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Catherine Wessinger

Co-General Editor

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Is the Canon on Jonestown Closed?

Rebecca Moore

The popular understanding of what happened in Jonestown, Guyana on 18 November 1978 has not changed significantly in two decades. The basic details remain the same: a group of Peoples Temple members assassinated a U.S. Congressman and members of the media on a remote jungle airstrip, and more than 900 followers of a charismatic leader named Jim Jones died in a mass murder/suicide ritual. These facts make up the essential canon of Jonestown.[1]

Certainly, news coverage in 1998 of the twentieth anniversary of the deaths did little to alter, question, or update the popular version of events. The attempt by a group of scholars to secure the release of secret government documents about Peoples Temple was one of the few notable exceptions to newspaper and TV reports, which, while extensive, seem almost exclusively drawn from archives. Astonishingly or not, two decades of scholarly reflection upon the events of that day seemed to have had little impact on conventional wisdom about Jonestown or Peoples Temple. In effect the canon concerning Jonestown is closed. A publicly-accepted history of Jonestown exists which appears almost unalterable in its persistence. This poses a serious problem for historians and other researchers who may not consider the canon quite as fixed as the public does and who are, indeed, still in the process of recovering and writing the historical record.

The loss of institutional memory about Peoples Temple complicates the process of recovery and, thus, of establishing a canon. The death of Dr. Chris Hatcher in February 1999 poses a tremendous loss for those studying Jonestown. Then-San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein appointed Hatcher to head the crisis intervention team that dealt with the deaths in Jonestown and the assassinations of Mayor George Moscone and Harvey Milk. In the twenty years following his appointment, Hatcher counseled Temple members who returned from Guyana and the relatives of Jonestown victims, wrote articles on the topic, and regularly participated in the yearly service held in memory of the people who died in Jonestown.[2] Others with personal knowledge about Peoples Temple who have also died in the past two decades include: Jones'

personal physician Dr. Carlton Goodlett; Temple lawyer Charles Garry; U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission in Guyana Richard Dwyer; Temple member Paula Adams and Guyana's ambassador to the U.S. Laurence Mann; two prime ministers of Guyana, Forbes Burnham and Cheddi Jagan; and Al and Jeannie Mills, who founded the Human Freedom Center and helped start the Concerned Relatives. This list, of course, excludes those who could tell us best about life in Jonestown, the 913 who died there, although their views live on to a certain extent in letters, journals, and notes.

Further complicating the historical recovery process is the loss of yet another type of institutional memory: government documents. A Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request filed by myself and Fielding M. McGehee III with the Social Security Administration in 1998 to obtain SSA records of recipients living in Jonestown in November 1978 revealed that the agency had destroyed those papers. Responding to a still-pending FOIA request with the Federal Communications Commission for records of the agency's investigation of Temple radio communications, a caseworker warned that those items may no longer exist.[3] FOIA workers at the Federal Bureau of Investigation were puzzled when we referred to the agency's "Guyana Index" to the Temple's own records gathered at Jonestown: they were unfamiliar with this guide, which a previous generation of workers had developed in 1979 to assist the FBI in processing FOIA requests.[4]

In the meantime, research on Peoples Temple has continued in the ten years since Thomas Robbins evaluated the literature in 1989, although at a much-reduced level.[5] While the public and the news media tend to see alternative religions as self-contained units oblivious to external pressures, a number of writers began to evaluate the impact that government, apostate groups, and news media had on Peoples Temple. The government handling of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas in 1993 graphically demonstrated the role that hostile and powerful opponents of religious groups may play. These developments influenced academic evaluations of Peoples Temple and revised scholarly considerations of Jonestown.

The question of canon—that is, whether we have a complete accounting as well as an accepted historical narrative—emerged as I attempted to survey Peoples Temple literature of the past decade, picking up where Robbins left off in 1989. My examination indicates that a wide gap exists between popular literature and scholarly analyses. Standard accounts continue to promote the deranged leader/brainwashed follower paradigm and to shape the prevailing understanding of Jonestown. Moreover, conflicting accounts of what happened in the first weeks after the tragedy, coupled with the failure of federal agencies to release classified information on the organization, gave rise to a body of

conspiracy theories which provides alternatives to both popular and scholarly explanations of what happened.

A popular canon thus appears to dominate common knowledge of Peoples Temple and Jonestown. This canon seems impervious to critique either by scholarly analysts or conspiracy theorists. Its strength rests on the lack of consensus among its critics. This paper shows just how wide the disagreements are within and between these two groups of challengers. The general understanding of Peoples Temple that was more or less fixed within a year of the deaths in Jonestown therefore comprises the canon on Jonestown today. Whether or not this canon is complete or in need of revision is another question.

THE POPULAR CANON

News coverage at the twentieth anniversary clearly presented the current canon of Jonestown. Television news re-ran video and photographs of the death scene as well as of Congressman Leo Ryan's visit to Jonestown on 17 and 18 November 1978. The poison vat and pictures of bodies served as icons of the danger of cults. News stories in California focused on first-person accounts, such as several by Tim Reiterman, who had accompanied Ryan to Jonestown, and John Jacobs, who together with Reiterman wrote *Raven*.[6] The *San Francisco Examiner* ran a three-part series, the first of which asked what we have learned.[7] An article in the 13 November 1998 *San Francisco Chronicle* did attempt to articulate the present divide between cult "apologists" and "alarmists," quoting J. Gordon Melton and Margaret Singer.[8] The *Chronicle* and the website for Cable News Network (CNN) reported on efforts to declassify government papers on Jonestown.[9] But CNN also ran photos of corpses and the poison vat, and claimed that "some were shot to death by the armed guards ringing the camp." The fact is, only two people were shot to death in Jonestown (as opposed to five at the Port Kaituma airstrip), according to Guyana's assistant Police Commissioner for Crime.

ABC's *20/20* aired an hour-long program with Jim Jones' sons Stephan and Jim Jones, Jr., which seemed to humanize the people who died and not to demonize them. And yet, the program ended on an ominous note, when Jackie Speier, Ryan's aide who was wounded at the Port Kaituma airstrip, said, "No one should ever be so arrogant as to think that it can't happen to them. We're all susceptible on one level or another."[10] Barbara Walters followed Speier's comments by drawing parallels between Jonestown and the deaths of the Branch Davidians and members of Heaven's Gate, saying it was ironic that they were all looking for a better, more peaceful world. Diane Sawyer summed up by noting that, "It's what makes cult activity so pernicious—that you're really

preying on people's best instincts, their desire for spirituality and for community. And I guess it leaves all of us just fearing, but knowing, that some day it will probably happen again."[11]

Deborah Layton's account of her experiences in Peoples Temple, *Seductive Poison*, received extensive coverage because its publication coincided with the twentieth anniversary.[12] Layton presented her experiences and memories of twenty years earlier, admitting in a prefatory note that all of her conversations with Jim Jones in the book were re-created from memory and "from hours of tape recordings my brother, Dr. Thomas N. Layton, made of me immediately after my escape [in May 1978]." In other words, *Seductive Poison* is based on much of the same source material as Thomas Layton's 1981 book *In My Father's House.*[13] The foreword by Charles Krause, a reporter who accompanied Ryan to Jonestown and who wrote of his experiences in *Guyana Massacre: The Eyewitness Account*, also failed to incorporate any new insights gained since 1978, as he repeated what he wrote twenty years earlier.[14]

Deborah Layton's book both reveals and disappoints. She confirms Mary McCormick Maaga's assertion that women essentially ran and operated Peoples Temple, especially its financial management (see below). Whereas Maaga concludes that Jones *lost* power in the move to Jonestown, though, Layton claims that he *gained* more power and authority than when the Temple was in San Francisco.

Most disappointing is Layton's failure to discuss adequately her involvement with the Concerned Relatives, an apostate group actively organized against Jones. Layton devotes only eighteen pages in a 305-page book to her contacts with the Concerned Relatives and with Leo Ryan. The book could have offered the first insider account of this apostate group and provided a truly original and valuable contribution to our understanding of Peoples Temple and its opponents, but Layton squanders the opportunity.

Other popular accounts have appeared since 1989 which reflect the canon about Jonestown established shortly after November 1978. James Boyle's book *Killer Cults*, published by St. Martin's Press True Crime Library, follows a chapter on Charles Manson with one on Jim Jones.[15] "Dad Knows Best" clearly derives from narratives published within a few years and, in some cases, a few weeks of 18 November 1978.[16] Aside from historical inaccuracies, Boyle's article takes a flamboyant and titillating tone. For example: "Jonestown was in fact a plantation ruled by Jones and his white aides, with the black majority in the field all day under tropical heat, carefully supervised by guards who took notes of attitudes and comments."[17] It took one hundred guards whose "thuglike members wielded power like a banana-republic goon squad" to control the remaining drugged and dispirited population.

Robert Endleman also makes the link between Charles Manson and Jim Jones—one noted as early as 1978—in *Jonestown and the Manson*

Family: Race, Sexuality and Collective Madness.[18] Endleman says that *The Cult That Died*, by George Klineman (1980) and *Our Father Who Art In Hell*, by James Reston, Jr. (1981) were his primary sources.[19] The author really focuses on Jones and Manson, rather than on the dynamics of the groups. He occasionally makes an astute observation, such as "[e]ach of these movements tapped into the great and still unresolved American dilemma of race."[20] In fact, the title suggests an interesting discussion of sexuality and race in these two movements. Unfortunately, the book proves to be repetitive and derivative.[21]

Perhaps the best indicator of the canon of Jonestown comes from *Britannica.com*, the online edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The entry for Jonestown is brief enough to present in its entirety:

> **Jonestown** former site of the People's [sic] Temple commune in northwestern Guyana, near the Venezuelan border. A religious cult group, the commune ended in 1978 when the cult's founder and leader, Jim Jones, initiated a mass suicide in which 913 people died. [Punctuation, spelling, and typography as in original.][22]

A much longer entry appears under "Jones, Jim," which gives more details about the history of Peoples Temple and the events of 18 November 1978. A few brief passages reveal the tone and tenor of the article:

> [Jones, Jim,] American cult leader who promised his followers a utopia in the jungles of South America after proclaiming himself messiah of the People's [sic] Temple, a San Francisco-based evangelist group. He ultimately led his followers into a mass suicide, which came to be known as the Jonestown Massacre (Nov. 18, 1978).

The paragraph above appears as the initial reference within *Britannica.com* itself (as opposed to other websites) under the search heading "People's [sic] Temple." By clicking on "Jones" one accesses the complete article. A few excerpts follow.

> As ruler of the sect, Jones confiscated passports and millions of dollars and manipulated his followers with threats of blackmail, beatings, and probably death. He also staged bizarre rehearsals for a ritual mass suicide.

> On November 18, [Jones] commanded his followers to drink cyanide-adulterated punch, an order that the vast majority of them passively and inexplicably obeyed. [Punctuation and spelling as in original.][23]

One sees little evidence of scholarly language, let alone scholarly distance, concerning a contemporary new religious movement. Yet the information *Britannica.com* presents on Jim Jones and Peoples Temple succinctly sums up how most people view them.[24] Most importantly, the

Encyclopaedia Britannica articles provide the foundation for what school children will read and think about Peoples Temple in particular, and about alternative religions or "doomsday cults" in general.[25]

John R. Hall's essay "Peoples Temple," which appears in the college textbook, *America's Alternative Religions*, provides a salutary antidote to the articles on *Britannica.com*.[26] I include it in the popular canon simply because it is likely to have a wider audience than most scholarly writings on Peoples Temple. As in his monograph *Gone from the Promised Land*, Hall's concern here is with what cultural significance Peoples Temple and Jonestown have for American life. In this essay for students, he identifies race, secularism, left-liberal politics, and social ethics as the significant intersection between Peoples Temple and American cultural issues. He also finds historical parallels between Peoples Temple and the Puritans and Mormons—groups which experienced conflict with the established order and migrated as a result. Hall describes the deaths in Jonestown as murders and mass suicides, arguing that the majority of people died more or less willingly, although he does admit that "the question will always be open to debate." He concludes by speculating on the United States government's role either in failing to prevent the deaths or in propelling them, and observes that opening government files might lead to a reassessment of the history of Peoples Temple.

Hall has confidence that Jonestown scholarship has replaced popular myths about Peoples Temple. For example, he believes that while Congressman Ryan, the Concerned Relatives and journalists were once considered heroes, it is clear now "that their own actions were consequential in affecting the course of events."[27] I am not as sanguine about the triumph of scholarship—or even his conclusions about popular perceptions of Ryan and the media—given the nature of the literature reviewed for this paper.

THE SCHOLARLY CRITIQUE: THE THIRD WAVE OF JONESTOWN RESEARCH

Thomas Robbins identified a first wave of Jonestown literature as comprising a short monograph, a reader, and "a handful of articles dealing specifically with the Peoples Temple and its spectacular holocaust."[28] The second wave he discussed included *Salvation and Suicide* by David Chidester and *Gone from the Promised Land* by John R. Hall.[29]

Two main trends have emerged in research concerning Peoples Temple since Robbins wrote his review. The first is a tendency toward comparative studies which look at the Temple in light of apocalyptic, millennial, or suicidal religious groups such as the Branch Davidians, Aum Shinrikyo, and the Solar Temple. The second is a tendency to examine marginalized groups—specifically women and African

Americans—ignored in the first and second waves of Jonestown studies. I would therefore like to describe a third wave of comparative and ethnic-gender studies about Peoples Temple and Jonestown which extends and revises the existing scholarly challenge to the popular canon.

Comparative Studies

The tragic end of the Branch Davidians near Waco, Texas on 19 April 1993 fueled a number of comparative studies between the group and Peoples Temple, as well as comparisons among a number of different groups which used violence or ended violently. In *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem*, Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony contrast the Branch Davidians with Peoples Temple. They say that the Davidians responded to external provocation, "whereas at Jonestown, the mere visitation of an unarmed congressperson and his party, who were about to return to the United States with a handful of voluntary defectors, produced a murderous assault on the visitors followed by an orgy of murder-suicide among more than 900 persons."[30] In an essay for Stuart Wright's book *Armageddon at Waco*, Robbins and Anthony identify two factors which may make a religious group prone to violence: exogenous (external) and endogenous (internal).[31] They claim that primarily endogenous factors within Peoples Temple led to its dramatic and violent end.[32] In other articles Robbins reiterates his argument that Peoples Temple overreacted to a minor provocation.[33]

The view that primarily endogenous factors influenced the actions of members of Peoples Temple ignores the existence of a bitter conflict between Peoples Temple and its enemies. Leo Ryan's visit was not the beginning but rather the culmination of this battle.[34] As John Hall and Philip Schuyler write in an essay for David Bromley's book *The Politics of Religious Apostasy*, leadership in Jonestown unleashed the murders and suicides "in response to a two-year struggle against Peoples Temple mounted by its cultural opponents, a group that called themselves the Concerned Relatives."[35] And later in the same essay: "Given the targets, the attack itself has to be understood as an extreme escalation of an intense conflict between the Concerned Relatives and Peoples Temple."[36]

In *Apocalypse Observed*, Hall, Schuyler, and Sylvaine Trinh continue to develop the arguments begun in Hall and Schuyler's essay by presenting a sociohistorical model based on a thesis of apocalyptic religious conflict to explain extreme religious violence.[37] Extreme collective religious violence is the product of the interaction between religious movements and opponents in the outside world, they assert. The case studies they examine—Peoples Temple, Branch Davidians, Aum Shinrikyo, Solar Temple, and Heaven's Gate—show that collective violence does not arise solely on the basis of internal dynamics. On the

contrary, apocalyptic episodes must be viewed in light of the established social orders in which they arise. When external conflict seems absent (as in the cases of Heaven's Gate and Solar Temple), alternative apocalyptic "scripts" come into play. Nevertheless, even the "mystical apocalypse of deathly transcendence" (the script for Heaven's Gate and Solar Temple) as opposed to the "warring apocalypse of religious conflict" (the script for Peoples Temple, Branch Davidians, and Aum Shinrikyo) cannot be seen apart from their cultural contexts.

In their analysis of Jonestown, the authors claim that internal features serve as necessary preconditions to violence, but they are insufficient alone to trigger large scale violence. Additional causal factors are needed, such as large-scale cultural opponents, a media biased against "cults," and the exercise of state authority.[38] This thesis follows Hall's argument in *Gone from the Promised Land* that the alliance of cultural opponents, especially apostates, the media, and the government, led inexorably to the deaths in Jonestown. The Jonestown myth, the authors say in this new book, depends on the belief that the carnage was solely a consequence of the acts of Jim Jones and his accomplices. Shattering that myth, the authors state that:

> [I]t seems incontrovertible that the expedition of Congressman Ryan, the Concerned Relatives and journalists, and especially the departure of sixteen Jonestown residents, was the precipitating factor in the murderous attack. As a specific event, the mass suicide must be seen as a consequence of the expedition.[39]

While Hall, Schuyler, and Trinh use the category of "apocalypse" to ground their analytical model, Catherine Wessinger uses the category of "millennialism" in her comparative study of Peoples Temple and other religious groups that have used violence. *How the Millennium Comes Violently* seems to take a middle position between Robbins and Anthony, and Hall, Schuyler, and Trinh.[40] The book states that both internal and external pressures push "fragile millennial groups" over the edge. Wessinger differentiates between fragile millennial groups, which include Peoples Temple, Aum Shinrikyo, and Heaven's Gate, and assaulted millennial groups, which include the Branch Davidians. Fragile groups initiate violence in the face of the potential loss of their millennial goals or in the face of perceived attacks, while assaulted groups may respond with violence to actual physical invasions.

