Rasmussen divides his work into three sections: "Earth Scan," "Earth Faith," and "Earth Action." The first section he calls a triptych—several panels telling a single story. In the eleven chapters of his "Earth Scan," he chronicles the long history of the " slow womb" of the earth, the rapid history of "the biological expansion" of Europe, the evolution of

human civilization, growth economics, environmental science, and environmental racism. He musters compelling evidence and critical arguments to bear on his position that "Earth cannot afford Modernity," (p. 53) and avers that "[t]o right ourselves, we will have to think against the grain of much of our ingrained thought" (p. 36). He argues persuasively for "sustainable community" as an ethical critique of "sustainable development."

In the second section of the book, Rasmussen highlights symbols that might key new understandings of our relationships to each other and the earth. Antique and novel interpretations of the Tree of Life are developed. The calm sanctity of the dark is explored. The very place of humanity in the garden of God's creation is reconsidered. Synthesis and symbiosis of science and theology is proposed. The Passion of Christ and the suffering of the earth are united in a fundamental ethic of community and of respect for the corporal world. Throughout, a quest for liberation from a "restless autistic subjectivity" propels the discussion. The final section turns from an inward meditation on symbols to a platform for action. Again, a community ethic is the fundamental moral frame for the salvation of both humanity and home.

Informative, inspiring, and critically argued, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* is a well-grounded and genuinely hopeful contribution to the study of environmental issues. Rasmussen's sources comprise a must-read list for anyone interested in current global environmental problems. The whole is a major contribution to contemporary green theology and has already been used in a number of theological seminaries. Anyone interested in Green politics and economics will also find this book an invaluable resource.

Sean M. Connors, University of California, Santa Barbara

Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity. Edited by Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker. University of California Press, 1998. 384 pages. $17.95 paper.

As religious bodies grapple with the question of appropriate official roles for women, scholars continue the difficult task of recovering the histories of female religious leaders. These essays illustrate the complexity of this revisionist project. Sources are often hagiographic and biased either for or against women. In the absence of a text, research is focused on visual presentations of women exercising whatever authority they could. But the present work also illustrates the enormous value of persisting in the recovery of overlooked moments in history.

Beverly Mayne Kienzle, whose previous research has been focused on medieval sermons, is Professor of Latin and Romance Languages at Harvard Divinity School. Pamela Walker is Assistant Professor of History at Carleton University. The seventeen essays they have edited are arranged in four chronological sections: early Christianity, the Middle Ages, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries, and Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. The essays vary in depth and reflect a broad definition of Christian history, incorporating movements as diverse as the Ursulines and the New Orleans Spiritual churches. The collective work makes it clear that women have consistently been active leaders in Christian churches and that there has been both a tradition of female oral discourse and an ongoing debate about the limits within which such discourse could occur.

Essays on the early church include an examination of the Gospel of Mary (Magdalene) in which Karen King explores the nature of prophecy and the specific attitudes which either tended to allow or to disallow the participation of women. Katherine Jansen also investigates Mary Magdalene, particularly as she was incorporated into tradition as *apostolorum apostola.*

An essay on anti-Waldensian polemics demonstrates the vigor with which women prophets were confronted during the medieval period and demonstrates the development of hermeneutical devices that began to be used against women's preaching. Darleen Pryds' essay on Rose of Viterbo concludes that her preaching at least was "tolerated if not officially sanctioned," largely in the context of threats from more dangerous heresies.

Essays on Waldensian women, Ursulines in France, and the Moravians demonstrate some of the ways in which women were involved in preaching or teaching. They offered alternative interpretations of scripture, transcended class-based restrictions on their behavior, and obscured the differences between behaviors that were deemed either acceptable (teaching) or unacceptable (preaching).

Essays on the modern period evaluate images of women preachers in black women's literature, Catherine Booth and the Hallelujah Lasses of the Salvation Army, Leaf Anderson and the Spiritual Churches, and the British suffrage movement. These essays demonstrate the diversity of self-understanding among female religious leaders. Judylyn Ryan's essay on literature focuses on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and its representative use of spirituality as a way of "knowing." Pamela Walker's excellent essay on Booth includes an overview of her life, motives, and accomplishments. Booth represents an extension of the radical and nonconformist impulses of activist women.

This is a rich and complex work which will be of particular value for its multidisciplinary approach. Extensive notes for most essays point to

both standard and obscure scholarship on the various subjects and suggest that the addition of a bibliography would have nicely enhanced this significant collaborative effort.

Lee S. Burchfield, Louisville Free Public Library

Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home. By Laura Levitt. Routledge, 1997. 224 pages. $59.95 cloth, $17.95 paper.

Laura Levitt's *Jews and Feminism* is an intensely personal work and, at the same time, a theoretical book on the search for a spiritual home. It ranges back and forth through time, intertwining incidents in the author's life with discussions of the Talmud, modern challenges to traditional Judaism, and feminism. Levitt explores her life experiences and her reactions to various scholars of Judaism and feminism as if they were "bricks" for building her home. She tests their shape and fit with other pieces, keeping some, but ultimately rejecting a great deal. It is not an easy book to read as the author explores the many meanings of her family of origin, her own sexual assault, and a difficult relationship with her Jewish faith.

Levitt dissects the theory that since the Enlightenment Jews have agreed to assimilate into Western societies in exchange for liberal tolerance of faith. This "contract," however, has been an agreement between men. Jewish women have not shared in the benefits supposedly accrued from the promise of liberalism. After an exploration of the traditional rabbinic discussions of the marriage contract and sexuality, Levitt concludes disappointedly that the most oppressive of these traditions were translated to the liberal state. Levitt finds that even Eugene Borowitz's theory that liberal marriage is a model for God's relationship with the Jewish people is ultimately oppressive to women and queers.

Levitt repeats this process with the feminists and feminisms that have shaped her life. She shares with her reader how some theories, essays, poems, and other women's lives had particular resonance for her. Levitt reveals the painful process of discovering that even these women could not, ultimately, speak to all parts of her being.

Levitt does not give answers finally as to how "home" may be understood and experienced by modern Jewish women. Set adrift by her critique of the Western liberal tradition, by a feminism that does not yet speak entirely to her needs, and by the challenge to traditional and newer, but still patriarchal interpretations of Judaism, Levitt does not provide satisfying answers. However, there is a sense here that Levitt is far from done with her exploration. This book is a glimpse into a lifelong process. So far we have a rejected blueprint of "home." It is

clear that Levitt will keep searching for a satisfying place she can call her own, and hopefully, she will keep sharing her visions of that search with the rest of us.