Wessinger's methodology proves useful in identifying similarities and differences between various movements and their ideologies. For example, she places Peoples Temple, Aum Shinrikyo, the Branch Davidians and the Montana Freemen in the category of catastrophic millennialist groups because they all have an inherently dualistic worldview in which the world serves as a battleground between good and evil. Wessinger goes further, however, and pairs Peoples Temple

and Aum Shinrikyo as fragile millennial groups because they turned to the use of violence in order to preserve their millennial goals. The Branch Davidians, on the other hand, never despaired of reaching their goals. On the contrary, the actions of law enforcement confirmed their expectations.

Wessinger's model may overstate differences and obscure similarities, however. I wonder about pairing Peoples Temple with Aum Shinrikyo. It seems to me that in some respects Aum Shinrikyo belongs with the Freemen and Christian Identity rather than with Peoples Temple because those groups are arming themselves to resist government oppression and to promote revolution (or the millennium). In other words, their violence is directed outward. Except for the brief outburst against Congressman Ryan and his party, Peoples Temple's violence was always internally directed. It had no arsenal, no automatic weapons, no sarin gas, no bunkers.

Three additional books provide a comparative analysis of Peoples Temple. Two Italian scholars examine the politics of Peoples Temple in separate books. Massimo Introvigne's comparison of Jonestown, the Branch Davidians, and the Solar Temple shows that the Temple's affiliation with a mainline church, coupled with its interest in Marxism, make it atypical of "cults."[41] This means that using Jonestown as the paradigm of cult excess is somewhat paradoxical. Enrico Pozzi, a political and military sociologist, obtained a number of FOIA documents for his study of the Temple in order to see if its peculiar brand of Marxism might have played a role in the formation of its ideology of revolutionary suicide.[42] Finally, David Bromley and J. Gordon Melton have a book on *Dramatic Confrontations* due out in 2001 that should contribute to the trend in comparative studies.[43]

Ethnic and Gender Studies

In addition to making comparative studies of Peoples Temple, researchers are beginning to explore the roles of women and African Americans in Peoples Temple. With some prescience, Archie Smith wrote in 1978, before Jonestown, that "[w]ith few exceptions, white scholars of the 'New Religious Consciousness' have failed, so far, to perceive racism as a significant factor worthy of their attention in the study of the new religious movements."[44] This held true for almost twenty years concerning Peoples Temple, with the exceptions of Smith, Vincent Harding, and C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya.[45] Lincoln and Mamiya identified Peoples Temple as a "political religion" but seemed to take umbrage that the media identified Peoples Temple as a black phenomenon in spite of its white leadership. That umbrage has dissipated with time as scholars have finally begun to locate Peoples Temple within the context of black religion. One can see this in Timothy

Miller's textbook, where he places Peoples Temple alongside the Nation of Islam, Santería, Voudou, and Father Divine's Peace Mission.[46]

Two articles on African American involvement in Peoples Temple appeared in 1998 on the website I maintain for Jonestown research: <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~remoore/jonestown>. In the first, Archie Smith addresses the criticism of the black church implicit in the defection of African Americans to Peoples Temple.[47] At the same time, however, modern secularism—which trivializes the religious impulse—dominated the ideology of Temple leaders, which led to a false consciousness that blinded members to the racism, sexism, and ageism at work in Peoples Temple. Smith finds this ironic, given the fact that people believed they had found a community of freedom and equality. Part of the problem, though, came from what Smith calls "audience corruption," the process by which both the group leader and the followers construct a social reality together. "Jones could not have orchestrated the idea of his deification without the support of his followers. Jones, too, was a victim of his ego deification process."[48]

Smith devotes the second half of his article to discussing the alternative to secularism, which he identifies as "relationality," and the implications his analysis has for the black church. "Relationality is a way of speaking about the interdependent, yet dialectical and constituent character of Black communal life as a whole," he writes.[49] Blacks joined Peoples Temple as an alternative to the insularity they experienced in black church worship. But lacking in the relational and self-critical dimensions, they were unable to discern Jones' false claims. Smith concludes by saying that Jonestown is not an anomaly but rather a product of the ethos of our time, "an ethos that tends to repress and trivialize the essentially religious impulse."[50] That ethos has not changed much in the last twenty years.

The second article published in 1998 concerning African Americans in Peoples Temple came from Mary Sawyer, who has been studying the black church in the Temple for several years.[51] She briefly examines the failure of early scholarly and journalistic reports to address the significant African American composition of the movement. She argues that the black majority membership of Peoples Temple retained traditional Christian beliefs: faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, confidence in God's liberative activities in history, and support for an activist social gospel. "It was this public modeling of 'church' that gained so much support for the Temple from government officials, church officials, the black press, and individuals like myself."[52] "They knew," she writes, "for all of their leader's deceit and heresy, that Jim Jones spoke a truth, and that truth was that America's 'self-evident' principles were not evident in practice."[53]

While Smith and Sawyer focus on the black church within Peoples Temple, Mary McCormick Maaga examines the role of women,

particularly the white leadership group.[54] In her book, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown*, she deconstructs traditional theoretical frameworks which describe women in new religious movements and concludes that "what one 'knows' about Peoples Temple and what happened at Jonestown on 18 November 1978 has more to do with the ideological schema being used by sociologists than with the lived experience of the people who were actually there."[55] She writes of the "triple erasure" of women in particular, due to their allegedly being 1) brainwashed cultists, 2) sexually-exploited women, and 3) suicide victims, and challenges the idea that Jim Jones held all the power in the movement. On the contrary, she argues, once the group moved to Guyana, power shifted from Jones to the leadership group, comprised predominantly of women, and loyalty was transferred from Jones to the Jonestown community. Women received the utilitarian benefits of achieving status, serving as gatekeepers, and influencing policy decisions by having sex with Jones. Women had more power in Peoples Temple than their gender, experience, or training would have allowed outside the movement.

In her study of the role of African Americans in the group, Maaga says that their status did not match that of white females. Although blacks did achieve some parity in the Indiana and California years of the Temple, the leadership group in Guyana was overwhelmingly white. The black rank and file actually returned to the subordinate position it held in American society. Nonetheless, blacks surpassed whites in their loyalty and commitment, Maaga argues, as evidenced by the fact that the high-profile apostates were for the most part white, as was the group which defected with Leo Ryan on 18 November 1978.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of Maaga's study is her re-working of Ernst Troelstch's church-sect-cult typology. She identifies "three groups in one:" an urban black church within Peoples Temple; a small white sect which migrated from Indianapolis to California in the 1960s; and a cult movement of young, predominantly white political idealists.[56] Peoples Temple was not just one entity, but rather several which varied in its relatively lengthy history. This identification may help resolve some of the problems scholars have in classifying Peoples Temple.

The fact that Maaga's work is the only book-length monograph on Peoples Temple to emerge from the United States in the third wave of scholarship seems to indicate that, even for scholars, the canon may be closed. Several areas of research still need investigation, however. An intensive study of African Americans' participation and involvement in the organization is critically needed, as are comparative studies of Peoples Temple with other African American religious groups, both Christian and alternative. Lincoln and Mamiya, and Reiterman and Jacobs briefly examine the connections between Jim Jones and Father Divine, but much more work remains to be done.

In addition, a wealth of unexamined materials might provide new perspectives on life inside Peoples Temple and Jonestown. The California Historical Society has thousands of pages, as does the FBI. Clearly researchers ought to examine these.[57] In fact, a complete analysis of the role of various governmental agencies—local, state, federal—also would contribute to our understanding of the events at Jonestown. In the absence of such an analysis, a body of conspiracy theories has arisen to challenge the prevailing canon.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Within weeks of Jonestown, skeptics questioned official accounts of what had happened. The varying number of bodies proved most suspicious: first 400, then 650, and then within a few days, 900. The arrangement of the bodies also seemed odd: is this how people dying of cyanide poisoning would actually look? Disbelief that people would voluntarily kill themselves also fueled suspicions that things were not as they appeared. The fact that so many African Americans had died raised questions as well. What conspiracy literature attempts to resolve are the very real inconsistencies that exist in the available narratives.

The first book-length exposé of the government conspiracy to conduct mind control experiments on black Americans came out in 1988. In *Was Jonestown a CIA Medical Experiment?* Michael Meiers claims that a Nazi-CIA axis of scientists—including Dr. Laurence Layton, the father of both Temple member Larry Layton who was convicted of conspiracy to murder a congressman and of Deborah Layton who persuaded Congressman Ryan to go to Guyana—tested drugs in Jonestown as part of the CIA's MK-ULTRA program.[58] While Jim Jones pretended to be a communist, he was actually a registered Republican, "whose ultra-conservative, right-wing politics were reflective of the Ku Klux Klan or the Nazi Party and are best evidenced by the fascist form of his Peoples Temple."[59] Meiers links the Peoples Temple experiment to the Symbionese Liberation Army, the assassinations of George Moscone and Harvey Milk, the outbreak of the AIDS virus in the United States, and of course former Nazis from Germany who control the CIA.[60] Meiers further contends that Jones and his leadership group escaped, and "[t]he Reverend Jim Jones is alive, wealthy, secure and conceivably sipping pina [sic] coladas on the veranda as he reads this first published account of his escape from the carnage he created in Jonestown."[61]

If one wanted to discredit conspiracy theories, Meiers' book would do it. There are factual inaccuracies, wild leaps to conclusions, and gratuitous speculations. It is sparsely footnoted, with even a few notes saying "Pending," indicating that the citation had not yet been located or verified. But Meiers attempts to address several legitimate questions

with his book, particularly the reason for the tremendous supply of psychotropic drugs found in Jonestown. Jones' strange political connections, his trips to Brazil, and his comments about Richard Dwyer, the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission to Guyana, on the death tape all serve as grist for the conspiracy mill.

Against Meiers, Nathan Landau asserts in the book *Heavenly Deceptor* that Jonestown was a left-wing conspiracy which sought to bring down the United States by establishing a base of operations in Guyana.[62] Jim Jones planned to escape using the millions of dollars he had stashed in various banks in the Caribbean and in Europe. Jones' escape plan, called "The Last Stand" according to Landau, was foiled by Teri Buford as well as by his circle of guards.[63] Buford double-crossed Jones by involving Mark Lane in the plan to spend the money, since she knew the secret bank account numbers. The guards double-crossed Jones by killing him at the end and escaping.

Heavenly Deceptor contains almost all the elements required for a decent conspiracy theory today: sex, drugs, money, Nazis, torture, the John F. Kennedy assassination, the Martin Luther King, Jr. assassination, Ayatollah Khomeini and the PLO, and Eva Braun.[64] While the book is ultimately incoherent, it does raise the question of what Jones planned to do with all of the money hidden away and why it was not used to improve conditions in Jonestown. It also poses the race question of why a number of people in the white leadership group escaped at the last minute.[65] Landau sees the deaths of African Americans as evidence of a racist, perhaps even Nazi, attempt to create a concentration camp in which people were worked to death rather than exterminated.

While Jeff Brailey's self-published account of his experience with the evacuation of the bodies of the Jonestown dead does not fall into the category of conspiracy literature, *The Ghosts of November* is sure to fuel conspiracy theories.[66] Brailey, a Licensed Practical Nurse, was a U.S. Army Master Sergeant with the 601st Medical Company stationed in Panama which was assigned to participate in the bodylift after 18 November 1978. He derives his account of life in Jonestown primarily from Deborah Layton [Blakey]'s 1978 affidavit which warned of the potential for suicide, but his most interesting anecdotes come from his personal experiences of being stationed in Matthews Ridge, Guyana the week after the deaths.[67] He recalls "heading toward a place with more dead human bodies scattered about than any other place I had ever been including Vietnam."[68] Brailey claims that he saw Jim Jones lying dead on the steps of his cabin, not in the pavilion, with his arms in a different position from that of the famous photograph. He also says that a lieutenant from the Guyana Defense Force showed him a cabin in Jonestown with dead Guyanese citizens who had been shot. Brailey returned from his first visit to Jonestown on 20 November in a helicopter with a man claiming to work for the U.S. Embassy in Georgetown. The

official insisted that Brailey shoot anyone who attempted to grab the large crate of papers he had gathered over the previous twenty-four hours. Brailey concludes that the man was a CIA "spook," or operative.[69]

Brailey attempts to clear up the mystery of the changing body count with an explanation which may or may not satisfy conspiracy theorists. He says that bodies had fallen—from youngest and smallest to oldest and most able-bodied—on top of each other in a depression around the pavilion. In his words, they fell in an "inverted pyramid."[70] He provides some useful information about the identification process which might help researchers determine family groupings. He also notes that a Criminal Investigation Division of the Army in Panama looked into charges of theft from Jonestown. This might prove another avenue for research: military investigations and after-action reports that might allay conspiracy talk by accounting for discrepancies that appeared in news coverage of the initial chaos.

Three conspiracy sources take the position that the CIA wanted to disrupt Jonestown because it was a leftist, interracial, political group. A cover story in *Freedom*, the magazine of the Church of Scientology, claims that the CIA was bent on destroying both Peoples Temple and Leo Ryan, who had sponsored legislation to curb CIA abuses.[71] Quoting former Green Beret Charles Huff, the article claims that people in Jonestown did not die willingly. "We saw *many* bullet wounds as well as wounds from crossbow bolts," he said, adding that adults who had not been shot were injected.[72] Dr. Leslie Mootoo, chief medical examiner for Guyana in 1978, also reiterated his belief—which he first voiced in 1978—that the majority of people in Jonestown had been murdered, saying that 187 bodies showed signs of injections. Mootoo and his staff did not complete examinations on all of the dead.

The article also states that, "One source told *Freedom* the actual killers had been planted in the Peoples Temple."[73] That source, unidentified in the article, undoubtedly is Laurie Efrein Kahalas, a Peoples Temple loyalist who in 1998 published *Snake Dance*, her own version of events, and who maintains a website at <http://www.jonestown.com>.[74] She writes that the CIA had a contingency plan to exterminate the community. CIA sharpshooters, not Temple members, conducted a professional hit on Leo Ryan and the media in order to eliminate the congressman and to discredit Jim Jones. The community then had little choice but to take their own lives, she argues, quoting Jones from the final tape: "We have no choice now. Either we do it or they do it."[75] Kahalas presents the Peoples Temple perspective on events prior to 18 November 1978 faithfully, if uncritically. She goes further, however, and labels any account at variance with her own as "disinformation." Nevertheless, her book is a valuable look at what Peoples Temple members thought about a major and on-going child custody battle, about the Concerned Relatives, and about Ryan's visit. Moreover, Kahalas raises

interesting questions about the hit squad which assassinated Ryan and the others: where is NBC's raw, unedited footage of the event, she wonders.

The third and most credible example of leftist conspiracy literature comes from Jim Hougan, a freelance writer and novelist who has documented and footnoted his research investigating alleged connections between Jim Jones and the CIA.[76] Hougan makes a compelling argument for tying Jones to Dan Mitrione, a CIA agent murdered by Uruguay's Tupamaros in 1970.[77] He looks closely at Jones' mysterious years in South America between 1960 and 1963, including his trip to Cuba and a trip to Guyana when he supposedly was in Hawaii.[78] Hougan's most important contribution is his emphasis of the fact that it was the CIA that first described the deaths in Jonestown as mass suicide.[79] In other words, very early in the reporting the deaths were identified as suicide rather than murder, even though Guyana's chief medical examiner called them murder. Hougan believes that most residents of Jonestown were forcibly injected and therefore were in fact murdered. He bases this belief on the forensic work of Guyana's medical examiner, Dr. Leslie Mootoo, and on the eyewitness account of Stanley Clayton, arguing that these reports are the closest thing we have to an official judgment on the matter. The reason for the murders: Jones wanted to hide the imminent disclosure of his former ties to Mitrione and to U.S. intelligence agencies.

The magnitude of the Jonestown event itself probably means that in some respects no account will ever completely satisfy everyone. In an e-mail message to me Hougan wrote that "if it is in fact the case that the CIA was in some sense 'responsible' for Jim Jones, then the Agency must also have a responsibility—moral and legal—for those who died at Jonestown."[80] The *Freedom* article concludes by saying that "nearly two decades after the death of Congressman Leo Ryan, America is still owed a definitive explanation for the many unresolved questions surrounding the tragedy."[81] It is clear that conspiracy theorists will continue to spin their tales as long as government documents remain classified.

CONCLUSIONS

Jonestown—as a myth, a word, a concept—has entered common parlance and is visible everywhere. During the threatened strike by major league baseball umpires in August 1999, one umpire said the strike "is like the Jonestown, Koolaid thing. But not everybody was going to be that stupid."[82] A novel by Wilson Harris is titled *Jonestown*, but has little to do with the original Jonestown,[83] nor does Frank Zappa's *Jonestown* album or the group called Jonestown Massacre. An extremely interesting popular analysis of Jonestown appears in Daniel Quinn's novel *My*

Ishmael.[84] A textbook by Lorne Dawson attempts to present a "sympathetic understanding" of new religious movements, and does look at Peoples Temple in a scholarly way.[85] But such thoughtful efforts are balanced by throwaway references to Jonestown in popular culture, such as the promotion for an episode of the television program *Law and Order* which compared an abusive father to Jonestown.

A body of scholarly literature has grown upon the foundations laid in the first ten years after Jonestown. That first decade saw instant paperbacks and sensationalistic accounts as well as thoughtful and thorough investigations into the meaning and reality of Peoples Temple. The last decade of the twentieth century viewed Peoples Temple through the lenses of Waco and other violent events involving religious communities, comparing groups, beliefs, and actions. It also examined unexplored facets of life within the Temple, from the perspectives of both women and African Americans. At the same time, however, a canon exists which seems unassailable by scholars attempting to modify, nuance, or enlarge that canon.