Wendy E. Chmielewski, Swarthmore College Peace Collection

The Most Dangerous Man in America: Pat Robertson and the Rise of the Christian Coalition. By Ralph Boston. Prometheus, 1996. $18.35 cloth.

Described by its author as "a fire alarm, ringing loudly and warning of an immediate danger—that an intolerant extremist now comes perilously close to holding the reins of American politics" (p. 16), this unfortunate book adds little if anything to our knowledge of Pat Robertson or the movement he heads. Its account of Robertson's activities is almost entirely derivative, a rehash of critical and often scurrilous reports culled from the press. Its portrayal of Robertson's thought likewise is decidedly second-hand, resting on conspiratorial disclosures and interpretations of published book reviews. This derivative quality would not be overly problematic for a trade book of this sort were it not for the excessive amount of Robertson and Religious Right bashing. As such, the book is more revealing of Ralph Boston and the particular orientation he represents than it is of his would-be subject matter.

Robertson, himself, is the book's biggest casualty. There simply is no effort to probe beneath the surface of a controversial figure who has been the subject of substantial public scrutiny for more than a decade. Boston utilizes a good deal of space to highlight contradictions in Robertson's statements on a variety of issues and topics. However, rather than utilizing these to assess development, complexity, points of tension, or nuance, Boston attributes them to duplicity. As he puts it, "In Robertson's universe, up can become down, black can become white, two plus two can equal four, five, or even twenty-eight, if that's what Robertson says" (p. 14). Apart from this, Boston rehearses a litany of "embarrassing revelations" (read "allegations") about Robertson's personal life—that he lied about the date of his wedding for years to conceal the fact that his wife-to-be was seven months pregnant (Robertson had not yet converted), that he relied on his father's influence as a U.S. Senator to get him out of combat duty in the Korean War (Robertson sued Congressman Pete McCloskey for $35 over these charges), and that the "preacher's dishonesty" was apparent in his financial dealings and unwillingness to be definitive about his earnings.

The Christian Coalition (CC) does not fare much better. According to Boston, Robertson and his youthful protégé, Ralph Reed (who has since resigned his executive directorship of CC), formed "an unusual

tag team" with Robertson serving up "red meat" for true believers and Reed projecting a "kinder, gentler image," marketing the CC "as merely an organization of concerned Americans whose members favor morality and conservative principles in government" (p. 64). This tactic, he suggests, masked the organization's embrace of "far right politics," its "extremely narrow interpretation of the Scriptures," and its willingness to "do whatever it takes . . . even if that means trashing the Constitution and advocating theocracy" (p. 114). Although one is hesitant to accept Boston's characterization of the tax-exempt CC as "the equivalent of a political action committee," he does score with his discussion of the group's "blatant GOP politicking" (pp. 94–112). Less convincing are Boston's subtle and no-so-subtle efforts to link Robertson and the CC to all manner of extremists and extremism ranging from Pat Buchanan, Louis Farrakhan, David Duke, the Oklahoma City bombing, and militia rhetoric to Mobutu of Zaire, Serrano of Guatemala, Chiluba of Zambia, Iran, the Nazis, Calvin's Geneva, and Christian Reconstructionism.

More than anything else, the book reveals the many ways Robertson has offended Boston. He is offended that the CC has made "family values" its exclusive property. He is offended that Robertson sees his ministry at the center of God's interest and concern. He is offended that Robertson dares compare the "persecution" of evangelicals to that suffered by Jews, blacks, and others. And he can't understand why anyone would associate with one whose statements "should make him a pariah in decent society" (p. 147). Boston's notion of "decent society" appears to be one that tolerates little ambiguity. The church is boxed neatly here and the state there. Theology is here and politics there. The pariahs of society are here and the mainstream there. The irony, of course, is that the apocalyptic certitude, divisive rhetoric, name-calling, smearing, atmosphere of paranoia and siege mentality, nakedly partisan overtones, utter lack of compassion and charity, arrogance, and demonization of which Robertson and the CC stand accused characterize this inconsequential attack volume.

Michael L. Mickler, Unification Theological Seminary

The Culture of Religious Pluralism. By Richard E. Wentz. Westview Press, 1998. 130 pages. $65.00 cloth, $15.00 paper.

At the outset of *The Culture of Religious Pluralism*, Richard E. Wentz makes a distinction between religious diversity and religious pluralism. For Wentz, "religious diversity" refers to the material fact that diverse religious traditions have coexisted and challenged one another throughout American history. "Pluralism" refers to the cultural and moral embracing of diversity as a positive phenomenon. A central thesis

of *The Culture of Religious Pluralism* is that a dominant—but as yet incompletely realized—theme in America is the gradual transformation of the reality of diversity into the ideal of pluralism. A second major theme is the assertion that pluralism is an ideal worthy of pursuit.

Wentz's book is not so much a chronological development of the culture of religious pluralism as it is a series of related essays which reexamine familiar themes and episodes in the cultural history of American religion from the vantage point of the notion that American religious history is an epic of groping toward pluralism. Themes addressed in the book include conquest and conversion, denominationalism, civil religion, race and gender, secularization, and the New Age. The concluding chapter is Wentz's programmatic statement of what would be required for America to become truly pluralistic.

The Culture of Religious Pluralism could perhaps be described as an undisciplined book. It is part cultural history, part sociology, part theology, part sermon. Although it is packaged as if it were a textbook, it is instead an idiosyncratic, often challenging, intensely personal interpretation of American religious culture. This could be a valuable text in courses in American religion, but I would use it toward the end of the course rather than at the beginning. Students not already familiar with the basic outlines of the issues it raises may have difficulty following some of the arguments presented. Well prepared and motivated students will, I think, find it challenging and rewarding.

Arthur L. Greil, Alfred University

Spiritualism in Antebellum America. By Bret Carroll. Indiana University Press, 1997. 227 pages. $35.00 paper.

In his *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*, Bret Carroll attempts to strip away the stereotypes of crank mediums and rigged seances to examine what he contends was a serious belief system with earnest adherents who developed a well organized religious subculture complete with theology and rituals. In subjecting spiritualism to serious scholarly analysis, Carroll also provides a window on nineteenth-century American culture and the plethora of religious subcurrents that arose in response to the rapid changes and transitions of the period.