Will historians and religion scholars be able to amend the existing Jonestown canon? Right now the odds do not look very good. Although scholars know that we need more information and more research before declaring the canon closed, they appear to have little say in the matter. Moreover, conspiracy theorists may find greater acceptance with the public in the future, just as they have with alternative accounts of the John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinations. I hope that this paper sounds the alarm for the pressing need to communicate scholarly findings with the general public so that one hundred years from now the canon on Jonestown will reflect information and analysis that occurred in the decades after November 1978. I also hope this article points to the urgency of acting quickly to obtain all available documents about Peoples Temple and Jonestown, and to talk with all living witnesses, before they are irretrievably lost. No matter how closed it looks today, the canon on Jonestown remains open as long as government records and first-person accounts are excluded; as long as the stories of African Americans and women are neglected; as long as the role of apostates is ignored; and as long as the questions raised by conspiracy theorists continue to go unanswered. Absent the insights garnered through twenty years of research, the canon by definition must stay open.

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ENDNOTES

[1] One of the many definitions of "canon" is an official list or catalog. I am using the word in that sense to mean the official listing or cataloguing of facts about Jonestown. More broadly, I also take it to mean the publicly-accepted historical record about Peoples Temple. The word "canon" also suggests completeness. For example, the canon of scripture provides the complete or finished list of books in the Bible. This paper considers "canon" in all of these ways.

[2] In addition to writing books and articles in the fields of child and criminal psychology, Chris Hatcher wrote at least three articles on Peoples Temple: "Cults, Society and Government," in *New Religious Movements, Mass Suicide, and Peoples Temple: Scholarly Perspectives on a Tragedy*, ed. Rebecca Moore and Fielding McGehee III (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 179-95; and "Coercion, Control and Mass Suicide," and "After Jonestown: Survivors of Peoples Temple," in *The Need for a Second Look at Jonestown*, ed. Rebecca Moore and Fielding M. McGehee III (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 61-71, 127-46.

[3] The documents have since been located. Brian Csuk, an independent investigator, relates an incredible story of the recovery of audiotapes the FCC made of Temple radio traffic. The tapes were found in 1999 in a cardboard box at an FCC monitoring station in Maryland pursuant to Csuk's Freedom of Information Act request. Csuk has made the FCC audiotapes available at <http://www.icehouse.net/zodiac/fcc/fccindex.html> and has posted numerous government documents pertaining to Peoples Temple at <http://www.icehouse.net/zodiac/index.html>. These URLs were no longer operational in May 2000.

[4] In January 2000 we sent FOIA workers at the FBI a copy of the "Guyana Index" from our personal files for their use and information.

[5] Thomas Robbins, "The Second Wave of Jonestown Literature: A Review Essay," in Moore and McGehee, *New Religious Movements*, 113-34. The piece is an expansion of his article, "Reconsidering Jonestown," *Religious Studies Review* 15, no. 1 (January 1989): 32-37.

[6] Tim Reiterman, "Remembering Jonestown," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 November 1998, A1, A10, A11; idem, "Two decades later: The search for a fitting tribute to Jonestown's 918 victims," *San Francisco Examiner*, 15 November 1998, D11; John Jacobs, "Finding Meaning from Jonestown 20 Years Later," *Sacramento Bee*, 15 November 1998, Forum 1 and 6; and Tim Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven: The Untold Story of the Rev. Jim Jones and His People* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1982).

[7] Larry D. Hatfield, "Days of Darkness," three-part series, *San Francisco Examiner*, 8, 9, 10 November 1998.

[8] Don Lattin, "The End to Innocent Acceptance of Sects," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 November 1998, A1, A19.

[9] Michael Taylor and Don Lattin, "Most Peoples Temple Documents Still Sealed," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 November 1998, A19; and Cable News Network, <http://cnn.com:80/US/9811/19/jonestown.anniversary.01>, accessed 18 February 2000.

[10] ABC News, *20/20*, "The Tragedy of Jonestown: Jim Jones' Sons Revisit Site of Mass Suicide," 18 October 1998, transcript from <http://www.abcnews.com/onair/2020/transcripts/2020_jonestown981018_trans.html>, accessed 18 February 2000.

[11] ABC News, *20/20*, "The Tragedy of Jonestown."

[12] Deborah Layton, *Seductive Poison: A Jonestown Survivor's Story of Life and Death in the Peoples Temple* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998).

[13] Min S. Yee and Thomas N. Layton, *In My Father's House: The Story of the Layton Family and the Reverend Jim Jones* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981).

[14] For example, Krause notes that "[w]hat I saw reminded me of a Southern plantation before the Civil War," which is how he described Jonestown in his initial news accounts. Layton, xviii. See n. 16 for complete citation for *Guyana Massacre*.

[15] James J. Boyle, *Killer Cults* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

[16] Boyle is particularly indebted to the following: Ken Wooden, *The Children of Jonestown* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981); Jeannie Mills, *Six Years with God: Life Inside Rev. Jim Jones's Peoples Temple* (New York: A&W Publishers, 1979); and Charles Krause with Laurence M. Stern and Richard Harwood, *Guyana Massacre: The Eyewitness Account* (New York: Hawthorne, 1978).

[17] Boyle, 50.

[18] Robert Endleman, *Jonestown and the Manson Family: Race, Sexuality and Collective Madness* (New York: Psyche Press, 1993). The reference connecting Charles Manson and Jim Jones appeared in *The Washington Star* newspaper. Rebecca Moore, *A Sympathetic History of Jonestown: The Moore Family Involvement in Peoples Temple* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 9.

[19] George Klineman, Sherman Butler, and David Conn, *The Cult That Died: The Tragedy of Jim Jones and the People's Temple* (New York: Putnam's, 1980); James Reston, Jr., *Our Father Who Art in Hell* (New York: Times Books, 1981).

[20] Endleman, 205.

[21] The Jim Jones-Charles Manson connection also appears in more scholarly works, such as Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony, "Sects and Violence: Factors Enhancing the Volatility of Marginal Religious Movements," in *Armageddon at Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 249.

[22] "Jonestown," *Britannica.com*, <http://search.britannica.com/bcom/eb/article/5/0,5716,44965+1,00.html>, accessed 18 February 2000.

[23] "Jones, Jim," *Britannica.com*, <http://search.britannica.com/bcom/eb/article/7/0,5716,44947+1,00.html>, accessed 18 February 2000.

[24] Even a longer piece by Martin Marty on "Doomsday Cults" tends to reflect popular attitudes, although Marty does begin by warning readers that scholars try to avoid using the word "cult." "Doomsday Cults," from *Year in Review 1997*, in *Britannica.com*, <http://search.britannica.com/bcom/eb/article/9/0,5716,124419+1,00.html>, accessed 18 February 2000.

[25] One personally gratifying note in all this is that the first link *Britannica.com* provides to "The Web's Best Sites" under the heading "People's [sic] Temple" is to "Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple," <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~remoore/jonestown>.

[26] John R. Hall, "Peoples Temple," in *America's Alternative Religions*, ed. Timothy Miller (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995).

[27] Ibid., 310-11.

[28] Robbins, "The Second Wave," 114. He specifically includes the following works in the "first wave": Judith Weightman, *Making Sense of the Jonestown Suicides* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983) and Kenneth Levi, ed., *Violence and Religious Commitment: Implications of Jim Jones' Peoples Temple Movement* (University Park, PA: Penn State, 1982). For a complete bibliography see 130-34.

[29] David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of the Peoples Temple and Jonestown* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988); John R. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1987).

[30] Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Religious Totalism, Exemplary Dualism, and the Waco Tragedy," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 273.

[31] Robbins and Anthony, "Sects and Violence," 237.

[32] They rely to a certain extent on Marc Galanter's discussion of boundary preservation in *Cults: Faith, Healing, and Coercion*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 113-18.

[33] Thomas Robbins, "Religious Movements and Violence: A Friendly Critique of the

Interpretive Approach," *Nova Religio: Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 1, no. 1 (October 1997): 13-29; and Thomas Robbins and Susan Palmer, "Patterns of Contemporary Apocalypticism," in Robbins and Palmer, *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem*, 17.

[34] See Rebecca Moore, "'American as Cherry Pie': Peoples Temple and Violence in America," in *Millennialism, Persecution and Violence: Historical Cases*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 121-37. Hall's book *Gone from the Promised Land* also details the conflict, 210-53.

[35] John R. Hall and Philip Schuyler, "Apostasy, Apocalypse, and Religious Violence: An Exploratory Comparison of Peoples Temple, the Branch Davidians, and the Solar Temple," in *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements*, ed. David Bromley (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 146.

[36] Ibid., 150.

[37] John R. Hall with Philip D. Schuyler and Sylvaine Trinh, *Apocalypse Observed: Religious Movements and Violence in North America, Europe and Japan* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000). Hall and Schuyler's earlier essay served as a "working paper" for this longer work.

[38] Ibid., 38.

[39] Ibid., 39.

[40] Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000). An earlier version of a chapter from the book can be seen at: <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~remoore/jonestown/jt1978.html>. See also an abbreviated version of her argument, "How the Millennium Comes Violently: A Comparison of Jonestown, Aum Shinrikyo, Branch Davidians, and the Montana Freemen," *Dialog* 36, no. 4 (Fall 1997):277-88, which also appears at <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~remoore/jonestown/millennium.html>.

[41] Massimo Introvigne, *Idee che uccidono. Jonestown, Waco, il Tempio Solare* (Milan: Pessano MIMEP-Docete, 1995).

[42] Enrico Pozzi, *Il carisma malato. Il People's Temple e il suicidio collettivo di Jonestown* (Naples: Liguori, 1992).

[43] David Bromley and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Dramatic Confrontations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[44] Archie Smith, Jr., "Black Reflections on the Study of New Religious Consciousness," in *Understanding the New Religions*, ed. Jacob Needleman and George Baker (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 210.

[45] Archie Smith, Jr., "An Interpretation of the Peoples Temple and Jonestown: Implications for the Black Church," *PSR Bulletin Occasional Paper* 58, no. 2 (February 1980), and idem, *The Relational Self: Ethics and Therapy from a Black Church Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), Chapter VIII, "An Interpretation of the Peoples Temple and Jonestown: Implications for the Black Church," 187-31; Vincent Harding, *The Other American Revolution* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, UCLA, and Atlanta: Institute of the Black World, 1980), 222-24; and C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, "Daddy Jones and Father Divine: The Cult as Political Religion," *Religious Life* 49 (1980):6-23.

[46] Timothy Miller, ed., *America's Alternative Religions* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1995).

[47] Archie Smith, Jr., "We Need to Press Forward: Black Religion and Jonestown, Twenty Years Later," <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~remoore/jonestown/SMITH.htm>, accessed 18 February 2000. The substance of this article reiterates and elaborates upon Smith's earlier writings.

[48] Ibid., 9.

[49] Ibid., 14.

[50] Ibid., 19.

[51] Mary Sawyer, "My Lord, What a Mourning: Twenty Years Since Jonestown," <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~remoore/jonestown/SAWYER.htm>, accessed 18 February 2000.

[52] Ibid., 3.

[53] Ibid., 6.

[54] Mary McCormick Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998). This is a revision of her dissertation, "Triple Erasure: Women and Power in Peoples Temple," Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1996.

[55] Ibid., 38.

[56] Ibid., Chapter Five, "Three Groups in One," 74-86.

[57] The FBI has released to the public over 48,000 documents it gathered from Jonestown (letter to Fielding M. McGehee III, dated 23 November 1998, stating that there are 48,738 pages available). By telephone FBI FOIA officer Linda Kloss stated that the FBI has put the documents on CD-ROM. The FBI also has 364 pages from its investigative files on the Leo Ryan murder posted at <http://foia.fbi.gov/jonestown.htm>, accessed 19 February 2000.

[58] Michael Meiers, *Was Jonestown a CIA Medical Experiment? A Review of the Evidence* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988).

[59] Ibid., 350.

[60] I should point out that Meiers states that, "it is entirely possible that Rebecca Moore was a communications conduit between the experiment and the faction of the federal government that sponsored it" (509). Nevertheless, he recommends reading *A Sympathetic History of Jonestown* "as long as the reader understands that it is a defense of the Moore family and questions that it is a defense of the CIA," 509-10.

[61] Meiers, 519. John Judge reached the same conclusions—that Jonestown was a CIA mind control experiment—a few years earlier. "The Black Hole of Guyana: The Untold Story of the Jonestown Massacre," in *Secret and Suppressed: Banned Ideas and Hidden History*, ed. Jim Keith (Portland, OR: Feral House, 1993), 127-65. The original draft was written in 1985.

[62] Nathan Landau, *Heavenly Deceptor: The True Story Behind the Jonestown Massacre, Including Connections to the Kennedy and King Assassinations* (Brooklyn, NY: Sound of Music Publishing, 1992).

[63] Landau says that he based his book on extensive interviews with Teri Buford. He does not present a sympathetic picture of the top financial aide who escaped Jonestown one month before the deaths.

[64] Missing are Elvis and UFOs.

[65] Landau's group includes Tim Carter, Mike Carter, Mike Prokes, Phil Blakey (off-shore), Charles Garry, and Mark Lane, as well as people in Georgetown and Teri Buford.

[66] Jeffrey Brailey, *The Ghosts of November: Memoirs of an Outsider Who Witnessed the Carnage at Jonestown, Guyana* (San Antonio, TX: J&J Publishers, 1998).

[67] Brailey includes an appendix titled "Last Rights," which consists of a chapter taken from Rebecca Moore, *In Defense of Peoples Temple, and Other Essays* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988).

[68] Brailey, 89.

[69] Ibid., 104-05.

[70] Ibid., 158.

[71] "Revisiting the Jonestown Tragedy," *Freedom Magazine* n.v. (1997): 4-11. Michael Meiers also believes the CIA targeted Ryan, and that in fact the Jonestown deaths merely covered up the agency's true purpose: to assassinate Ryan.

[72] *Freedom*, 10-11, emphasis in original.

[73] Ibid., 9.

[74] Laurie Efrein Kahalas, *Snake Dance: Unravelling the Mysteries of Jonestown* (New York: Red Robin Press, 1998).

[75] Ibid., 353.

[76] Hougan produced a documentary on Peoples Temple and Jonestown for the Arts and Entertainment Network which ran in 1998, and continues to run on Bill Kurtis' *American Justice* series.

[77] Jim Hougan, "Jonestown: The Secret Life of Jim Jones: A Parapolitical Fugue," *Lobster* 37 (Summer 1999): 2-20.

[78] Hougan is indebted to Alan W. McCoy for raising questions about Jones' whereabouts in the 1960s, as well as for other leads provided in McCoy's book, *The Guyana Murders* (San Francisco: Highland House, 1988).

[79] Although McCoy also makes this point, and I do in *A Sympathetic History of Jonestown*, Hougan puts it into a new frame for better viewing.

[80] Hougan, e-mail to Rebecca Moore dated 9 July 1999.

[81] *Freedom*, 11.

[82] Dave Phillips, quoted in *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 1 August 1999.

[83] Wilson Harris, *Jonestown* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996).

[84] Daniel Quinn, *My Ishmael* (New York: Bantam Books, 1998).

[85] Lorne L. Dawson, *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4. Dawson tends to rely on Marc Galanter's theory of "social encapsulation" to explain Peoples Temple (147-48) and to use the analysis of Peoples Temple provided by Robbins and Anthony in "Sects and Violence" (131-46).

Celestial Lodge Above: The Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem as a Religious Symbol in Freemasonry

Guy L. Beck

The hangings in the lodge room are blue, spread with golden stars. The Master and all the brothers wear a white robe as well as a blue headband with twelve golden stars on it, tied around their foreheads. The Master sits under a blue canopy on a throne, behind which is a transparent light that is sufficient to illuminate the whole lodge. Facing is a painting or image of a square city, or the celestial Jerusalem, descending from heaven, to crush the remains of the present Jerusalem. A Serpent or hydra with three heads representing the badness of the infidels remains there. This Celestial Jerusalem, elevated as on a cloud, has twelve gates, three on each side with a Tree in the middle that bears twelve different sorts of fruits. Under this is the ancient Jerusalem which is in ruins and overturned, along with the Serpent which is in chains and appearing crushed by the weight of the Celestial Jerusalem. There is a high mountain on one side toward which the candidate (for initiation) is directed by the Warden (the guide), who then retreats backwards, and after a moment of silence, the candidate takes three steps toward the three-headed Serpent and steps on each of the heads. He then advances in a special way toward the city and receives the secret sign, token, and password of the degree. He is also given a crimson sash with twelve golden stars on which hang a square jewel of gold from the right shoulder to the left hip, on one side the letter Alpha and on the other Omega.[1]

The initiation scenario cited above appears in one of the oldest surviving manuscripts of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, the Francken Manuscript of 1783. Known as the 19th degree of Grand Pontiff, this initiation originally formed part of a series of advanced rituals called the Rite of Perfection which led an initiate beyond the normal first three degrees of Masonry from the 4th to the final 25th degree. This Rite of Perfection was brought to the Americas in 1762 from France, and by 1786 had been expanded to thirty-three degrees which remain to the present.

In several of the initiatory degrees of Freemasonry, we find references to the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, which is also frequently viewed as a kind of grand metaphor for the Masonic lodge itself. And, as noted above, the celestial New Jerusalem is particularly prominent in the 19th degree of Grand Pontiff. Yet the overall importance of King Solomon's Temple, and specifically the Celestial Jerusalem, has elicited very little attention within scholarship on Freemasonry. This article will first briefly outline the symbolic importance of King Solomon's Temple and its paraphernalia within the first three initiatory degrees of Masonry, and then give primary focus to the symbolic role of New Jerusalem ("Celestial Lodge Above") in the 19th degree with reference to several manuscripts and published editions of the rite dating back to 1783.

Freemasonry itself functions as a kind of "symbol system" containing a rich tapestry of word images and tools that are interpreted as symbols for esoteric teachings and abstract ideas such as "brotherhood," "moral character," and "immortality." While we use the term symbol as "anything that serves as an outward sign of something else, usually spiritual or immaterial,"[2] we also recognize that these symbols are not arbitrary but somehow "participate" in the things signified in the best way through a kind of relational symbol system. They become Masonic symbols.

The city of Jerusalem has been at the center of biblical prophecy since its founding by King David. Out of the 800 or so references to Jerusalem in the Bible, roughly 350 deal with future prophecies for the city, including the New Jerusalem descending from the heavens as described in the apocalyptic book of Revelation. While it is generally known that Jerusalem is a sacred site for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, its appearance within the ritual literature of other religious traditions is seldom discussed. In both Judaism and Christianity, the city of Jerusalem is a focal point of messianic and eschatological events leading toward a collective salvation. For Jews the future city represents the restored Kingdom of David that will be ruled by the messiah from Mt. Zion. For Christians, borrowing the Jewish notion of the millennial kingdom, the descent from heaven of the New Jerusalem at the climax of the 1000-year reign of the returned Jesus Christ as God's messiah represents eternal salvation. And for Muslims, Jerusalem is the sacred space from which the Prophet Muhammad visited the heavens. Early Muslims used to pray facing Jerusalem, but this was changed to Mecca during the prophet's lifetime. For the international fraternal organization known as Freemasonry, the Temple that was built within the earthly city of Jerusalem has been appropriated to represent symbolically the progressive moral development of humankind on earth and its fulfillment in a permanent state of perfection. As will be shown, the image of the Temple in Jerusalem functions centrally and positively in Freemasonry as a symbol of both an expanding moral order on earth and a celestial lodge above in the Masonic eschaton.

THE CENTRAL SIGNIFICANCE OF JERUSALEM AND KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE TO FREEMASONRY

Almost all the symbolism of Freemasonry rests upon or is derived from the House of the Lord at Jerusalem. So closely are the two connected, that to attempt to separate the one from the other would be fatal to the further existence of Masonry. Each lodge is and must be a symbol of the Jewish Temple; each Master in the chair a representative of the Jewish King; and every Mason a personation of the Jewish workman.[3]

The general category of fraternalism as an important social and cultural form is finally receiving more attention from academic scholars. For example, sociologist Mary Ann Clawson stresses that fraternalism was widespread in Europe due to the construction of social ties across many regions through its rituals and public ceremonies, particularly in the context of guilds, journeymen's societies, and confraternities of late medieval and early modern Europe.[4] And according to British intellectual historian Margaret Jacob, these ties became more pronounced in the Masonic lodges of eighteenth-century Britain and France. Initially unfolding within the casual ambience of taverns and coffee-houses, Freemasonry strongly encouraged the construction of new symbolic identities through horizontal social ties that transcended sectarian religious and ethnic affiliation:

> The Masonic initiation is a rite of leveling. Symbolically detached from worldly standing, men could divest themselves of traditional identities for the purpose of fellowship. Protestants, Catholics, and even Jews could become Masons and be bound together as brothers through a ritual process that claimed to override their sectarian loyalties.[5]

Freemasonry is now the largest fraternity in the world and is usually believed to have been derived directly from the medieval guild associations of stone-masons in Europe. This "operative character" was then replaced by a so-called non-operative or "speculative" character by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in either England or Scotland. There is some consensus that Freemasonry in some early form was founded in Scotland by descendants of the Knights Templar who escaped Catholic persecution of this order after 1307 C.E.[6] Freemasonry is said to have then been brought to England by King James VI of Scotland, himself a Mason, when he became James I of England in 1603. Masonic scholar John Hamill claims that speculative Freemasonry itself originated in England, yet acknowledges that operative Freemasonry already existed in Scotland.[7] So while it is highly probable that Masons were in Scotland and Ireland, it is certain that by 1717 the fraternity in England had officially formed a conglomerate body of lodges in London known as

the Grand Lodge of England. From there, other Grand Lodges were formed in different countries as well as in the American colonies.

The appeal of Freemasonry for intellectuals of the Enlightenment period was directly tied to its symbols and rituals, which were used to express liberal universal categories of brotherhood and non-sectarianism in the public sphere of civil action and politics. The roll call of Masons during this early formative period included the names of many progressive thinkers and creative artists associated with the changing times, far from the quarries of manual stone-masonry: Voltaire, Goethe, Schiller, Robespierre, Mesmer, Gibbon, Mozart, Haydn, Ben Franklin, Herder, Fichte, Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, Frederick the Great, Sir Walter Scott, and Edmund Burke, among many others.

The emphasis on Temple symbolism in Freemasonry is connected with Freemasonry's general embrace of the numerical sciences of geometry and architecture as well as the new sciences in matters of explaining the natural world. A large portion of James Anderson's *Book of Constitutions* of 1723 presents a history of architecture beginning with Adam who had the principles of geometry written in his heart by the Great Architect of the Universe, the name of God or Supreme Being in Freemasonry.[8] In fact, according to Margaret Jacob, Masonry viewed itself as a kind of vehicle for sharing the new "mysteries of science" for the betterment of humankind: "the sharing of masonic mysteries among all classes of men, in secrecy and privacy, with emphasis on the liberal arts and sciences, particularly geometry, . . . improve and civilize mankind."[9]

From the Masonic perspective, the Egyptian temple was the true prototype of all other temples in the ancient world, including especially the Mosaic tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. For example, the typical Egyptian temple had a pair of tall obelisks at the entrance, which were the predecessors of the two pillars at the porch of Solomon's Temple. The temple was quadrangular and built on an east-west axis, as exemplified in the hieroglyph of the same form. Divided into a spacious hall, which served as the sanctuary where the great body of the worshippers assembled, the temple also included a cell or *sekos* (Latin, *adytum*), equivalent to the Jewish Holy of Holies, into which only the priests entered. In the most remote part, usually behind a curtain, appeared the image of the deity or sacred animal which represented it. In the Masonic tradition, it is suggested that this Egyptian temple form was borrowed by the Jews and with some modifications adopted by the Greeks and Romans before entering modern Europe. The idea of a separation into a holy and most holy place has been maintained in the construction of Masonic Lodges, which are but imitations, in spirit, of the ancient temples. The main difference, however, is in the direction of the most holy place; the Egyptians and the Jews placed it in the west, Masonic Lodges placed it in the east.[10]

Consequently, King Solomon's Temple as the first temple in Jerusalem functions as a model for the earthly Masonic Lodge and its work of constructing moral principles among the living brethren. In the Masonic view, the historical destruction of this Temple parallels the mortality of earthly life, and is thus aligned with the first three initiatory degrees leading to Master Mason. Several of the advanced degrees, such as those of Royal Arch Masonry and the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite leading to the 33rd degree, employ the image of the Second Temple of Zerubbabel built upon the foundations of the First Temple as a symbol of the future eternal life where, according to Masonic lore, "the lost truth shall be found, where new incense shall rise from a new altar." Likewise, New Jerusalem as depicted in the Apocalypse of St. John has been adopted into the Scottish Rite as a symbol for the eschatological hope of the fraternity, the celestial lodge above. And this is most fully displayed in the 19th degree of Grand Pontiff. The inclusion of New Jerusalem as a religious symbol in this degree in the mid-1700s, however, postdates the appropriation of King Solomon's Temple within the three basic Craft degrees.

Before the founding of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717, there were already documents of an operative nature "with speculative overtones" known as *Old Charges* that were in circulation from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. These were followed by a series of more formal Masonic catechisms published from the late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries culminating in the magnificent *Book of Constitutions*, edited by Dr. James Anderson, which appeared in 1723 and 1738 (1st and 2nd editions). This last work, with the seal of approval from the Grand Lodge of England, officially ushered in the speculative period of modern Freemasonry as the formative document of the Craft.

Masonic scholar Alexander Horne has observed a shift of emphasis in the two earliest *Old Charges*, the Regius manuscript of 1390, and the Cooke manuscript of 1410. The former does not contain any mention of King Solomon, while the Cooke manuscript seems to be the first document in which the Judaic Temple is presented as a theme in Freemasonry. Thus Horne surmises that "[t]he Masonic Legend of King Solomon's Temple can . . . be seen to go back to about 1410 A.D., as far as our own written records are concerned."[11] The Cooke Manuscript of 1410 contains a short account of King Solomon, while the Regius Manuscript of 1390 refers to King Nimrod of the famous Tower of Babylon as the person who gave the Masons their first charge or rule. According to Horne, this discrepancy arises because the Regius manuscript was written by a Roman Catholic priest and represents pre-Reformation Catholic attitudes about the Old Testament. The Protestant Reformation brought in its wake a deeper appreciation for Old Testament characters and themes, and so Horne suggests:

> It is in this Cooke MS, . . . representing, for the first time, the Protestant as opposed to the Roman Catholic element in the Masonic tradition—that we are introduced for the first time to the Masonic Temple Legend.[12]

Thus the Cooke MS contains the following account, the first in written Masonic records:

> At the making of Solomon's Temple that King David began . . . Solomon had four score thousand Masons at his work; and . . . Solomon confirmed the Charges that David his father had given to Masons. And Solomon himself taught them their manners [i.e., customs and practices], but little differing from the manners that now are used.[13]

In this text and several others that followed, the claim that Freemasonry originated with King Solomon and his Temple was enthusiastically supported by deference to older Masonic chronicles and oral traditions. And the change from Nimrod to Solomon as founder becomes more interesting in light of the strongly anti-Masonic, and often anti-Semitic, temper of official Roman Catholicism from the early eighteenth century.

The earliest *Masonic Catechism* (1696) contains the following Question and Answer: "Q. Where was the first lodge? A. In the porch of Solomon's Temple."[14] This basic formula is found repeated almost without variation in other catechisms of the period gradually including references to the pavement, the twin pillars, the middle chamber, the master jewels, etc., the standard items in modern-day initiation rituals. The first edition of the *Book of Constitutions* (1723) devotes a total of five pages to minute details of King Solomon's Temple.

Against the background of an increased fascination with biblical themes and stories following the release of the King James Version of the Bible in 1611, the rise in interest in King Solomon's Temple may also be viewed within the context of a general Solomonic revival in the minds of both Protestant and progressive thinkers at about the same time that Masonry switched from operative to speculative status. Reference may be made to Sir Francis Bacon's scientific utopia *New Atlantis* (1624), with his utopian island containing a House of Solomon full of scientific learning, and John Bunyan's *Solomon's Temple Spiritualized* (1688), in which nearly every square inch of the ancient edifice is discussed from his uniquely Protestant perspective. Several later Masonic works contain similarities in literary style and content to the Bunyan work.

However, despite a strong body of Christian, mostly Protestant, members, the general perspective of the developing Masonic fraternity must be set outside the Christian theological concerns of the times:

> The ethos of Freemasonry could not be further removed from the intense piety, even revivalism, of the sectarian or the Methodist. Anglican piety also never

abandoned belief in the natural depravity of humankind, in the inability of human beings to merit salvation.[15]

In contrast to biblical notions of sin and redemption, early Freemasonry was more in league with Deism and rational theology. It drew its roots from the Greek philosophers and pagan traditions that taught the perfectibility of the human condition through gnosis or initiation. As such, Freemasonry attempted to assemble beliefs and doctrines that would appeal to the largest possible cross-section of men, and was thus extremely ecumenical in principle. Its roots, real or imagined, are believed to be pre-Judeo-Christian. Hence the use of biblical themes and images are symbolic and allegorical in response to the surrounding religious traditions within which Freemasons found themselves. For example, in India, Freemasons use the Vedas and the Bhagavad-Gita as their sacred texts, in Turkey the Quran, in China Confucius and Lao Tzu, etc.

The religious symbolism of King Solomon's Temple within the three craft degrees of Freemasonry is well-known. The First Degree, known as the Entered Apprentice, is conducted in the lodge that represents the Ground Floor of King Solomon's Temple. The Second Degree, called Fellowcraft, is conducted as if in the Middle Chamber of King Solomon's Temple, and the final Third Degree, known as Master Mason, is performed in the Master's Lodge representing the Sanctum Sanctorum, or Holy of Holies, of King Solomon's Temple. The Master's Lodge is also known as the "Blue Lodge" (for its blue canopy) of Master Masons, where only the first three degrees are awarded.

Analysis of the ritual manuals of Blue Lodge Masonic initiation as they have developed from the eighteenth century discloses that the process of character building within the first three degrees of Freemasonry parallels the construction work of the builders of King Solomon's Temple, such that each Masonic Lodge as a miniature Temple of Solomon is essentially a "workshop" for building individual character through the figurative use of hand tools and objects associated with stone masonry: the square, compass, ruler, plumb, spade, setting maul, rough ashlar (uncarved block), and apron.[16] These items are employed symbolically to enunciate Masonic virtues that are carefully implanted within the heart of each Masonic candidate for initiation in order to construct a new interior temple "not made with hands," which is said to survive the demise of the physical body and confer immortality and entrance into the Celestial Lodge Above.

The First Degree, known as Entered Apprentice, requires the candidate to enter the lodge blindfolded, kneel before an altar, and take a solemn oath or obligation before an open Bible (or any other volume of sacred law which is permissible according to the cultural context of the lodge or Masonic candidate). When the blindfold is

removed, he is taught the significance of the degree, including secret signs, symbols, handshake, and password. He is given a white lambskin apron, representing the aprons said to be worn by the builders of King Solomon's Temple, but also believed to have been worn by initiates of the ancient mystery religions.

Each of the first three degrees has what are called "working tools," that is, stone cutters' implements that are figuratively employed to convey Masonic teachings on morality. For the Entered Apprentice, the working tools are the 24-inch gauge and the common gavel. After Entered Apprentice, the Second Degree of Fellowcraft is taken, which includes a lengthy and elaborate lecture on the architectural symbols of King Solomon's Temple, including the twin pillars. The three working tools of the Fellowcraft are the plumb, the square, and the leveler.

The drama of the Third Degree initiation ceremony is the most important of the Craft degrees and establishes the candidate as a Master Mason, a full Mason. The candidate is cast in the role of the hero of Freemasonry, Hiram Abiff, the principal architect of King Solomon's Temple. After being symbolically slain by a setting maul by three assassins after refusing to reveal Masonic secrets, the candidate (as Hiram) is placed in a mock grave and then ritually raised up by the Master of the Lodge. This "resurrection" symbolizes the emergence into a new way of life for all new Masons, a dying and rising motif drawn from the ancient mystery religions. Some Christian Masons have viewed this as a disguise for the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. The working tool of the Third Degree of Master Mason is the trowel.[17]

While the name of Hiram Abiff is not in the biblical record, and the precise origin of the Hiramic legend cannot be ascertained, the name Hiram of Tyre as a worker in bronze is found in the Hebrew Bible accounts of the building of King Solomon's Temple (I Kings 5 and 7, II Chronicles 2, 3, and 4). There is no reference in the scriptures to his murder or other details found in the Masonic initiation. For these, many theories abound tracing it to rabbinic Judaism, early Rosicrucian manuscripts, gnostic myths, or medieval folklore among stone-cutters or operative masons.

In addition to the working tools of the three degrees, the candidate is instructed regarding the three ornaments as well as the six jewels of the Lodge, three movable and three immovable, which are said to have been features of the interior of King Solomon's Temple. The three ornaments are the checkered pavement, the indented tassel, and the blazing star. The three movable jewels are the rough ashlar, the perfect ashlar, and the trestle-board; the three immovable jewels are the square, level, and plumb.[18] All of these tools, ornaments, and jewels from King Solomon's Temple are embedded within a framework of lectures that teach the candidates to contribute toward a peaceful "utopian" world through moral example and charitable works.

Masonic eschatology was influenced by Neoplatonic concepts of human perfectibility and immortality. It anticipates entrance into the Celestial Lodge Above at the time of death. According to Mackey, this includes a belief in a type of resurrection or restoration to life as exemplified in the degree of Master Mason: "The doctrine of resurrection to a future and eternal life constitutes an indispensable portion of the religious faith of Masonry. It is not authoritatively inculcated as a point of dogmatic creed, but is impressively taught by the symbolism of the Third Degree [the raising of Hiram Abiff]."[19] However, I was unable to find a distinct reference in Masonic literature regarding physical resurrection as taught in some forms of religion. Most Masonic historians indicate a kind of general restoration, albeit spiritual, that is not aligned specifically with physical resurrection but which points to the survival of identity or consciousness in some post-mortem form. Thus Mackey, for instance, is able to juxtapose Masonic eschatology with a wide range of ancient teachings that include reincarnation and spiritual resurrection.

Restoration to a future life that is not physical is implied in the Mason's funeral service outlined in their own ritual manual:

> He has laid down the working tools of the Craft and with them he has left that mortal part for which he no longer has use. His labors here below have taught him to divest his heart and conscience of the vices and superfluities of life, thereby fitting his mind as "living stone" for that spiritual building—that house not built with hands—eternal in Heaven. Strengthened in his labors here, by faith in God and confident expectation of immortality, he has sought admission to the celestial lodge above.[20]

There are parallels here with some types of Western philosophical thought—the rationalism of Aristotle, Maimonides, Spinoza, and Deism—that stressed the cultivation of the intellect as the way to achieve non-physical immortality.