Asserting that "spiritualism bloomed in the cultural soil that had been prepared for it" (p. 8), Carroll sketches a portrait of a religious movement that arose at a time of perceived crisis within American society. Increasing in popularity throughout the 1840s and 1850s, spiritualism was a part of the tidal wave of religious experimentation and social reform that sought to stem or at least channel the rapid

changes engulfing American life. This sense of cultural crisis stemmed in part, Carroll contends, from the changing face of the American and heretofore Protestant population, the rise of economic insecurity, the proliferation of materialism at the expense of spiritual values, and the perceived loss of spirituality at the hands of scientific rationalism.

The adherents of spiritualism were, in Carroll's view, veterans of the many social reform movements of the period, and many had theological roots in liberal religions. Indeed, while largely critical of Christianity and the excesses of revivalist preachers, many spiritualists compared their practices to those of the early Christians and believed that they, like the first-century church, were attempting to restore a lost and pristine past. This primitivist impulse within spiritualism was not unlike that of the Mormons, Oneidans, or even the seventeenth-century Puritans.

What Carroll argues made spiritualism a distinct new arrival on the American religious scene was its doctrine of spirit communication. Spiritualists believed that the spiritual was manifested in the material world and that they could articulate rituals which would provide mystical contact with that spiritual presence. The idea that the physical and spiritual worlds were not mutually exclusive and that it was indeed possible to have contact with spirits came largely from the work of Swedish theologian Emanuel Swedenborg. After Swedenborg reportedly appeared posthumously to Andrew Jackson Davis in 1847, Davis articulated what became the basis for much of spiritualist thought in his work, *The Magic Staff.* Communication with spirits was achieved through entering a "mesmerized" state. The spiritualists conceived of the spiritual world as a set of concentric circles arranged in a hierarchical manner from God through a set of lesser spirits. The "circle," the ritual arrangement of the seance, was a reflection of this belief, and also served to foster what Carroll termed a "congregational identity" among spiritualists (p. 132). Communication with the spirit world was intended to reassure humans that "society was being controlled from above and molded into conformity with a spiritual reality" (p. 6).

Perhaps the most compelling thesis in Carroll's work is his contention that spiritualism served a number of contradictory functions for its followers. In its theology and rituals, spiritualism was a "commitment to democratized religious authority and individualized experience with a deep longing for spiritual community and attachment" (p. 119). The practice of the circle in particular provided a snapshot of the contradictory impulses within spiritualism. Carroll observed that the circle "aimed through strictly controlled and repeatable procedures to create and recreate the intense experience which spiritualists are unable to find elsewhere while satisfying their intellectual allegiance to scientific empiricism. It wed emotion, intellect, religion and science, rapture and reason" (p. 143). This was also a group that scorned much of traditional

religion yet also ended up replicating much of the structure of traditional religion: services that began with invocations, closing benedictions, and homilies (p. 137).

Carroll demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the theology and worldview of spiritualism. Strengthening his work throughout is an ongoing discussion of the historiography of the movement. The book is extremely well documented, and the bibliography is an indispensable starting point for anyone interested in the topic of spiritualism. Carroll effectively strips away the stereotypes popularly associated with spiritualism. What is left is an exceptional portrait both of a serious religious movement and the tumultuous culture in which it found itself.

Mark Taylor Dalhouse, Washington and Lee University

The Soul of Cyberspace. By Jeff Zaleski. HarperCollins, 1997. 284 pages. $22.00 paper.

"What effect does surfing the Web have on mind, on consciousness, and most importantly, on attention—the basic tool of spiritual realization?. . . Does sacred ritual have a place in cyberspace? Is cyberspace sacred space?" These are the central questions Jeff Zaleski asks in his riveting book, *The Soul of Cyberspace.* To answer these questions, Zaleski forsakes the traditional essay mode of composition for a more lively format combining commentary with interviews of figures prominent in the field of electronic technology. But even the commentaries are spiced with dialogue from the principals while Zaleski himself adopts the literary persona of the attentive reporter or ingratiating snoop: "The buildings in this part of Brooklyn are rundown, scarred by graffiti. Iron gates cover nearly every window." This kind of thing, overdone, could be annoying, but Zaleski's timing is very good. He knows when to abandon local color for what the reader has come for: mind-bending thoughts about what is going to happen to religion in the Age of the Internet.

Zaleski wisely limits himself to discussing familiar territory—the influential world religions of Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism. In each chapter, he discusses the Big Question with a devoted follower of the religion who is also a dedicated nethead. Each representative makes the same point: in order to survive the revolutionary changes of the latter days of the millennium, religions and their progeny must keep up with the times, get wired, establish a home page, go on-line. Rabbi Kazan talks about "The Global Interactive Database of Good Deeds," a permanent web site where "people will be able to participate in lighting their own menorah, by typing in an act of goodness or kindness or a positive thing that they did."

Zaleski deftly outlines the ambivalence involved in bringing the world of Islam onto the Net. Fundamentalist Muslims, he points out, fear a contamination of Arabic by English if the Qur'an were to go on-line. Yet Sheikh Hisham Muhammad Kabbani, who was instrumental in bringing the Islamic information center, the Haqqani Foundation, into cyberspace, understands that "always spirituality is high-tech. Spirituality is a kind of energy transmission from human beings to each other."

Christianity, by contrast, has no such reservations about cyberspace. Adept from the beginning at using extant communication technologies, Christians have taken to the Net in droves. In early 1997, Zaleski writes, "Christian web sites made up more than 80 percent of the Web sites of the world's five major religions." There is even an "Order of Saint Benedict" Web site, dedicated to sharing information among members of a Catholic monastic order. Zaleski asks Brother Richard, a member of the order, if God manifests himself in cyberspace. "Not yet to me, thank God," he replies.

Elsewhere in the book a Zen "Cybermonk" advertises an event called "Dharma Combat," "an unrehearsed dialogue in which Zen practitioners test and sharpen their understanding of Zen truths with tools provided by the Internet." And Zaleski discovers for us the "Om" page, which he says is "the most sophisticated Yoga site on the Net."

Each chapter concludes with Website addresses of key persons and places related to the religion Zaleski discusses.

While all of this is interesting and insightful, the real value of the book hinges on two extraordinary interviews, one with John Perry Barlow, and one with Jaron Lanier. The Barlow interview centers on the fact that cyberspace, while bodiless, may be moving in the direction of becoming incarnated, in the sense that poetry, while only words, becomes, if genuinely understood, a fleshly experience. In The Gospel of John, Barlow says, "you start out with the word, the word becomes flesh. What we're in the process of doing is making the flesh back into word." For Lanier, cyberspace is an "ocean," "a working anarchy" with "erotic quality." Whatever one happens to be looking at the moment might not be interesting, but there is an "energy source" that propels the Web and encourages looking elsewhere, lifting the veil that hides the thing that you need to see.