One of the most commanding religious images of the future restorative state for Masons, as for some Christians, is New Jerusalem, presented and described in the penultimate chapter of the New Testament book of Revelation (21:1-27). While the description told to St. John is heavily indebted to imagery found in the prophet Ezekiel's vision of Jerusalem (40:1-4; 48:35), the new version is centered around Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. There is said to be no separate temple structure among the buildings contained in the 1,500-mile square celestial city of New Jerusalem, as it rests between the new heaven and new earth ("And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb." Rev. 21:22). For St. John, the entire city is a temple, an eternal sanctuary of God, Christ, the martyrs, the twenty-four elders, and the 144,000 in the redeemed community. There would be no need for a "sacred" temple apart from the surroundings since the entire city is radiating God's glory.

However, the Masonic version of New Jerusalem, as will be shown, depicts a purely symbolic "celestial lodge above" without the inclusion of Jesus Christ. For this reason and others, Freemasonry has incurred the wrath of Christianity, especially Roman Catholicism. Mainstream Christians(Catholics and major Protestant denominations) have also rejected the literal interpretation of Revelation and the coming millennial kingdom, having adopted the symbolic and allegorical approach of the Greek-inspired St. Augustine. But of course they, unlike Freemasonry, stop short of omitting Christ as the central focus of the future Kingdom.

Drawing from the book of Revelation, Kabbalah, and rabbinic sources, the ritual literature of advanced Masonry, including degree rituals from 4th to 33rd, incorporates images of Jerusalem, the Temple of Solomon, the Second Temple of Zerubbabel, as well as the ritually-invoked vision of New Jerusalem as a celestial city of golden buildings overcome with the light of God, emblazoned with the signs of the zodiac, and descending from the heavens. As quoted at the outset, the Masonic New Jerusalem specifically appears in the Grand Pontiff or 19th degree of Scottish Rite Masonry. We will now elaborate on this important symbolic component of Masonic eschatology and ritual imagery after first briefly discussing the establishment of the Scottish Rite tradition in Freemasonry.

Although carrying the name "Scottish," the origin and early development of the Scottish Rite occurred in France. Having to do with attempts to connect Craft Masonry (the first three degrees) with the Knights Templars of the Crusades, there were, in fact, a number of legends relating to the survival of the Templars in Scotland after the dismantling of the order and the confiscation of its properties by the Roman Catholic Church in the fourteenth century. According to Masonic historians, the 19th Degree of Grand Pontiff was originally part of the Rite of Perfection of 25 degrees which was practiced in France toward the middle of the eighteenth century, and was among the degrees brought to the West Indies by Stephen Morin in 1762.

More details of the transition from Europe to America are given as follows:

> Soon after the development of "Ecossais" [Scottish] Masonry in France, Stephen Morin was appointed "Grand Inspector in all parts of the New World" by the Council of the Grand and Sovereign Lodge of St. Jean de Jerusalem in either Bordeaux or Paris. Morin, who had access to many high-grade rituals, then apparently created a set of Masonic regulations called the "Constitutions of 1762" to assist him in establishing High-Grade Masonry in the New World; he also organized these "haut gradés" into a masonic rite. Armed with his patent, Morin traveled to Kingston, Jamaica, and between 1762 and 1767 conferred his rite upon Henry Andrew Francken (1720-1795), whom he also appointed Deputy Inspector-General in 1769. Francken wrote out the rituals by hand in at least three manuscripts [1771, 1783, 1786]—the most complete set being the 1783

manuscript. In 1767, Francken authorized a "Lodge of Perfection" in Albany, New York, and the seeds of Scottish Rite Masonry were planted in North America on the East Coast. By 1800 some 50 men had been appointed Deputy Inspectors, and several resolved to establish a governing body of the rite. A document known as the "Constitutions of 1786" authorized an increase from Morin's degree system to one of 33 degrees.[21]

The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite is today the most widely established form of Freemasonry in the world, with over forty countries having their own Supreme Councils. Although its European origin is clear from the history, the original Supreme Council, the "Mother Supreme Council," was founded in Charleston, South Carolina on 31 May 1801. Principal in the foundation of this council were Colonel John Mitchell(1801-1816), the first Grand Commander, and Reverend Frederick Dalcho(1816-1823), the first Grand Secretary and second Grand Commander. Rev. Dalcho was an Episcopal minister of St. Michael's Church in Charleston in addition to being a key figure in all aspects of Masonic history in South Carolina.[22] The first Supreme Council met upstairs in Shepheard's Tavern, on the northeast corner of Church and Broad Streets in downtown Charleston, which had served as a Blue Lodge since 1736, named Solomon's Lodge #1.

As early as 1813, a Northern Masonic Jurisdiction was formed into a separate body in the northern United States, making two divisions of the Scottish Rite in America that remain today, the Northern and the Southern Jurisdictions. While the Northern Jurisdiction was centered first in Boston and then in Lexington, Massachusetts, the Supreme Council of the Southern Jurisdiction remained in Charleston until 1870, just after the Civil War, when it was transferred to Washington, D.C., under the supervision of Albert Pike. Pike proved instrumental in raising the Scottish Rite of both jurisdictions to national importance as well as revising the ritual degrees and writing commentaries on them.[23]

An examination of the current ritual manuals of both jurisdictions reveals some minor differences in their degree work, including that of Grand Pontiff. However, they each trace the origin of their degrees to the same source, the Francken Manuscript of 1783, which is stated to be:

> [t]he single most important document relating to the Ancient and Accepted (Scottish) Rite, because it is the lineal predecessor of the Rite. The rituals of this manuscript represent their authentic form at the birth of the Scottish Rite, before they were modified by Carson, Gourgas, Yates, Pike, etc. [Masonic ritualists]. To whatever extent the rituals may have changed in any jurisdiction, all owe their existence to the rituals of this magnificent document.[24]

The Northern Jurisdiction acknowledges this debt in the preface to its own ritual manual of Grand Pontiff:

The earliest 19th degree ritual is the archives of the Supreme Council 33rd degree. A.A.S.R. for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, USA, is in a bound volume of manuscript rituals of the Rite of Perfection—4th to 25th inclusive—in the handwriting of Henry Francken (1720-1795) and dated 1783. Francken indicates that he received these rituals from Stephen Morin in Kingston, Jamaica.[25]

While the Francken manuscript contains the 4th through 25th degrees of the original Rite of Perfection, there is a following document which is understood to be the earliest complete set of degrees from the 4th to the 33rd, and believed to be a version in possession of Rev. Dalcho in Charleston. It is called *Ordo ab Chao: The Original and Complete Rituals, 4th-33rd Degrees of the first Supreme Council, 33rd Degree, at Charleston, South Carolina*, dated 1801 and 1802.[26] Many of the ritual degrees in this set differ from the Francken manuscript, representing an ongoing process of revision of those rituals. By careful study of each MS—there are a number of others leading up to Albert Pike's *Magnum Opus* (1857)—one is able to view the evolution and development of a very unique ritual tradition in America.

When comparing the Francken manuscript with the 4th through 33rd degree rituals in current use in the Southern Jurisdiction,[27] only the 4th through 22nd degrees correspond directly to each other. After the new creation of 23rd through 27th degrees, the 23rd of the Francken manuscript corresponds to the 28th in current use, followed by the creation of a new 29th degree, followed by the 24th of the Francken manuscript corresponding to the current 30th degree, then the creation and addition of a 31st degree, followed by the 25th of the Francken corresponding to the current 32nd, called the Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret. The format in order can be summarized as follows with the original Francken degrees underlined: 4-22 = 4-22; 23-27; 23 = 28; 29; 24 = 30; 31; 25 = 32. The main point is that the 19th degree of Grand Pontiff in the original Francken manuscript of 1783, despite a series of revisions, corresponds in name and number with the ritual in present use in both Northern and Southern jurisdictions.

Now back to the Francken manuscript of 1783, which is crucial for the study of the symbolism of King Solomon's Temple and New Jerusalem in early Scottish Rite Masonry. The opening summary of the degree, as paraphrased at the beginning of this article, is succeeded by a question and answer "catechism" that serves to initiate a candidate as a Grand Pontiff (see Appendix). Several significant points are mentioned in this conversation. First, the Celestial Jerusalem represents ancient, primordial Masonry, and comes down to replace the earthly city:

> A Square City of 4 equal sides with 3 gates on each side, on the middle of which is a Tree bearing 12 different fruits & Said City is suspended as on clouds, Crush-

ing a Serpent with 3 heads. The Square City represents ancient masonry, under the Title of Grand Pontiff, that comes down from Heaven to replace the ancient destructed temple, when Grand Pontiffs come to make it appear, as is represented by the Ruins and the 3 headed Serpent chained.

Secondly, this ancient masonry was taught by St. John,[28] who is understood as being "the first mason that held a perfection lodge,"[29] that is, the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. That is why he is considered the Patron Saint of the Scottish Rite.

In response to a query about the headband worn by the candidate, the Master replies that this was the article worn in previous times to guarantee entrance into the Celestial Lodge: "It procures him the entrance to our lodge, as it did procure entrance in Celestial Jerusalem to those who wore it—thus has St. John explained himself." The golden stars on the blue hangings within the lodge appear to represent all the Masons who will reside eternally in the Celestial Jerusalem: "the stars represent those masons who have given proofs of their attachment to the statutes and rules of this order, which in the End will make them deserving of Entering the Celestial Jerusalem."[30] This was later dropped from the symbolism.

In 1855, the Supreme Council in Charleston decided to revise the existing rituals in their possession. Within two years, Albert Pike had single-handedly, from his own expense, published his *Magnum Opus*, being his revision of the complete rituals of the Scottish Rite. Analysis shows that Pike probably did not have access to the Francken manuscript, but only a set of degrees in use at that time. According to the Foreword in Pike's work,

Only 100 copies of his initial revisions were printed—less than thirty said to survive. Pike's work was so impressive he was made an active member of the Supreme Council and became the most revered Sovereign Grand Commander in the history of the Rite.[31]

He was initiated in the thirty-two degrees of the Scottish Rite in Charleston on 20 March 1853, under the direction of Albert G. Mackey, the famous Masonic scholar and historian. Formerly a Civil War hero on the Confederate side, Pike became a kind of renaissance Mason in that he was vastly learned in all branches of occultism, Kabbalah, gnosticism, Hinduism, and other ancient religions and esoteric doctrines, which he brought to or revived within Freemasonry.

Henceforth, the Southern Jurisdiction followed the degrees as presented by Albert Pike, first set down in *Magnum Opus*, and later in a set of revised rituals called *Liturgy of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for Southern Jurisdiction of the United States* (1878).[32] A substantial part of the extended commentarial lectures on each of the

degrees which are included in the *Magnum Opus* form the contents of Pike's more famous separate book *Morals and Dogma*[33] published in Charleston in 1871. This work was once widely circulated and even given to successful candidates after finishing the 14th degree.

The degree of Grand Pontiff as reworked by Pike in his *Magnum Opus* (1857) displays significant modifications and additions compared with the Francken manuscript. As in the Francken manuscript, the lodge has blue hangings with stars of gold, yet there is also one large spherical transparency behind the master's seat in the east. Around the lodge room are twelve columns engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve names of God in Hebrew, twelve signs of the zodiac, and the initials of the twelve apostles. The master wears a white linen robe (worn by those among the 144,000 in St. John's Revelation), but also on his chest is the Jewish High Priest's jeweled breast plate, the Urim and Thummim, the twelve divining stones of ancient Israel. The candidate is dressed as in the 18th degree of Knight of the Rose Croix and is conducted into the lodge. After the brethren sing an "ode," the blindfolded candidate is led twelve times counterclockwise stopping at a different column at each round. After hearing messages about the twelve tribes, etc., the candidate is then hurriedly placed in dark seclusion and silence for five minutes. Then there is a lecture from several brothers about those who worship the Beast and wear the number 666 on their forehead, and about the seven vials of God's wrath described in Revelation. After this, the candidate is brought into a lighted room with a large painting of the New Jerusalem. While Lord God the Redeemer is mentioned in the oration, there is no actual naming of Jesus or the Christ. The candidate then kneels at a Bible on the altar to receive his obligations (oaths and instructions). In this version, the candidate is made a priest in the Order of Melchizedek, which apparently is the same thing as a Grand Pontiff or Scottish Mason. He is then given the sign, token, password, and sacred word of the degree. While in the Francken manuscript the candidate's cordon (sash) is worn from the right shoulder to the left hip, in the Pike version it is the opposite, a small detail indeed, but one that elicits a recollection of Pike's Hindu studies that may have informed him about the way high caste Brahmins wear their sacred threads from the left shoulder to the right hip.

Pike's unique symbolic interpretation of the twelve tribes and twelve apostles is as follows:

> The 12 tribes, whose initials adorn the columns, and are seen on the pearl gates of the city, are emblematical of the human race; and the 12 apostles, whose initials also on the bases of the columns, and on the foundations of the city, are to us the type of all those who have labored to reform, instruct, and elevate mankind.[34]

The candidate is then told to step in succession on the three heads of the Serpent as the Master says: "So shall the foot of Truth crush error! So honesty and honor trample on falsehood! So charity tread in the dust Intolerance!"[35] At this point in the degree, there is a commentarial lecture by Pike which is substantially the same as that contained in *Morals and Dogma.* This is used in whole or in part by both Northern and Southern jurisdictions.

Beside the additions provided by Pike's revisions of the Grand Pontiff degree, there are a couple of items which he omitted that were prominent in the Francken manuscript: the reference to the twelve fruits on the Tree of Life in Jerusalem, mention of St. John as the first Mason of the Lodge of Perfection, and the explanation of the golden stars on the blue hangings. Pike's version of the Grand Pontiff rite in his *Magnum Opus* is essentially the same, with slight alteration, as that contained in Pike's *Liturgy* published in 1878.

In the 1953 version of the 19th Degree printed for the Northern Jurisdiction, which declares itself a "thorough and critical revision of the text,"[36] there appears a significant effort to distinguish Freemasonry from Roman Catholic and Christian affiliation. This includes deleting several Christian-like themes and statements found in earlier Northern versions such as that of Charles T. McClenachen (1867, 1885). McClenachen had included a large gold cross and a rose in his version of the degree along with musical settings of hymns to be sung. In the catechism he used phrases like "O Heavenly Father," "unto the Great Jehovah," and "Amen."[37]

The 1953 Northern edition also affirms that the name "Grand Pontiff" does not refer to the leader of the Roman Catholic Church. The editors of this ritual emphasize that prior to the term's use by Roman Catholicism to refer to a member of the council of priests in the Pontifical College that advised the Emperor, a pontiff was a priest in the ancient Roman religion who kept the path open between humans and the gods. Hence each candidate for this degree is transformed through initiation into a Grand Pontiff, *pontifex maximus,* or "great bridge-builder," from the Latin *pontifex, ponti* meaning "bridge" and *facere,* "to make," with the added sense that each initiate symbolically builds a bridge to the future Masonic utopia or kingdom as a "path-finder," and acts as a philosopher-priest in the order of Melchizedek.[38] Thus instead of having a single messiah figure, Freemasonry prepares each of its members for a key role in transforming the world.

In the Northern ritual, as revised in 1886 in a break both from the rituals of Albert Pike in the South and McClenachen in the North, the aspiring philosopher/candidate is given the name Philetus. After entering the Lodge, Philetus proceeds to engage in conversations with the shades of four great wise men of the past, namely Philo, Manu (the Hindu lawgiver), Hermes, and St. John the Evangelist. In the newer

ritual of 1953, the name of Manu has been replaced by Epicurus and his teaching,[39] and there are a total of five scenes: A Chapter of Grand Pontiffs, Journey to the Shades, The Return, Spirit of Evil vs. Spirit of Masonry, The Anointing of a Grand Pontiff.

In the last scene, after Philetus is anointed a Grand Pontiff, the Senior Prelate quotes Revelation 21: 2-3:

> And I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God.

Then the Grand Pontiff gives the Masonic explanation:

> The vision of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, cherished by all Grand Pontiffs, is a symbol of God's ultimate triumph in the hearts of men and in the councils of mankind. It is a summons to high adventure and to spiritual conquest. To sow that others may reap, to work for those who shall labor after we are dead, to be an inspiration in the lives of men yet unborn, to bless with the glorious gifts of truth and light and liberty those who will never know the giver—this, Philetus, is the true office of a Mason and the proudest destiny of a man.
>
> Philetus, lifting the globular mirror from its pedestal and holding it aloft, facing west, exclaims, "Alleluia! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Anointed, and he shall reign forever and forever. Amen and Amen."[40]

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Scottish Rite Lodges incorporated new technologies in their degree work. These rapidly expanding institutions built special theaters and auditoriums for their enactments that included novel varieties of audio-visual effects and scenic backdrops. But despite the prevalence of the Holy City image in the material ritual equipment of the Southern Jurisdiction, in the revised Northern degree of 1953 there are statements indicating why a scenic backdrop depicting the New Jerusalem is discouraged in the North. In a short section entitled, "For Officers and Directors of Work," we find, "The use of a Tracing Board or backdrop depicting the New Jerusalem is not recommended. While this is traditional, few of these scenes have artistic merit. The New Jerusalem in the 19th degree is a symbol to be interpreted spiritually."[41] Yet both jurisdictions, North and South, continue to emphasize New Jerusalem either visually or through verbal imagery.

Despite the abundant use of biblical symbols and references in the ritual and literature of Freemasonry, and its inclusive social character, we should not presume that the relationship between Freemasonry and Christianity has been amicable. The situation is the reverse. Nothing in

Masonic tradition is overtly hostile to Christianity, although there is a conspicuous absence of Jesus Christ in the Masonic rituals and vision, and although Masonry seemed to espouse, like the philosopher Kant, the possibility of a moral system independent of divine revelation. Yet the fraternity has endured strong condemnation over the last 350 years (nearly 650 years if you go back to the torture and execution of the Knights Templar Order in the fourteenth century). Affiliating itself with a kind of Newtonian Deism associated with the Enlightenment, that is, a naturalistic religion with a Supreme Creator God/Being termed the "Great Architect of the Universe" who is rational and above revelation, Freemasonry differed radically from traditional Christian theological assumptions about the human condition and its need for salvation and redemption from original sin.

Moreover, the secrecy and arcane symbolism of its rituals and literature confused many outsiders, such that today, "most major conservative Christian denominational bodies have issued official declarations condemning Masonry as a non-Christian and/or an anti-Christian religion."[42] A statement by the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, expresses the over-all concern of Christians: "the Lodge is a religion—a Christless religion—and thus . . . totally incompatible with Christianity and to be avoided by every Christian." But the strongest objections to Freemasonry have emerged from the Roman Catholic Church, including direct prohibition, condemnation, and even execution.

Further discussion regarding the continuously antagonistic relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and Freemasonry will be helpful in understanding the context for the development of the fraternity. Because of its teachings and perspectives, Freemasonry has been a principal target of official denunciation by the Roman Catholic Church for over two centuries up to the present day. Nearly every pope has supported its condemnation along with the penalty of excommunication for Catholics who become Masons. Because of the severity and frequent reiteration of these pronouncements, and several references to Freemasonry as the "Synagogue of Satan," any serious consideration of Freemasonry in academic scholarship must take this context into account regarding its growth and development.

The Roman Catholic perspective on Freemasonry is boldly stated by the Jesuit author and professor, Edward Cahill, S.J.: "Freemasonry is the central enemy of the Catholic Church."[43] Citing official documents, including the *Humanum Genus* of Pope Leo XIII on the title page ("Let us remember that Christianity and Freemasonry are, by their nature, irreconcilable"), Cahill explains in his book, *Freemasonry and the Anti-Christian Movement*, how the church faults Freemasonry for almost every liberal or progressive event in modern European history, including the French and Italian revolutions, the emancipation of the Jews, the unification of the German states, the suppression of the Jesuits, socialism,

the spoliation of the papal states, the creation of the United States of America, the basic freedoms of speech, press, and religion, the separation of church and state, the secularization of marriage, and even the establishment of state-supported education.

Despite the reforms of Vatican II, however, Freemasonry is still considered off-limits for all Catholics, as are derivative organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Elks, Moose, Oddfellows, Lion's Club, Boy Scouts, Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association), and occult groups such as the Theosophical Society and Order of the Golden Dawn.[44] The Catholic fraternity known as the Knights of Columbus provides a masonic-like body only for Catholics so they won't associate "on the level" with non-Catholics (i.e., Jews and Protestants) in real Masonic groups. Jewish fraternities like B'nai Br'ith are derived from Freemasonry as well.

Within twenty years of the official "public" formation of Freemasonry in 1717, Pope Clement XII forbade Catholics membership in the Lodge (1738), and seven other popes have followed suit in their warnings against affiliation of Catholics with Masonry. According to Catholic tradition, the three major reasons for the Vatican's proscription of Freemasonry are: 1) Paganism and Naturalism: "Masonry constitutes a religion of naturalism which considers basic Christian doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the necessity of Baptism, and the role of the Church in the plan of salvation to be quite incidental." 2) Secrecy: "The Lodge exacts a series of oaths, agreeing to the most horrible self-mutilation [symbolic] in order to protect a few passwords and secret grips. . . ." 3) Anti-clericalism: "The Masonic order has historically sought to destroy the Catholic Church and to substitute a purely secular society. Posing as nonpartisan in religious affairs the lodge plumps for abolishment of parochial schools, easy divorce laws, cremation, suppression of religious orders especially the Society of Jesus, and the separation of Church and State never envisioned by the framers of the First Amendment." In his historic bull called *In Eminenti* (28 April 1738), Pope Clement XII stated that, "We have determined and decreed that these same Societies, Meetings, Gatherings, Lodges or Conventicles, of Liberi Muratori, or Freemasons, or by whatever name called, . . . should be condemned and prohibited as by this present Constitution we do condemn and prohibit them."[45] Pope Pius VII (1821), Leo XII (1825), Pius VIII (1829), and Gregory XVI (1832) issued bulls against Freemasonry. Pope Pius IX issued six bulls condemning Freemasonry between 1846 and 1873. Pope Leo XIII, prompted by the Jesuits, was one of Freemasonry's staunchest foes and wrote the encyclical letter on Freemasonry entitled *Humanum Genus* in 1884. This letter divided the world into two camps, that of God and that of Satan. Freemasonry was stated to be in the camp of the latter.

Protestant criticism of Freemasonry is almost as scathing and includes official condemnations by the Baptist Union of Scotland, the British

Methodist Church, the Church of England, the Presbyterian Church of America, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Southern Baptist Convention, Holiness and Pentecostal Churches' Constitution and By-Laws, Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Quakers, Mennonites, Plymouth Brethren, Wesleyan Methodist Church, Free Methodist Church, many fundamentalist churches, the Salvation Army, and Eastern Orthodox churches. I am unaware of any evidence that it has been banned by any Jewish organization or synagogue.

Since Masonic traditions lack any reference to a specific messiah figure, to any kind of judgment, or to a millennium in the sense of a 1000-year period, I prefer to use the word "utopia" rather than "millennium" in delineating a specifically Masonic vision for the future both on the earth and in the Celestial Lodge Above. The concept of utopia, in distinction from chiliastic movements, is described by historian of religion James C. Livingston:

> Unlike the revolutionist, it does not look to the violent overturn of the present world; rather, it looks to the human reconstruction of the world on a communitarian basis and according to a divinely given plan. It is more radical than the reformist groups in that it calls not only for social improvement and reform but also for a total social reorganization in which evil is eliminated.[46]

John Michael Greer has recently distinguished three basic types of futuristic visions in Western history: arcadian, millenarian, and utopian. The arcadian tradition grounds human happiness in a flight from the social realm into a world governed wholly by nature. The millenarian tradition looks to a final irruption of the transcendent, a *deus ex machina*, into the world of social experience as a solution to the problems of suffering and evil. The utopian tradition envisions human society as perfectible through human action and understanding as expressed in social arrangements.[47]

Freemasonry thus fits best into Greer's latter category. But while some scholars prefer to limit the scope of utopia to the literary description of an already perfected place that is discovered by outside adventurers, Frank Manual has broadened the term from its original connotation in Thomas More's work: "Utopia also came to denote general programs and platforms for ideal societies, codes, and constitutions that dispensed with the fictional apparatus altogether."[48]

Furthermore, British scholar Margaret Jacob has observed in her study of Masonic utopian visions that

> The British masonic imagination took flight. It became not just speculative but frequently utopian. . . . In its essential optimism masonic literature is utopian; it looks to the secular and social order for perfectibility. But in so looking it exhibits a distinctly practical attitude. Although concerned with the coherence and

rationality of the ideal society, British masonic utopian literature imagines that such an order is in some sense possible.[49]

As indicated in the teachings and degree work, Freemasonry works with a practical vision that a divinely guided utopia on earth is not only possible but in many ways probable, especially as the fraternity continues to expand worldwide. Originally based in part on the emerging optimism and belief in progress stimulated by the philosophy of Descartes and Newtonian science, and then spread throughout the Enlightenment period, Masonic utopian thought increasingly saw God, or the Grand Architect of the Universe, bringing about the ideal society through the gradual operation of natural laws rather than through divine intervention. In Freemasonry, the "divine or superhuman plan" would in fact be a disciplined collective moral imperative enacted solely and gradually in conjunction with the perpetually unfolding designs of the "Great Architect of the Universe."

Functioning as a certain type of "progressive utopianism," then, Freemasonry has nonetheless incorporated biblical themes and images that are ordinarily part of literal millennial events in some Christian traditions. Eschewing the actual role of Jesus Christ and his millennial reign, Masonic utopianism has employed the images of King Solomon's Temple and the New Jerusalem as symbols for a future kingdom produced by a succession of many generations of virtuous Masons who labor for the general welfare of humankind in collaboration with a Supreme Being. Moreover, parallel to the personal immortality of Masons in the Celestial Lodge Above, immortality in Masonry is also understood to reflect the charitable and beneficial acts that remain after the demise of the person, such that the conglomerate of Masonic brothers around the world, each acting as a Grand Pontiff or "bridge-builder" by performing good deeds over many years, is believed to bestow a cumulative effect of "immortality" that ushers in a permanently perfected society in which good has gradually and incrementally triumphed over all past evil.

> It is the dead that govern. The living only obey. (Napoleon still rules France, Plato and other sages of ancient Greece are still the Kings of Philosophy. The law of Muhammad still governs a fourth of the human race). What other men in the past have done, said, thought, makes the great iron network of circumstance that environs and controls us all. . . . The thoughts of the past are the laws of the present and the future. That which we say and do, if its effects last not beyond our lives, is unimportant. That which shall live when we are dead, as part of the great body of law enacted by the dead, is the only act worth doing, the only thought worth speaking. The desire to do something that shall benefit the world, when neither praise nor obloquy will reach us where we sleep soundly in the grave, is the noblest ambition entertained by men. It is the ambition of a true and genuine Mason.[50]

APPENDIX

Grand Pontiff

Catechism from the Francken MS of 1783
(edited for clarity)

The Degree of the Sublime Grand Pontiff:

Q. What are you?
A. I am a Sublime Grand Pontiff.
Q. Where have you received this degree?
A. In a place that neither wants Sun nor Moon to light it.
Q. Explain this to me.
A. As the Grand Pontiffs never want any artificial light to light them, in the same manner, the faithful and true brothers the Sublime Grand Pontiffs do not want Riches nor Titles to be admitted into the Sublime Lodge, as they prove themselves in their attachment to Masonry and faithfulness in their obligations, & true friendship to their brethren in general.
Q. What represents the draught of the Lodge?
A. A Square City of 4 equal sides with 3 gates on each side, on the middle of which is a Tree bearing 12 different fruits & Said City is suspended as on clouds, Crushing a Serpent with 3 heads.
Q. Explain this to me.
A. The Square City represents ancient masonry, under the Title of Grand Pontiff, that comes down from Heaven to replace the ancient destructed temple, when Grand Pontiffs come to make it appear, as is represented by the Ruins and the 3 headed Serpent chained.
Q. How comes Masonry falling to ruin, as we are tied and attached indissolubly by our obligations which cannot be equivocal?
A. As it was decreed in all times, which we learn by St. John, who we know was the first mason that held a perfection lodge.
Q. Where does St. John say this?
A. In his Revelations, where he speaks of Babylon and the Celestial Jerusalem.
Q. What signifies the Tree with the 12 different fruits in the center of Said City?
A. The Tree of Life is placed there, to make us understand, where the sweets of life are to be found; and the 12 fruits signify, that we meet every month to instruct ourselves mutually, and sustain each other against our enemies.
Q. What signifies the fillet or veil, that the candidate is blinded with, and the twelve golden stars, thereon?

A. It procures him the entrance to our lodge, as it did procure the entrance in Celestial Jerusalem to those who wore it—thus has St. John explained himself.
Q. What signifies the 12 stars, on the fillet of the candidate, and those of the brethren?
A. They represent the 12 angels, who watch the 12 gates of Celestial Jerusalem.
Q. What signifies the blue hangings, and golden stars thereon?
A. The Blue is the symbol of Leniency, Fidelity, and Sweetness, which ought to be the share of all faithful and true brothers, and the stars represent those masons who have given proofs of their attachment to the statutes and rules of the order, which in the End will make them deserving of Entering the Celestial Jerusalem.

Lodge closes by saying Alpha and Omega and striking 12.

ENDNOTES

[1] Henry Andrew Francken, Francken Manuscript 1783 (Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing, n.d.). Typescript of 1783 handwritten manuscript. Paraphrase from 219-20.

[2] Webster's *Third New International Dictionary*, 1961, s.v. SYMBOL.

[3] Albert G. Mackey, *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences, Comprising the Whole Range of Arts, Sciences, and Literatures as Connected with the Institution*, new and rev. ed. (New York: Masonic History Company, 1924), 2:769.

[4] Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 4-5.

[5] Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 155.

[6] For a current analysis of the issues of Freemasonry's origins, see David Stevenson, *The Origin of Freemasonry: Scotland Century 1590-1710* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[7] John Hamill, *The Craft: A History of English Freemasonry* (London: Aquarian Press, 1986), 27.

[8] Jacob, 57.

[9] Jacob, 56.

[10] Mackey, 767.

[11] Alexander Horne, *King Solomon's Temple in the Masonic Tradition* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1972), 26.

[12] Horne, 58.

[13] Horne, 29, quoted from Knoop, Jones, and Hamer, *The Two Earliest Masonic MSS* (Manchester: 1938), Introduction.

[14] Horne, 117.

[15] Jacob, 55.

[16] For additional material on Masonic symbolism, see Allen E. Roberts, *The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism* (Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing Co., 1974), and Alex Horne, *Sources of Masonic Symbolism* (Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing Co., 1981).

[17] The Masonic meanings of all these tools are explained in the early ritual manual by Malcolm C. Duncan, *Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor* (New York: David McKay Company, 1866), 41, 82, 99-100. These meanings have remained essentially the same to the present day.

[18] Duncan, 52-53.

[19] Mackey, 621.

[20] *Ceremonials* (New Delhi: Grand Lodge of India, 1992), 222-23. This is a reprint of the London original of 1888).

[21] *Rare Esoteric Reprints and Freemasonry Books* (Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 1997), 9-10. An earlier account by Mackey is given: "In 1758 a body was organized at Paris called the Council of Emperors of the East and West. This Council organized a rite called the Rite of Perfection, which consisted of 25 degrees, the highest of which was Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret. In 1761, this Council granted a Patent or Deputation to Stephen Morin (said by several writers to be a Jew), authorizing him to propagate the Rite in the Western continent" (671).

[22] Other names among the eleven founders are Rabbi Abraham Alexander, Dr. Isaac Auld, Dr. James Moultrie, Emanuel De La Motta, Major Thomas B. Bowen, Jean Baptiste Marie Delahogue, Moses C. Levy, Israel De Lieben, and Comte Alexandre Francois Auguste De Grasse. For further information on the eleven founders, see Ray Baker Harris, *Eleven Gentlemen of Charleston* (Washington D.C.: Supreme Council, 1959).

[23] A good single-volume history of Scottish Rite Masonry is Walter Fox, *Lodge of the Double-Headed Eagle* (Fayetteville, AK: University of Arkansas Press, 1997). See also James D. Carter, *History of the Supreme Council* 33 (Washington D.C.: Supreme Council of A.A.S.R); vol. 1 (with Ray Baker Harris), 1801-1861 (1959); vol. 2, 1861-1891 (1967); vol. 3, 1891-1921 (1971); vol. 4, 1921-1997 (1998).

[24] Kessinger, *Rare Esoteric Reprints and Freemasonry Books*, 10.

[25] *Nineteenth Degree: Grand Pontiff* (Boston: Grand Secretary of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Northern Jurisdiction, 1953), 4.

[26] *Ordo ab Chao: The Original and Complete Rituals, 4th-33rd Degrees of the first Supreme Council, 33rd Degree, at Charleston, South Carolina*, dated 1801 and 1802. Anonymous. Copies of the versions of Rev. Frederick Dalcho (Episcopal Church), one of the founders of the first Supreme Council, 446 pages (Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing, Reprint, n.d.).

[27] The reference source for the current Scottish Rite Southern Jurisdiction degree information is Rex R. Hutchens, *A Bridge to Light* (Washington D.C.: The Supreme Council, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, 1988).

[28] The number symbolism and esoteric nature of St. John's Revelation have led many Masonic thinkers to postulate that St. John was himself an initiate of a mystery school, or perhaps an Essene as Mackey has claimed.

[29] See Appendix.

[30] All quotes from Francken Manuscript 1783, 220-21.

[31] Albert Pike, *The Magnum Opus or Great Work* (Kila, MT: Kessinger Reprint of 1857 edition, 1992), i.

[32] Albert Pike, *Liturgy of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for Southern Jurisdiction of the United States* (New York: J. J. Little & Co., 1878). Part 1 (degrees 1-3), Part 2 (degrees 4-14), Part 3 (degrees 15-18), Part 4 (degrees 19-30). Parts 2-4 reprinted by Kessinger Publishing, n.d., 700 pages.

[33] Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma* (Charleston, SC: Supreme Council of A.A.S.R. 33, 1871). Reprinted by Supreme Council, Washington D.C., 1950.

[34] Pike, *Magnum Opus*, xix-8.

[35] Pike, *Magnum Opus*, 8.

[36] *Nineteenth Degree: Grand Pontiff.*

[37] Charles T. McClenachen, *The Book of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*

(New York: McCoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., 1914 [1867, 1885], 291-301.

[38] *Nineteenth Degree: Grand Pontiff*, 7-8.

[39] As I was unable to acquire the original 1886 Northern ritual of Grand Pontiff, I could not examine the "teachings" of Manu as they were included in this section of the degree.