This isn't simply heady and giddy material for bedside reading; it is essential information for anyone interested in the future of religion. *The Soul of Cyberspace* is one of the first books (among thousands to come) which takes up what will be the central issue among those interested in the state of religion at the end (and beginning) of the millennium.

Zaleski concludes his book with a memorable anecdote. In 1996, three Tibetan Buddhist monks in Ithaca, New York, walked into their

monastery's prayer room. "They sat down on dark mats, two of them side by side, the third facing the others. This third monk flipped open a laptop computer and brought up an image of the Kalachakra mandala. In the light of the glowing screen, the three monks proceeded to pray for a half an hour, conducting a formal blessing of cyberspace."

The Soul of Cyberspace might be considered a secular version of that blessing.

Michael Sexson, Montana State University

Arts in the Religions of the Pacific: Symbols of Life. By Albert C. Moore. Cassell, 1998. $35.00, cloth.

When Albert Moore once told me over lunch that I was about to speak at the southernmost university in the world, I apparently showed the predictable burst of pleasure that he enjoys eliciting from his guests. His cabinets were full of an exceptional collection of images; his head was full of insights about them. I wanted to stay there a long time and learn from him, thus I am grateful for this book.

Encyclopedic efforts rarely satisfy, yet this is the second wholly successful work by Moore. His 1977 book, *Iconography of Religions: An Introduction*, is a reference in any religious studies library. Now add to that this recent book. There are several reasons why the book succeeds:

(1) Moore judiciously renders complex myths into concise narratives.
(2) The arts of the Pacific are never severed from their cultural contexts.
(3) He succinctly points out key issues for both art and religion, including aesthetics, the "primitive" and the primal, bi-culturalism, ritual, the effects of history, problems of representation, and the study of nonvisual arts.
(4) Contemporary art is well represented, correcting the "case of curiosities" approach to Polynesian arts.
(5) It is a highly teachable book and one that is adaptable for art history, religious studies, and anthropology courses.

When I was briefly in New Zealand, I became aware of the struggle between indigenous flora and European imports (with the European plants as aggressively successful as European humans and other colonizing animals). Nevertheless, I also began to become aware of the ways the West subtly revised its own sensibilities given the encounter with the cultures of the Pacific. It is not only Melville or Darwin or Gauguin who had life-shaping experiences there; those experiences were culture-shaping for the rest of us. The consciousness of the West is tattooed by the surprise encounters with the cultures of the Pacific. If

we are living in a time in which economic, political, and cultural imperatives are shifting from the shores of the Atlantic to the rim of the Pacific, then Albert Moore's book is not only interesting for specialized focus, but also for foundational religious studies and art history courses.

Lynda Sexson, Montana State University

The Night Has a Naked Soul: Witchcraft and Sorcery Among the Western Cherokee. By Alan Kilpatrick. Syracuse University Press, 1997. 160 pages. $28.95 cloth.

Alan Kilpatrick, a second generation Cherokee scholar, has made a groundbreaking contribution to the study of Cherokee religion in this book. The heart of this work consists of forty magical texts, known as *idi:gawe':sdi* ("to say it, one"), translated from the Sequoyah syllabary. Although these texts are considered by Cherokee traditionalists to be ritually dead, they could be revived through purification rites which Kilpatrick has sworn not to disclose.

The author builds on the work of his parents, Jack F. and Anna G. Kilpatrick, who collected a large number of Cherokee manuscripts in the 1960s (some dating back as far as the 1880s) and published some of their findings in several books that are listed in this book's bibliography. Like his parents, Kilpatrick focuses on the "western" Cherokee "who have grown up and now reside in five adjacent counties in northeastern Oklahoma: Sequoyah, Adair, Cherokee, Hayes, and Delaware"(p. xv).

The Night Has a Naked Soul draws from the wisdom of Cherokee traditionalists "who are still fluent in their native language or are literate in the Sequoyan script"(p. xvi) as well as from the manuscripts collected by his parents. He deals especially with folk beliefs and ritualistic language and has organized the texts he has translated into four categories, devoting a chapter to each: divinatory prayers, protective charms, serious conjuring spells, and purification rites.

Cherokee witches are found to be solitary individuals who can transform themselves into other physical forms (human or other animal) and who "represent the ultimate expression of human depravity and antisocial deviance. This is their cardinal trait"(p. 10). Such a totally negative view of witches stands in stark contrast to the way in which most contemporary pagans and witches view themselves.

Cherokee sorcerers or conjurers (many of whom are Christians, some preachers) must go through a long apprenticeship with a master practitioner in order to learn the magical texts which are usually corrective measures against witches. However, conjurers sometimes work harm themselves by "taking away an individual's health and happiness

as a means of 'getting even,' of settling a score or redressing an imagined wrong" (p. 140). Kilpatrick gives three contemporary case histories of individuals who were thought to be conjured in this manner.

The Night Has a Naked Soul is rich with information and insight and opens up great new possibilities in the study of Cherokee religion. The author, who serves as Associate Professor of American Indian Studies at San Diego State University, has made a very significant contribution with this brief but fascinating book.

Paul F. Blankenship, Memphis Theological Seminary

The Essential Gay Mystics. By Andrew Harvey. Harper San Francisco, 1997. 290 pages. $22.00 cloth.

Andrew Harvey brings together writers from ancient Greece to twentieth-century America who combine mystical visions with homosexual inclinations. He describes this anthology as "a loving protest" against the homophobia of religions such as Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and New Age. Harvey feels "there is no record of the Divine itself in any way excluding homosexuals from the direct contact with its love, which is offered freely and forever to every sentient being." This reader is an offering to anyone interested in mysticism—including homosexuals searching for a place within traditionally exclusionary religious teachings. It is also "a vision of the noble wisdom" that homosexuals offer for all humanity.