[40] *Nineteenth Degree: Grand Pontiff*, 45-46.

[41] *Nineteenth Degree: Grand Pontiff*, 17.

[42] John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge: A Christian Perspective* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 44.

[43] Rev. E. Cahill, S.J., *Freemasonry and the Anti-Christian Movement* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, Ltd., 1952), viii. Besides being highly anti-Masonic, this work reveals an intensity of anti-Semitism that suggests the need for further study into the relation between anti-Masonry and anti-Semitism, especially within Roman Catholicism and the Society of Jesus.

[44] See Cahill, 150-51, and William J. Whalen, *Christianity and American Freemasonry* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1958).

[45] All quotes from Whalen, 105. See also Vicomte Leon De Poncins, *Freemasonry and the Vatican* (London: Britons Publishing Company, 1968).

[46] James C. Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion*, 3d ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1998), 176.

[47] John Michael Greer, "Hermeticism and the Utopian Imagination," *Alexandria 4*, ed. David Fideler (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1997), 381.

[48] Frank E. Manual and Fritzie P. Manual, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979), 2.

[49] Jacob, 52-53.

[50] Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, 315, 317.

Are Mormons Christians? Presbyterians, Mormons, and the Question of Religious Definitions

Kent P. Jackson

What is a Christian? What are the theological or historical characteristics that define a person, a faith-system, or a religious perspective as Christian? Is there an accepted definition of what constitutes Christian beliefs and practices? Can one define oneself as Christian? Or must the designation be conferred by someone else? If so, by whom?

Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, and Seventh-day Adventists are frequently listed among those who while considering themselves Christians are really something else, based on specific beliefs or historical circumstances that others find to be outside their definition of Christianity. They, in turn, have their own reasons, and their own definitions, for including themselves. But who has the authority to create the definitions and make the judgments regarding who are Christians and who are not?[1]

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly called Mormons) are generally surprised when they hear the claim that they are not Christians. They think of themselves as Christians, and since they believe in Jesus Christ, they have always assumed that Christianity includes them. But there are many from other denominations who hold a different view. With over eleven million members and growing fast, the Latter-day Saint Church is a religious movement that by virtue of its rapid expansion and missionary zeal attracts a great deal of attention. Part of that attention comes in the form of negative reactions from others who consider themselves Christian but who see Mormonism as outside the perimeter of the Christian faith.

When Latter-day Saints are confronted by the assertion that they are not Christian, they frequently quote the first of what they call their "Articles of Faith," which reads as follows: "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."[2] Most Latter-day Saints feel that this statement of their beliefs proves beyond question that they are Christians. But far from establishing in the mind of the orthodox Christian listener that Mormonism is a Christian religion, the

recited Article of Faith reaffirms that Latter-day Saints are anything but Christians and that there is something profoundly non-Christian about what they believe.[3]

The question, of course, has to do with what words mean. Given what Latter-day Saints have in mind when they say "God," "Jesus Christ," and "the Holy Ghost," and what those of established Christian movements have in mind with those same words, the first Article of Faith does not confirm that Latter-day Saints are part of the Christian tradition. To some Christians, it does precisely the opposite, because as understood by Latter-day Saints, it announces a rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity, the core belief of traditional Christianity.

Early in 1995, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) issued a statement entitled "Relations with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Its People: Position Paper." Originally drafted by the Presbytery of Utah in Salt Lake City for its own use, some months later it was accepted by the national church as its official statement on the topic. Perhaps the document was motivated in part by the fact that the General Assembly, the annual national meeting of that denomination for 1995, was held in Salt Lake City, the world headquarters of the LDS Church.

The purpose of the Position Paper seems to be to answer the question within the framework of Presbyterian theology of whether Latter-day Saints are Christians. Although it concludes that they are *not* Christians, a conclusion with which Latter-day Saints will not agree, many will have a favorable view of it anyway and see it as a document that for the most part does a good job dealing with the issues.

In this article, I will examine the Presbyterian document's analysis of LDS theology and the criteria that the Position Paper uses to evaluate Mormonism's claim to being a Christian religion. To be sure, the ideas proposed by the Presbyterians are their own and may not reflect those of Christians or Protestants in general. But the Presbyterian document is worth our attention because it proposes an actual set of definitions, questions, and criteria that establish clearly what for them constitutes a Christian and what, conversely, is outside the Christian faith. My purpose is not to argue whether Latter-day Saints are Christians but to explore the question, the approach taken by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to deal with the question, and the issues of theology, semantics, and perception that are raised by the question.

The matter of whether Latter-day Saints are Christians may be of interest for intellectual reasons, or for reasons of understanding LDS acquaintances better. But the intent of the Presbyterian Position Paper in asking the question seems to be to deal better with theological matters of significance relating to interactions between the two denominations. For example:

*Question: If a Latter-day Saint should decide to become a Presbyterian, is his or her LDS baptism to be considered valid for inclusion into the Presbyterian Church? Answer: No. Whereas the baptisms of most other denominations that consider themselves Christian would be considered valid, LDS baptism is not.

*Question: May officials of the LDS Church "be invited to administer the Lord's Supper in a congregation of the Presbyterian Church?" Answer: No.

*Question: How are marriages between Presbyterians and Latter-day Saints to be considered? Answer: They are interreligious marriages.

*Question: "In geographic areas where Mormon culture is dominant,"[4] how is the Christian ministry to be carried out? Answer: "In a cross cultural context."[5]

The Position Paper analyzes the question of whether Mormonism is a Christian faith by referring to guidelines in the Presbyterian Church's "constitution," consisting of its *Book of Confessions* and its *Book of Order,* which together "set forth the basic theological framework within which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) defines and understands itself and thus determines its relationship with other churches and religions."[6] Those two books provide what the Position Paper calls "three concentric circles" which define the church's faith. The largest circle is "the Church catholic or universal." This circle is followed by "the Protestant Reformation." The final circle is "the Reformed tradition."[7] The Position Paper sets out to determine where the LDS Church and its people fit in relation to the three concentric circles.

With regard to the largest of these concentric circles, the *Book of Order* states:

> In its confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) gives witness to the faith of the Church catholic. The confessions express the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church in the recognition of the canonical Scriptures and the formulation and adoption of the ecumenical creeds, notably the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds with their definitions of the mystery of the triune God and of the incarnation of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ.[8]

The Position Paper concludes that "if [the LDS Church] shares faith commitments about the canonical Scriptures, and the creedal definitions of the mystery of the triune God, and the incarnation of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ, it must be regarded as a sister church and its members as brothers and sisters in Christ."[9] Accordingly, the document examines the LDS faith in the three areas mentioned: first, whether it accepts the canonical scriptures; second, whether it accepts the creeds; and third, whether it accepts the doctrine of the Trinity. I will follow the format of the Presbyterian document and examine the LDS faith in these three areas to determine whether Mormonism can be categorized as a Christian faith according to the Presbyterian definition.

THE CANONICAL SCRIPTURES

The reference in the Position Paper to acceptance of the "canonical Scriptures" makes no distinction between the Protestant Bible used by Presbyterians and the other Bibles used in the Roman Catholic and Eastern traditions. Latter-day Saints use the Protestant Bible. Joseph Smith stated in 1842: "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly."[10] "Translated," in this context, includes the whole process of transmission from original manuscript to modern-language translations. I would characterize the consensus LDS view on the Bible to be not too far removed from that of conservative Christians who believe the Bible to be inspired and basically inerrant in its autographs. Yet there are two fundamental differences between the conservative Christian view of the Bible and the LDS view.

First, Latter-day Saints believe that to a greater or lesser degree the biblical books have been subject to errors and omissions.[11] Thus, while they accept the reliability of the autographs, they are less confident than are most conservative Christians that currently extant manuscripts faithfully represent the originals.

Second, Latter-day Saints understand the Bible through the lens of Mormonism's other scriptures, which are equal in authority with the Bible but which provide the framework through which the Bible is interpreted.

But the largest difference between Mormonism and traditional Christianity with respect to scripture is that Mormonism's canon includes three other books that never were part of the Christian canon but are believed to have been revealed from God to Joseph Smith, the founding prophet of their religion. These are the Book of Mormon, considered an ancient sacred history similar to the Bible;[12] the Doctrine and Covenants, a collection of Joseph Smith's revelations;[13] and the Pearl of Great Price, additional writings and revelations.[14] In English-language versions, these books total 886 pages of uniquely Latter-day Saint scripture. Much of the distinctive LDS doctrine comes from these sources or from the interpretation of the Bible through these sources.

The LDS canon does not stop with these books. Joseph Smith said, "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."[15] Mormonism has an open canon. It is open in the sense that other writings can be added to it, and it is open in the sense that Latter-day Saints believe in ongoing revelation to the church through a succession of modern prophets and apostles who continue to speak God's word.[16]

Thus, scriptural authority in the LDS Church rests in its canonized scriptures, in the teachings of Joseph Smith, and in the official pronouncements of other church leaders since the days of Joseph Smith.

It seems that with three additional books of scripture and with a belief in an open canon, Mormonism could not be considered Christian according to the stipulation of the Presbyterian document. The Position Paper itself, however, does not take a stand on whether Mormonism's view of canon allows it to be classified as a Christian faith. It defers judgment until an examination is completed of the content of those additional books to evaluate their theology.[17]

THE CREEDS

The next test of the Christianity of Mormonism in the Position Paper is whether Mormonism accepts "the formulation and adoption of the ecumenical creeds, notably the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds."[18]

In this area there is no question. The LDS faith rejects entirely the ecumenical creeds, the processes that produced them, the authority of those who created them, and much of the doctrine they contain.

Mormonism's self-definition includes a belief in what Latter-day Saints call "the Apostasy." They believe that with the death of the ancient apostles of Jesus, the apostolic authority to act in Jesus' name was taken from the earth, and true Christianity eventually became lost. They believe that without apostolic guidance, much of the true teaching of Jesus was changed, removed, or radically reinterpreted through the influences of the prevailing culture. Thus what Latter-day Saints call "the Apostasy" is the process that they believe took place whereby the church of Jesus died, as a historical event, while the Christianity that remained and continued to develop in subsequent centuries was neither guided by Jesus' revelations nor recognized by Jesus as legitimate.

Latter-day Saints believe that this period of apostasy was interrupted dramatically in 1820 when God and Jesus appeared to Joseph Smith and began a process of divine revelation that restored through him Jesus' church, the ancient apostolic authority to guide the church, and the doctrines that had been lost in earlier centuries. This process is what Latter-day Saints call "the Restoration," which they view as the undoing of the Apostasy. Thus Latter-day Saints hold to the belief that theirs is the only church that possesses God's authority and the full message of his gospel, and that it is the only church acknowledged by God as his own.

With this belief in a historical apostasy and a historical restoration, Mormonism rejects what the Presbyterian document calls "the formulation and adoption of the ecumenical creeds,"[19] believing that those creeds were formulated without divine inspiration or sanction.

Thus by the Presbyterian definition, the LDS faith, with its disavowal of the historical continuity of Christianity and the creeds and doctrines that came through that historical process, cannot be considered

Christian. The Position Paper concludes accurately: "The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are on opposite sides of the fence in the matter of the ecumenical creeds, and share no common commitments in this area."[20] The General Assembly stated that while Mormonism is a "religion that expresses allegiance to Jesus Christ in terms used within the Christian tradition," it "is not, however, within the historic apostolic tradition of the Christian Church."[21]

THE TRINITY

The third of the three tests in the Position Paper is whether the LDS faith accepts "'the mystery of the triune God,' as defined by the ecumenical creeds."[22]

To be brief, the LDS understanding of God is radically different from that presented in the creeds, and Latter-day Saints do not believe in the Trinity. The doctrine of the nature of God is the area in which Mormonism differs most profoundly from historical Christian tradition. To point out the contrasts, I will quote the words of Joseph Smith, as recorded by scribes from his sermons:

1. *God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are three separate beings.* Joseph Smith said, "Any person that has seen the heavens opened knows that there are three personages in the heavens holding the keys of power."[23] "Every one [is] a different or separate person, and so [are] God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost separate persons. But they all agree in one or the selfsame thing."[24]

This doctrine is significant for how the LDS faith is viewed because it disagrees so fundamentally with the received Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Joseph Smith said, "I have always declared God to be a distinct personage. Jesus Christ [is] a separate and distinct person from God the Father; the Holy Ghost is a distinct personage or spirit. And these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods."[25]

2. *God and Jesus have bodies of flesh and bones.* According to Joseph Smith, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also."[26] "There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones."[27] Belief that God has a material body is a significant departure from Christian tradition. As expressed in the Westminster Confession, God is "a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, . . . incomprehensible."[28] Perhaps an even more significant departure from tradition, however, is the LDS belief that God's body is not only composed of matter but of flesh and bones, which in LDS theology suggests something of the relationship between deity and humans.

3. *God is a man.* Joseph Smith said: "God, that sits enthroned, is a man like one of yourselves. That is the great secret. If the veil were rent

today and the great God, who holds this world in its sphere or its orbit, [and] the planets—if you were to see him today you would see him in all the person, image, [and] very form of man. For Adam was created in the very fashion of God."[29] As the Presbyterian Position Paper states, "For Mormons, the biblical language describing God is not metaphorical. It is literal."[30]

4. *Humans may become as God is.* "What was the design of the Almighty in making man? It was to exalt him to be as God."[31] For Mormonism, that succinct statement from Joseph Smith explains why God created humans and what the ultimate purpose is for human existence. Joseph Smith taught that "all the spirits that God ever sent into this world are susceptible of enlargement." "God himself, . . . because he was greater, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself."[32] Latter-day Saints see the purpose of divine law as being to train women and men to develop fully the divine qualities that they receive from God and see in his works. They see the ultimate destiny of humankind, as Joseph Smith expressed it, as being "to inherit the same power [and] exaltation, until you ascend the throne of eternal power,"[33] "enjoying the same rise, exaltation, and glory, until you arrive at the station of a God."[34]

The Presbyterian document summarizes that "the doctrine of God and the doctrine of humanity are virtually the same in Mormon theology."[35] Indeed, in LDS theology, God and humans are of one species. They are profoundly different from each other, but the difference is not a difference in the kind of beings they are but a difference in their respective locations in a universal process that perfects intelligent life.

It is safe to say that the radically unique LDS view of God differs sufficiently from the traditional definitions established in the ecumenical councils and creeds to preclude Mormonism from being a Christian faith according to those definitions. The Position Paper discusses this matter in some detail: "The conclusion is inescapable that Mormon theology is tri-theistic rather than trinitarian. There are three gods who share the godhead. . . . It would be accurate to classify Mormon theology as polytheistic rather than monotheistic."[36] "There can be only one answer to the question of whether or not the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints shares 'the faith of the Church catholic' (*Book of Order* G-2.0300)." That answer is "No."[37]

The document continues: "From the point of view of our theological self-understanding and the Christian faith as we see it, Mormons do not share with us the faith of the church catholic and should be treated accordingly."[38] Thus, LDS baptism is not considered valid, LDS officials may not administer the Lord's Supper in Presbyterian congregations, marriage between a Presbyterian and a Latter-day Saint is considered "interreligious," and so forth.[39]

THE QUESTION OF DEFINITIONS

The Position Paper recognizes that definitions are critical in understanding other religions. While not classifying the LDS Church as Christian, it calls it a "religion that expresses allegiance to Jesus Christ *in terms used within the Christian tradition.*"[40] It goes on to say that "the potential is great for confusion and miscommunication resulting from sharing so many theological terms."[41] "The meanings given to the word 'God,'" for example, "are so different that there is virtually nothing in common."[42] "The word 'God' stands for very different realities in Presbyterian theology and Mormon theology."[43]

Latter-day Saints would agree in principle with those statements about the use of different meanings for the word "God." But they would probably disagree with the idea that comes next in the document that they and the Presbyterians do not even worship the same deity.[44] Latter-day Saints generally allow for a broader range of definition for the Christian God than that expressed in the Presbyterian document. Most would assert that they and the Presbyterians do indeed worship the same God but that Latter-day Saints have additional information about God. They would also say the same thing about God in Judaism and Islam.[45]

Mormonism has no official definition of what constitutes Christianity and who should be included as Christians. There is nothing in LDS doctrine that would exclude anyone, of any denomination, who believes in the Jesus of the New Testament. As to whether they themselves are Christians, Latter-day Saints use a definition very different from that of the Presbyterian document. When I asked a thirteen-year-old boy whether he and fellow Latter-day Saints are Christians, he responded: "We believe in Jesus, don't we? Doesn't that make us Christians?" This very unscientific anecdote is instructive because it presents the only definition that comes to mind among average Latter-day Saints.[46] Moreover, this is the definition that comes to mind among average non-Latter-day Saint Christians as well, despite official definitions of churches. Standard dictionary definitions stress belief, profession of belief, and lifestyle, rather than catechism or doctrinal details.[47]

The question of whether Latter-day Saints are Christians is simply not an issue among Latter-day Saints, who take for granted that they are and do not understand why some would want to define them otherwise. They identify themselves as Christians because they believe in Jesus and view him as the only means whereby they can be saved. Their holy books, the canonical sources of their doctrine, teach of Jesus in great detail. In all the unique LDS scriptures (excluding the Bible), the word *Jesus* appears 275 times, *Christ* 460 times, *Messiah* 38 times, *Lord* (usually with reference to Jesus) 2091 times, *Savior* 35 times, *save* and cognates with reference to Jesus over 100 times, *Redeemer* 63 times, *redeem* and cognates

with reference to Jesus 176 times, *atone* and cognates with reference to Jesus 41 times. Given what Latter-day Saints consider to be evidence of their Christianity according to their own definitions, they view themselves without hesitation as Christians and would want others to view them as Christians also.[48]

THE POSITION PAPER

"Relations with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Its People: Position Paper" deals for the most part responsibly and respectfully with this sensitive topic. But the twenty-page document shows signs of being the work of a committee, with predictable unevenness. The last seven pages, in which the conclusions are drawn, abandon the academic tone of the first part of the document, in which LDS doctrine is analyzed, to assume a more denominational bias.[49] On the whole, however, the Position Paper is a good example of civil religious discourse that includes an honest analysis, from a denominational perspective, of another religion. Three features of the paper stand out as being especially noteworthy.