Harvey takes his readers on a journey crossing both space and time to discover the words and visions of lesbian, gay, and bisexual men and women. The adventure begins in ancient Greece with the mythology-laden poetry of Sappho and Plato's tale of the hermaphroditic origins of humans. Then we are off to ancient Rome for the pondering of Virgil and the reverent poems of the "gender-variant" eunuch priests of the goddess Cybele, called "Galli." We then jump to the continent now called America to peer into the visions of gay Native American shamans (unfortunately referred to as *berdache* by Harvey and others—a name meaning prostitute), as well as to the Far East for visions from Goddess worshipping and Buddhist men, including the founder of No theater. Then Harvey takes us to Persia for the ecstatic poems of Sufi mystics. Then Shakespeare makes his appearance along with Sor Jauna Inés de la Cruz. North America's Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, France's Arthur Rimbaud, Ireland's Oscar Wilde, and others represent the nineteenth century. For twentieth-century selections he includes Russia's Marina Tsvetaeva, Spain's Federico Garcia Lorca, Germany's Hildegard Elsberg, England's Virginia Woolf, and North America's H. D. and Audre Lorde.

Nova Religio

Throughout the book Harvey brings the homosexual inclinations of many writers to light. He also brings the mystical edge of many writers considered to be secular to the forefront. Harvey, along with the writers he presents, seeks to erase the line between sacred and secular, hetero- and homosexual, poetry and fiction. Thus, this text is in itself a mystical venture.

Elizabeth Curran, University of Oregon

Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs and Disease: An Anthropological Study of the European Witch-Hunts. By H. Sidky. Peter Lang Publishing, 1997. $34.95 paper.

Since the 1970s, the field of witchcraft studies has undergone a revolution. Before that time, theories about the Great European Witch Hunt were based primarily on propaganda, namely on the literature produced by witch-hunters. We had little idea what the average trial looked like, nor how accurate the literary evidence was. Then, around 1977, historians began to tabulate the data contained in the thousands of surviving witch trial accounts. Previously, most of this information had been ignored because of the monumental amount of work required to gather, collate, and analyze it. The results of these new studies were stunning, overturning most of the older theories in the field. We found that we had only been using approximately five percent of the available data and that the information we had used was terribly misleading. This new trial data generated a host of regional studies and nuanced, multi-disciplinary discussions welcomed by the vast majority of academics. H. Sidky disagrees.

Sidky claims that for the last thirty years witchcraft studies have been dominated by mentalism, an excessive fixation with people's perceptions of reality. Historians have wasted far too much time trying to understand how witch-hunters thought, rather than focusing on what they actually did. He states that he will remedy this situation by providing a "scientific" study of the trials, one that focuses exclusively on what "really" happened.

How, one might ask, do we know what "really" happened? Sidky's answer is simple. He assumes that witch-hunting literature is essentially accurate and then searches for physical phenomena (drugs, diseases, torture, etc.) that can explain witchcraft beliefs. Physical causes are "real" and "scientific"; psychological and cultural ones are not. Ironically, he ignores the new trial data, which are records of real, documented events. Instead, like scholars from the 1950s, Sidky relies on literature, on works that are mainly secondhand reports and semi-fictional accounts.

Resurrecting a number of old theories, he blames the trials on civil and religious elites who, he claims, launched a program of mass murder to solidify their power and enrich their coffers.

None of these ideas are new. They are the old "common knowledge" about witchcraft, the theories that were overturned by the new trial data. We now know that most witches were poor and were accused by their neighbors, not by money hungry witch-hunters. We know that trials flourished where central authority was weakest (along borders, and during periods of civil war and strife) and that, surprisingly, a strong civil or religious authority tended to minimize the persecution. Trial evidence suggests that the Great Hunt was a rumor panic, not a program of genocide launched by evil governments.

Unfortunately, Sidky never addresses this new data. He acknowledges that most modern researchers disagree with his theories, but he blames this on their prejudices rather than on counterevidence. One of the most painful examples comes from the discussion of the death toll of the Great Hunt. Sidky claims that between 100,000 and 1,000,000 witches died. In a footnote, he admits that modern researchers estimate that there were only 40,000 to 60,000 deaths. However, he insists that all estimates are "pure guesswork" and states that current numbers arise from the neoconservative biases of modern historians. This is untrue. Sidky's figures are indeed guesses, estimates made at a time when no one had counted how many trials existed. The figures he rejects, on the other hand, are based on solid research. Trials in many areas have now been counted, and we have found less than 13,000 executions. New data, not Reaganomics, is why historians are sure no more than 60,000 witches died.

Given its historical subject, the book is oddly unhistorical. It pays little attention to the details of history: where and when phenomena occurred. Events from disparate times and places are blurred together until the Great Hunt appears to be one homogenous event. For instance, most of the forty-page chapter on torture is devoted to graphic descriptions of the stomach-turning torments visited upon suspected witches. Yet nowhere does Sidky discuss the history of torture: why so many European courts came to adopt it; how the limitations on it were gradually eroded as the fear of witches grew; how it intensified over time, and why. Instead, tortures from all times and places are woven together into a monstrous tapestry and presented as "the way" that all trials were run. The effect is graphic and disturbing, but not enlightening. Sidky paints a picture of horror, yet never explains how that horror came to be. He seems content to reiterate, over and over again, that witch-hunters were vile and evil. Any attempt to understand how people could do these things is dismissed as mentalism.

Frequently the link between a "cause" and its "effect" is highly dubious. For example, Sidky suggests that fears about the Black Plague

caused the Great Hunt. However witch trials began to increase forty years before the Plague, and they did not skyrocket until the mid-sixteenth century, approximately two hundred years later. And while these theories may explain some aspects of the trials, they cannot explain why the Great Hunt happened. Many of the "causes" Sidky highlights have existed throughout time. The Roman Empire used torture. Ergot and psychoactive plants have always been with us. Yet witch crazes are not ubiquitous. The Great Hunt took place in a distinct time period (1300–1800, and primarily from around 1550–1650). The drugs and diseases Sidky notes may have fed the Hunt. They may have been interpreted as signs of witchcraft during the persecutions. But by themselves they do not explain why the Hunt occurred.

In the last chapters, Sidky addresses several fringe hypotheses about the origin of the trials. These include the theory that possession was caused by ergot poisoning; that hallucinogenic drugs were responsible for the strange confessions witches gave; that illnesses like rabies and porphyria created legends of werewolf-witches. This is the finest section of the book. Much of the writing on these topics is exceedingly poor, and Sidky weeds through it in a balanced and thoughtful manner. But even these chapters suffer from a lack of evidence. The explanations are possible yet Sidky cannot provide any evidence to support them. He admits that we know of no instance where outbreaks of possession and ergotism occurred at the same time. Recipes for witches' "flying ointments" do list mind-altering herbs. However, numerous witch-hunters tested these ointments and not a single one was ever found to have an unusual effect. Sidky mentions and dismisses one such inquisitor, but experiments were common and well-known; some witch-hunting manuals contain elaborate excuses for why these supposedly magical ointments don't do anything.

In the end, *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs, and Disease* does little to advance our understanding of the Great Hunt. It is an example of how research used to be done in this field. It only uses a tiny fraction of the available evidence. It relies primarily on the worst data available, on literature rather than trial records. And in a time when regional studies are revealing enormous variations in the persecution of witchcraft, it treats the Great Hunt as a static, simple whole.

Jenny Gibbons

Whisper to the Black Candle: Voodoo, Murder, and the Case of Anjette Lyles. By Jaclyn Weldon White. Mercer University Press, 1999. $22.95 cloth.

One would expect that *Whisper to the Black Candle*, published as it is by a quality academic press and advertised in Mercer University Press'

academic catalog, would endeavor to fulfill the promise of its title to offer insight into the strange case of Anjette Lyles. Lyles, a practitioner according to the book's flyleaf of various forms of "voodoo ceremonies and black magic," became the first white woman to be sentenced to death in the state of Georgia. In the decade of the 1950s, Lyles was convicted of murdering by means of arsenic poisoning two husbands, one mother-in-law, and one of her young daughters. Her death sentence was eventually commuted to life in a psychiatric institution.

The Lyles case merits a good deal of scholarly attention in that it raises a number of issues in such areas as religious freedom, folk religious practices in the rural South, and race and gender. Remarkably, none of these issues is explored by the author, Jaclyn Weldon White, who is described as a Juvenile Court Administrator in Gwinnett County, Georgia. Indeed, save for passing references to candle magic and the use of roots for various purposes, we learn virtually nothing of Lyles' beliefs and practices. This is particularly frustrating given the fact that large portions of the trial transcript focus on the defendant's religious beliefs and that Lyles herself testified at length on this topic.

Whisper to the Black Candle is a fascinating read, much in the style of the best of popular true crime books. But it is troubling that a quality academic press would publish the work and market it as an academic text, which it assuredly is not. It is hoped that, even in these difficult financial times for academic publishing, the marketing of a popular book as an academic text will remain the exception and not the rule.

Jeffrey Kaplan, Helsinki University

The End of Time: Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millennium. By Damian Thompson. Sinclair-Stevenson, 1996. 366 pages. £8.99 paper.

At a time that is witnessing an explosion of books on millenarian and apocalyptic thought, Damian Thompson's *The End of Time* provides a comprehensive and insightful survey of the topic that should be particularly useful to nonspecialists who are seeking an introduction to the plethora of millenarian and apocalyptic groups that have appeared throughout the world since the beginning of the Christian era. This book is especially valuable for the attention paid to non-Western and non-Christian millenarian movements, demonstrating that anxiety over the anticipated end of the world is hardly limited to fundamentalist Christian groups.

Thompson divides his work into two sections. The first part consists of a detailed historical survey of millenarian thought and movements in Western Christendom, running up to the early twentieth century. As

such, it situates millennialism in a larger historical and cultural context, showing that the anxiety associated with the approach of the year 2000 is merely the latest version of the type of millenarian expectation that has been attached to numerous "special" dates throughout the history of Christianity. Thompson covers a wide range of topics in chronological order, including the concept of the Great Week, date-induced mass hysteria, the debate over the impact of the year 1000, notorious movements such as the Taborites, and much more. Of particular interest is his analysis of the church's changing attitude toward millenarianism over the centuries, as solidification of the church's status as part of the institutional power structure seems to have been accompanied by an increasingly critical view of millenarian thought as a threat to the established order.

Part two of *The End of Time* consists of detailed accounts of a number of contemporary movements, including the Branch Davidians, Aum Shinrikyo, fundamentalist Korean groups, New Age groups, and others. Thompson moves well beyond the confines of European and North American developments, describing millenarian movements in Latin America, Korea, Japan, and elsewhere.

While working best as a resource for descriptive accounts of millenarian movements, the book also offers analytical and interpretive perspectives on these groups. When theorizing, Thompson's positions are sometimes in need of further refinement and clarity, and some of his interpretations (such as his perspective on the Roman Catholic Great Jubilee) will certainly be contested by other scholars. Overall, however, this is an excellent survey of the millenarian tradition.

George Adams, Susquehanna University

The End of the World As We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America. By Daniel Wojcik. New York University Press, 1997. 281 pages. $50.00 cloth.

In Neil Gaimen's novel, *Good Omens*, the world is about to face Armageddon, but none of the active forces involved—angels, demons, and the antichrist himself—can say exactly why; they know only that it must take place. Daniel Wojcik in *The End of the World As We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* identifies this same sense of fatalism as the primary characteristic of contemporary American beliefs concerning the end of the world.

Wojcik uses the methods and language of folklore, folk religion, and popular culture to analyze this topic, first summarizing the "American Apocalyptic Legacy" to both explore and ground the origins

of contemporary apocalyptic beliefs. In clear language and with sound documentation he illustrates modern preoccupations with the inevitable end—nuclear holocaust, alien invasion, or environmental collapse—in the context of these historical roots. Wojcik traces not only religious, but also secular views of the end of the world from their development in these earlier prophetic traditions through their emergence as apocalyptic beliefs. He supports his theories with detailed examples of specific traditions such as Hal Lindsey's dispensationalists, visitations of the Virgin Mary, and secular beliefs surrounding alien contact or predictions of alien assault. In this context, he then identifies the crucial shift in belief and attitude through which the end of the world, once popularly held to be a "meaningful and supernatural event" promising renewal by divine forces, came to be understood as global annihilation, a meaningless apocalypse.

Perhaps his most interesting discovery is that many apocalyptic beliefs, religious and non-religious, share common roots, and have fixed on a common vision of the end: the majority favors a nuclear holocaust that is unavoidable. Hence the sense of fatalism—the notion that events and experiences are inevitable, unalterable, and determined by external forces beyond human control. While religious and some secular interpretations are not necessarily pessimistic—for many the apocalypse offers the possibility of the thousand-year reign of Christ; for some, the reeducation and civilizing of humankind by aliens on Earth—what is clear in his summary of American traditions of apocalypse is that the vast majority believe it will come and come in force.

The End of the World as We Know It is an essential contribution to the fields of folklore, cultural studies, and the history of religion. This comprehensive analysis will also be readily accessible to the general public searching for timely research on this topic.

Amanda Carson Banks, California State University, Sacramento

The New Age Movement and The Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue. By John P. Newport. W. B. Eerdmans, 1998. 620 pages. $35.00 paper.

Distinguished Professor Emeritus John P. Newport differs from most evangelical Christian critics of the "New Age Movement" in at least two important ways: He is a well-informed scholarly observer, and he describes his subject matter with clarity and objectivity. This recognized, *The New Age Movement and The Biblical Worldview* is still a polemical tract written with the clear purpose of exposing and critiquing the teachings and beliefs of a very wide range of new religious movements (NRMs), including some traditions (e.g., Pentecostalism, the Faith Movement) generally recognized as "Christian." Newport's avowed aim is to

demonstrate the superiority of the "biblical worldview" (as he understands it) over all other forms of religious belief.

The great strengths of the book are its nearly encyclopedic breadth and the objectivity of its descriptive passages. Newport takes on everything from the Gaia hypothesis to est, Mayan magic to Therapeutic Touch, Fritjof Capra to the Church of Satan, and shows a convincing mastery of his material. Factual errors are rare. Sensitive readers of the text can acquire an accurate sense of what participants in various NRMs actually believe. This descriptive clarity elevates *The New Age Movement and The Biblical Worldview* above the usual fare found in Christian bookshops.

Perhaps the book's greatest weakness is its repetition; several chapters provide so much overlapping background information that it seems likely they were written to be published independently. Repetition is also a problem in the evangelical critiques that follow the descriptive portions of each chapter. These sections of the text read like primers in basic Christian dogma. Curiously, Newport's descriptions of "New Age" teachings are so accurate and well nuanced that the beliefs he is attacking frequently sound more reasonable and attractive than the "biblical worldview" he champions.

While scholars will find points of interest in *The New Age Movement and The Biblical Worldview*, its greatest value may lie in its potential to serve as an accurate, relatively unthreatening introduction to "New Age" beliefs for students with strong evangelical backgrounds, students who would ordinarily gain their understanding from the books of Bob Larson, or worse.

Scott Lowe, University of North Dakota

On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism. By Jon R. Stone. St. Martin's Press, 1997. 229 pages. $45.00 cloth.

In the continuing debate over how to define Evangelicalism, Jon Stone has added a needed conceptual correction. He avoids the use of metaphors and typologies—approaches that Stone believes at best only allow comparison among static perspectives—in favor of a single analytical concept, coalition (or coalition group). Two basic questions are confronted: "What is Evangelicalism?" and "Who are the Evangelicals?" The answers to these questions center on the role that group boundary dynamics play in the creation of evangelical coalitions.

The historical survey of Evangelicalism is largely unfolded by analyzing the efforts of Evangelicals to define who they are not. The evangelical coalition evinces an admix of persistence and change

brought about by an opposition to Fundamentalists on the right and to liberal Protestants on the left.

In opposing the Fundamentalists, Evangelicals were enmeshed in the fundamentalist-modernist debates of the turn of the century. As a consequence, liberal-conservative distinctions became more important than denominational identities. The Fundamentalists' removal to the margins of American culture left room for the emergence of moderate Fundamentalists and Evangelicals to attempt to recapture positions within mainstream culture. Evangelical coalitions emerged as these groups sought to create (or in their view, recreate) a truly Christian America based upon solid biblical principles.

This required three accommodations that through the fifties and sixties accounted for the great successes of the evangelical coalition: (1) the tempering of such theological principles as inerrancy and premillennial dispensationalism in order to make conservative theological orthodoxy respectable; (2) the movement away from cultural marginalization; and (3) the effort to develop a social agenda. As these dynamics operated, boundaries were defined in opposition to the more extreme Fundamentalists. This created a shift to the left in education and publications with the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary (1947) and the creation of publications such as *Christianity Today* (1956), and in cooperative coalitions such as the National Association of Evangelicals (1942).

Yet the irony is that once again, as Evangelicals defined themselves as not Fundamentalists, they risked confusion with liberal Protestants. While many cooperative social projects emerged, the boundary that distinguished Evangelicals from liberal Protestants turned to theological criteria. Cooperation on social issues gave one consensus, but beneath it lay the battle for theological differentiation—a battle that eventuated in the fragmentation of the evangelical coalition that began in the seventies and continues today.

Stone demonstrates that it is the Evangelicals who have kept alive the keen interest in boundary maintenance. Social scientists ought not to expect a final, static answer to either "Who are the Evangelicals?" or "What is Evangelicalism?" Yet the questions must be, and are, continually asked. Others may write a different history of the Evangelicals and many may quibble with specific claims made in this text. Yet when all is said and done, Stone has provided a very useful framework for analyzing the dynamics of the definitional ambiguities that characterize both the study and praxis of Evangelicalism.

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

The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity. By Paul Heelas. Basil Blackwell, 1996. 266 pages. $49.95 cloth, $25.95 paper.

> The New Age is a Spirituality "of" modernity in the sense that it (variously) provides a sacralized rendering of widely-held values (freedom, authenticity, self-responsibility, self-reliance, self-determination, equality, dignity, tranquillity, harmony, love, peace, creative expressivity, being positive, and, above all, "the self" as a value in and of itself) and associated assumptions (concerning the inner self and the intrinsic goodness of human nature, the idea that it is possible to change for the better, the importance of being true to oneself and exercising expressive ethicality, the person as the primary locus of authority, the importance of taking responsibility for one's own life, the distrust of traditions and the importance of liberating oneself from the restrictions imposed by the past, the community of all that is human, the value of nature, the efficacy of positive thinking) (p. 169).

This passage offers Paul Heelas' understanding of the New Age movement as a specifically modern religious phenomenon. The book as a whole offers a comprehensive inquiry into the movement, generally expanding on themes and concepts noted above. The first section, which comprises a little over half of the book, defines New Age and gives a brief history of the term. The second section explains why the movement functions as a religious expression of modernity. In the third section, Heelas offers his evaluation of the effectiveness of the teaching practices of the New Age and offers some predictions for the future of the movement.

Heelas argues that far from being an unorganized "mish-mash" of ideas (p. 2), the New Age movement has a coherent ideology. He states that typically the term New Age is used to "convey the idea that a significantly better way of life is dawning" (p. 15). Heelas defines New Age participants as "those who maintain that inner spirituality—embedded within the self and the natural order as a whole—serves as the key to moving from all that is wrong with life to all that is right" (p. 16). Though he grants that the New Age takes a variety of forms, he maintains that the one idea held in common is "the self itself is sacred" (p. 2). Each manifestation of the New Age offers a method for the individual to "make contact with the spirituality that lies within" in order for that individual to change whatever is wrong in his or her life (p. 2). According to Heelas, a natural outgrowth of the New Age concept of the sacred self is the self as authority and source of guidance (pp. 21–24).

This concept of "self-spirituality" yields three practical religious components: explanations for why life is not as it should be, accounts of what it means to find perfection, and processes for achieving salvation (p. 18). The first component explains that society has "brainwashed"

each soul into established patterns that corrupt its most basic spiritual identity; these corrupting patterns establish what is called the ego (p. 18). The second features the assertion of the divine essence of the individual and the call for adherents to understand that "to experience the self is to experience God" (p. 19). The third component stresses that adherents must rid the soul of ego so the true self may be liberated (p. 20). Heelas also cites five other characteristics of the self-spirituality doctrines of the New Age: internalized spirituality, detraditionalized religious activities, individual autonomy, experiential pursuit of spiritual insight, and the belief in universal truths.

Although each form of New Age has the unifying concept of self-spirituality, Heelas does not regard the New Age as a new religious movement (NRM), which he defines as an organized entity that is centrally administered (p. 16). Because the New Age in its many forms—communities, networks, camps, workshops, gatherings, businesses, schools, healers, and individuals pursuing spiritual paths—is not centrally connected and administered, Heelas does not consider the movement to be a NRM. The use of the term "movement" in conjunction with "New Age" is puzzling, especially since the author states that the New Age is not a NRM; this may cause some confusion for readers. Readers can only hazard a guess as to how he would classify individual New Age groups, but following his brief description of NRMs, one can presume that to the degree they are organized they would be included in that category.

Heelas notes that New Age philosophies are evident in commercials, business seminars, and educational techniques, and therefore the boundaries of New Age are blurry. He is not able to make the lines clearer, since the concept of self-spirituality has crept into many established religious institutions, healing practices, and commercial enterprises, thus broadening the range of the movement's ideological reach while at the same time preventing its clear isolation as a single institution. In fact, it appears that New Age themes are quite evident throughout modern culture (p. 128). Heelas claims that though the movement began with wealthy elites, it is "no longer in the hands of the elite; and it is no longer so much a matter of 'cults' as it is of 'culture'" (p. 128). Although it appears that few people pursue New Age religion full-time, there are many part-time participants (p. 119).

After describing the movement in the first section, Heelas uses the second section to explain why the New Age has such an appeal to modernity. Although the movement appears to run counter to many ideals of modernity such as faith in progress and consumer culture, and corporate management of individual activities (p. 135), Heelas maintains that many of the ideals of the New Age are very much a part of modernity. He specifically notes the following New Age beliefs as harmonizing with the virtues of modernity: progressive notions of

perfectibility, "constructivistic" tendencies (meaning that things can be changed), and faith in training programs that engage the participant in effecting change (p. 169). He makes a good case for the New Age being a distinctly modern religious phenomena, but he does not sufficiently support his contention that "currently the New Age is not post-modern" (p. 216). It would be helpful if Heelas expanded upon this statement, especially since he did such good work in relating the New Age to modernity in the context of its contradictions.

The author maintains that, overall, the uncertainties of modernity lead to individuals feeling unsure of their identities, and this is the great appeal of the New Age. These individuals are attracted to New Age doctrines in order to resolve their sense of self. Many of these individuals have "lost faith in conventional remedies" and are therefore searching for alternatives to mainstream solutions. According to Heelas, the "appeal of the New Age has to do with the culturally stimulated interest in the self, its values, capacities and problems. . . . [D]etraditionalized spirituality is well-suited for the individual" (p. 173).

In the last section of the book, Heelas deals with the effectiveness of New Age teaching practices and offers his predictions for the future of the movement. Since New Age practices stress the need for a conversion from the ego to the knowledge of the self, Heelas tackles the difficult subject of how to measure the success of such changes. He acknowledges that these conversions are hard to measure or quantify, since some conversions last for a short period of time, and some instigate major lifetime changes. In addition, there is the problem of quantifying conversions due to the diversity of New Age institutions and agencies, including various workshops, advertising, communes, teaching practices, self-help books, and therapy seminars. The author chooses to focus on a specific group, the Programmes group of companies, and uses surveys to measure in some quantifiable way conversion to New Age (p. 183). While his survey field may be somewhat restricted, his findings, which focus on why changes occur in the lives of workshop participants, may serve as a helpful base for further inquiries.

Heelas notes three causes that participants cite as sources for changes resulting from workshop participation: (1) self-spirituality is true (when one loses the ego, one finds the self); (2) "cultural plausibility" (individuals are looking for something more, and they find it in the workshop); and (3) individuals are predisposed to make a rational choice to change for the better, and the workshop gives them tools for this change. He also cites three sources which observers note as sources for resultant changes: (1) individuals have a spiritual experience (the participant makes sense of an unusual experience by attributing it to a spiritual nature); (2) socialization (the individual feels pressure from other participants who appear to be experiencing change to have the same experience); and (3) brainwashing (although this is a charge made by some outside

groups, the author feels there is little evidence to support the accusation). Although he qualifies his citation of brainwashing, it is regrettable that Heelas even notes this largely debunked concept as a legitimate cause for changes in workshop participants.

Heelas saves his predictions for the last chapter of the book. In his estimation, the "New Age can make a positive difference in everyday life," improve the quality of life for individuals, and succeed in "communicating and fueling a commitment to values" (p. 207). What these values are remains ambiguous, however, and we are left to surmise that they are in some manner constellated around the self-spirituality notion. Heelas does rightly call attention to this very challenge by noting that focus on the individual may be a potential weakness for the movement. As he notes: "The great challenge for the future . . . is for the New Age to find ways of ensuring that it minimizes the trivialized and self-indulgent whilst at the same time not becoming too traditionalized or hierarchically authoritative" (p. 214).

The author reveals a comprehensive knowledge of New Age religion. Although his personal history in the movement may lead some to conclude that the text is too much of an insider's perspective, I do not believe Heelas' background in the movement compromises his work in any noticeable ways. In fact, I found Heelas' comments on his experiences in the movement to be refreshing in their candor. He has certainly done his research, as shown by his fieldwork, contacts in the movement, and exhaustive references, and he has given us a good, if still only provisional, theory on the relationship of the movement to the culture of its origin. In short, he accomplishes his aim of identifying key themes and issues in the New Age movement and of relating the movement as a whole to the culture of modernity. For this reason *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* is an important contribution to the still developing field of New Age studies.

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