First, the Position Paper uses responsible sources to present LDS beliefs. Good primary and secondary sources are used throughout the analysis.[50] This is unfortunately rare in a document of this kind.

Second, as a result of using good sources, the Position Paper represents Latter-day Saint doctrine accurately. In contrast, the many books, tracts, newsletters, and monographs that are produced in an effort to counter and refute Mormonism are generally consistent in their distortion of LDS beliefs. Most Latter-day Saints do not recognize their own beliefs in that kind of literature, because the authors frequently present as LDS teachings things that Latter-day Saints do not believe, or distort LDS beliefs beyond recognition.[51] The Presbyterian Position Paper in almost every instance states LDS beliefs as LDS persons believe them.

Third, the Position Paper invokes at the outset a rational, defensible, preexisting definition of what a Christian is and uses that definition as the criterion for determining whether Mormonism is a Christian faith.[52] While Latter-day Saints do not agree with the definition and therefore with the conclusion either, they can view it nonetheless as a definition that represents the point of view of many persons who call themselves Christians. In most of the literature that seeks to oppose or explain Mormonism, the definitions range from *ad hoc* to *ad hominem* and seem, to Latter-day Saints, to be intended not to examine or explain but to caricature and disparage. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) committee that produced the document is to be commended.

In general, it is not scholars who are contending that Latter-day Saints are not Christians. While historians might hold that view, based as in the

Presbyterian document on traditional historical and theological grounds, for the most part it is promoted by nonacademic critics whose scholarship, tone, and intent would be called into question in academic contexts.[53] But even when informed academics argue the position with rational criteria in mind such as those found in the Presbyterian document, their listeners and readers often understand something different. Because dictionary definitions and common parlance use the word *Christian* to mean one who believes in Jesus, those who are taught that Latter-day Saints are not Christians understand that to mean that Latter-day Saints do not believe in Jesus,[54] something that is demonstrably untrue as well as highly offensive to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The following points provide a more accurate characterization of Mormonism's claim to being a Christian religion, while highlighting the differences between it and historical Christianity:

1. Belief in the Bible;

2. Belief in the historical Jesus Christ as described in the New Testament;

3. Belief that Jesus is the source of human salvation, as described in the New Testament;

4. Belief that the post-resurrection New Testament Christian church received revelation from Jesus and was recognized by him as authoritative;

5. Belief that the New Testament church ended with the death of the apostles, due to apostasy from God's teachings;

6. Belief that the post-apostolic Christian church no longer received revelation from Jesus nor was recognized by him as authoritative;

7. Rejection of the subsequent developments in Christian beliefs, including the councils and creeds that established traditional Christian doctrine;

8. Belief in a restoration of true Christianity beginning in 1820, with the restoration of the apostleship, Jesus' pristine doctrine, and Jesus' divinely recognized church;

9. Belief that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints receives revelation from Jesus and is acknowledged by him as his church, just as was the primitive church in the days of the apostles.

Items 5-9 of these fundamental Latter-day Saint beliefs place Mormonism in direct contrast with orthodox Christianity and clearly outside of its historical tradition. Whether these provide sufficient grounds to label the LDS faith non-Christian depends on one's definitions. At the very least, it makes little sense, especially from an LDS point of view, to argue that Latter-day Saint history, beliefs, and self-definition fit easily among the other denominations of modern Christianity.

In many ways, Mormonism is radically unlike the rest of Christianity. But profound similarities exist in core beliefs, primarily because the LDS faith shares with other Christians a belief in the New Testament and a belief in Jesus as depicted in the New Testament (see items 1-4).

This article has not attempted to suggest motives for those who believe that Latter-day Saints (or Adventists, or Christian Scientists, or Jehovah's Witnesses, or others) are non-Christians. Some, such as the authors of the Presbyterian Position Paper, have doctrinal and historical reasons for excluding the Latter-day Saint faith. Others may have reasons founded on other criteria.[55] But based on recent statements by LDS Church leaders,[56] it is clear that the Latter-day Saints want others to view them as Christians because: (a) they view *themselves* as Christians, and (b) they feel that any other designation would misrepresent their beliefs. While dictionary definitions favor the LDS position, in the absence of some other universally recognized authority it is likely that disagreements of this sort will continue.

In the final analysis, it is not certain what meaning the question may have to the beliefs or practices of either camp. The Latter-day Saints have made it clear that how others define them will not have an impact on how they view themselves. As church president Gordon B. Hinckley stated in April 1998, "There are some of other faiths who do not regard us as Christians. That is not important. How we regard ourselves is what is important. We acknowledge without hesitation that there are differences between us."[57]

ENDNOTES

[1] I would like to express sincere thanks to the anonymous reviewers who read the manuscript of this article and made recommendations for its improvement.

[2] Pearl of Great Price, Article of Faith 1.

[3] In this paper I will refer to the general Christian faith that is recognized as within the historic apostolic tradition of universal Christianity with such terms as "orthodox Christianity," "traditional Christianity," or "historical Christianity." This would include Catholics, members of the Orthodox churches, and most who identify themselves as Protestants.

[4] Which includes only the U.S. state of Utah, the southeast corner of Idaho, and a few isolated communities in neighboring states.

[5] "Relations with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Its People: Position Paper" (Salt Lake City: The Presbytery of Utah, Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.], 21 January 1995), resolution of the 207th General Assembly (1995), cover document to the "Position Paper," 1–3.

[6] "Position Paper," 2.

[7] Ibid., 3.

[8] *Book of Order,* G-2.0300; cited in "Position Paper," 3.

[9] "Position Paper," 5

[10] Article of Faith 8.

[11] See Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:23–29.

[12] First published in 1830 in Palmyra, New York, the Book of Mormon is believed by Latter-day Saints to be the record of early inhabitants of the Americas, including the writings of their prophets and the account of Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to believers there.

[13] The Doctrine and Covenants was first published in 1835 and has been expanded in various subsequent editions. The current edition (1981) contains 138 revelations and two official declarations.

[14] The Pearl of Great Price was first compiled in 1851 and was canonized in 1880. It contains excerpts from Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible, a record of Abraham, excerpts of Joseph Smith's own history of Mormonism's founding events, and a list of authoritative belief statements.

[15] Article of Faith 9.

[16] See Kent P. Jackson, "Authority of Scripture," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1280–281.

[17] For overviews of the books in the LDS canon, see Kent P. Jackson, "Latter-day Saints: A Dynamic Scriptural Process," in *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective,* ed. Frederick M. Denny and Rodney L. Taylor (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1985, 1993), 63–83; and Kent P. Jackson,"The Sacred Literature of the Latter-day Saints," in *The Bible and Bibles in America,* ed. Ernest S. Frerichs (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 163–91.

[18] "Position Paper," 7, citing *Book of Order,* G-2.0300.

[19] Ibid., 7.

[20] Ibid., 8.

[21] Resolution of the 207th General Assembly (1995), 1.

[22] "Position Paper," 9.

[23] Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1981), 214. In quotations from Ehat and Cook, some spelling, capitalization, and punctuation has been modernized.

[24] Ibid., 382.

[25] Ibid., 378.

[26] Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.

[27] Ehat and Cook, 60.

[28] "The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647," 2.1, in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom,* 3 vols., 4th ed. (New York: Harper, 1919), 3:606.

[29] Ehat and Cook, 357.

[30] "Position Paper," 10.

[31] Ehat and Cook, 247.

[32] Ibid., 360.

[33] Ibid., 350.

[34] Ibid., 345.

[35] "Position Paper," 12.

[36] Ibid., 13.

[37] Ibid., 14.

[38] Ibid., 15.

[39] Ibid., cover document, 1–3.

[40] Cover document, 1, emphasis added; see also "Position Paper," 17.

[41] "Position Paper," 19.

[42] Ibid., 15.

[43] Ibid., 16.

[44] Ibid., 16-18. And they certainly would disagree with the Position Paper's conclusion that they are therefore idolaters and heretics.

[45] See, in the Book of Mormon, Alma 29:8; also, "Statement of the First Presidency, February 15, 1978," in Spencer J. Palmer, *The Expanding Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), v.

[46] "Latter-day Saints hold that Christians in the broadest sense are those who base their beliefs on the teachings of Jesus and who have a personal relationship with him. Within that definition they recognize Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Latter-day Saint Christians" (Roger R. Keller, "Christians and Christianity," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 271).

[47] There is nothing in any of the following definitions with which Latter-day Saints would disagree or which would preclude them from being Christians. *Christian:* "One who believes or professes or is assumed to believe in Jesus Christ and the truth as taught by him: an adherent of Christianity: one who has accepted the Christian religious and moral principles of life" (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* [Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1986], s.v.). *Christianity:* "The religion of Christians: the religion stemming from the life, teachings, and death of Jesus Christ: the religion that believes in God as the Father almighty who as a just and merciful creator and sustainer of the universe works redemptively through the Holy Spirit for men's salvation and that affirms Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior who proclaimed to man the gospel of salvation: the religion that recognizes the New Testament as its book of sacred scripture" (ibid., s.v.). *Christian:* "One who believes or professes the religion of Christ; an adherent of Christianity." "One who exhibits the spirit, and follows the precepts and example, of Christ; a believer in Christ who is characterized by genuine piety" (*The Oxford English Dictionary,* 2d ed. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1996], s.v.). *Christianity:* "The religion of Christ; the Christian faith; the system of doctrines and precepts taught by Christ and his apostles" (ibid., s.v.).

[48] Two books by LDS authors, written primarily for LDS readers, argue that Mormonism is a Christian faith: Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991); and Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, *Offenders for a Word: How Anti-Mormons Play Word Games to Attack the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Aspen, 1992).

[49] Perhaps the authors thought this was necessary because in the last section the conclusions are drawn that determine how Mormonism should be viewed within Presbyterian belief and policy. It is in this section that the terms "the wrong deity," "idolatry," "a different god" (17), and "heretical" (18) are found.

[50] The Position Paper quotes frequently from Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), and from good summary articles in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism.*

[51] Examples include J. Edward Decker and Dave Hunt, *The God Makers* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1984); and Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults,* rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985).

[52] By "preexisting" I mean that the criteria were not invented for the purpose of the Position Paper but were already in existence as the official definition.

[53] See Massimo Introvigne, "Old Wine in New Bottles: The Story behind Fundamentalist Anti-Mormons," *BYU Studies* 35, no. 3 (1995–96):45; Lawrence Foster, "Career Apostates: Reflections on the Works of Jerald and Sandra Tanner," *Dialogue* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1984):35–60.

[54] See note 47.

[55] Some Evangelical critics have stated that in presenting itself as Christian, Mormonism is concealing its real non-Christian beliefs and agendas. This idea is reflected in the words chosen for book titles, such as *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality, Mormonism Unmasked, The Mormon Illusion, The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism,* and *Behind the Mask of Mormonism.*

[56] Gordon B. Hinckley, "We Bear Witness of Him," *Ensign* (May 1998):4–6; Boyd K. Packer, "The Peaceable Followers of Christ," *Ensign* (April 1998):62–67; M. Russell Ballard, "Building Bridges of Understanding," *Ensign* (June 1998):62–68.

[57] Hinckley, 4.

Gender-Inclusive Images of God: A Sociological Interpretation of Early Shakerism and Mormonism

Danny L. Jorgensen

Biblical religions traditionally envision God as exclusively male. The Genesis portrayal of God as the Almighty Patriarchal Ruler reflects and reinforces a hierarchical order whereby gender is uniquely salient and males have legitimate human authority for all matters of any consequence. Images of God therefore are especially interesting sociologically. How sacred reality is envisioned holds monumentally important consequences not merely for religion but for the social order that these "collective representations" define and sanction.[1]

As the structure and organization of modern Western societies have become less hierarchical and authoritarian and more egalitarian and democratic, the traditional patriarchal image of the biblical God increasingly has been perceived to be problematic. Elaine Pagels notices that many other religions have female deities and feminine descriptions of divinity.[2] She also finds that heterodox versions of early Christianity included feminine depictions of God. Concerned that the patriarchal God concept devalues women and leads to their oppression, other scholars have rejected this imagery entirely or endeavored to modify it.[3] Some of them consequently have found new, nontraditional, and socially marginal religions to be especially interesting.[4]

Rosemary Ruether has identified a variety of American examples.[5] She and many other scholars find the gender-inclusive image of God advanced by the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing (or Shakers) especially interesting.[6] Shaker thinking intrigues these feminist scholars partly because it influenced other new religions, including Oneida Perfectionism, Christian Science, and New Thought.[7] Ruether also noticed that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or Mormons) developed a Heavenly Mother concept as the female counterpart of the Heavenly Father.[8] She and most other non-Mormon scholars exhibit little interest in this image, perhaps because the Saints did not modify patriarchy as indicated by their practice of polygynous (patriarchal) marriage. However, one study speculates that Mormonism's male-female God is a form of mysticism.[9] It also has been suggested that

Mormon plural marriage may have "fulfilled certain feminist goals."[10] And two recent discussions of women's theology in various new religions also include Mormonism.[11]

Mary Bednarowski's influential theorizing about women in socially marginal American religions concisely summarizes what other scholarly studies confirm.[12] She argues that women are more likely to achieve leadership and greater equality with men when: 1) the masculine God concept is modified by bisexual imagery or an impersonal, nonanthropomorphic principle; 2) the doctrine of the Fall is denied or tempered; 3) there are no ordained clergy; and 4) women's fulfillment is not exclusively defined by marriage and motherhood. Some sociological theories of religion also can account for these insightful generalizations and related problems. The apparent patriarchy/goddess paradox that perplexes Bednarowski and other feminist scholars of new religions is explained by sociological theory.

Emile Durkheim's sociological theory of religion holds that images of God externalize (or project) and objectify social relationships.[13] These projected images, like all externalizations of what is believed to be real, constitute plausible cognitive structures. Once these plausibility structures are legitimated and internalized, they provide a "sacred canopy" that renders human existence meaningful, thereby generating social order and solidarity out of nothingness and chaos. God concepts, like all social institutions, are founded on an analogy with nature, and these concepts "think," conferring identity, remembering and forgetting, classifying, and making consequential life and death decisions. Or in other words, institutions do the thinking and we just apply this.

These sociological and feminist theories generally agree about what is expected from God imagery. They predict that exclusively male descriptions of God will depreciate women and subjugate them to patriarchal authority. Conversely, they anticipate that gender-inclusive images of God will appreciate women, moderate patriarchy, and result in greater gender equity. Considerable scholarly attention has focused on the Shakers' gender-inclusive image of God and its social consequences.[14] While the Mormons' gender-inclusive concept of God is less familiar, their gender relationships—especially marriage and family—have been examined extensively.[15] Shakerism and Mormonism therefore provide especially appropriate cases for examining theoretical contentions about characterizations of God and their consequences.

The Shaker case largely confirms scholarly expectations, but the Mormon case seems anomalous and it, thereby, is rather enigmatic. A sociological study of Mormonism's Mother in Heaven concept ironically concludes that "patriarchy and belief in a goddess go hand-in-hand."[16] The Mormon example suggests that either the facts needed to salvage the Durkheimian theory remain obscure or the theory is mistaken and it should be rejected or modified accordingly. The comparative analysis

and interpretation of Shakerism's and Mormonism's gender-inclusive images of God therefore have important implications for a scholarly understanding of these religions and related thinking about new religions and society generally.

SHAKERISM AND MORMONISM

The cultural diversity, lack of long-standing traditions and classes, egalitarianism, economic opportunism, and religious pluralism of early American society encouraged and supported innovation. Shakerism and Mormonism were formed out of the spiritual turmoil of the great awakenings that were transforming imported religions, particularly European Protestantism, into something distinctively American and stimulating novel religions.[17] Shakerism benefited from the Second Great Awakening, and Mormonism emerged out of it. These new religions initially attracted Yonkers and Yankees, and they were established in New York State. American culture thereby provided favorable conditions for religious innovation, but nothing about these cultural characteristics explains the development of these new religions or their unique images of God.[18]

Emergence through Charisma

Shakerism and Mormonism were products of the charismatic experiences of a principal leader and the collective enactment of the new forms envisioned and sanctioned by this unique type of authority.[19] The nine Shaking Quakers, under the leadership of the prophetess Ann Lee (1736/42?-1784), who arrived in the American colonies from England in the summer of 1774, emphasized religious experience (charismatic gifts of the spirit) and opposed formal doctrines and rites as well as ecclesiastical structures. They established a community at Watervliet, near Niskeyuna, New York, in the Albany area, and attracted a few American followers.

Mormonism emerged from the visionary encounters of Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805-1844) with supernatural personages in the 1820s near Palmyra in western New York.[20] These charismatic experiences eventuated in the 1830 publication of a new scripture, *The Book of Mormon*, believed to be Smith's translation of an ancient Christian history of the Americas.[21] Later that year, Smith and a few followers formally organized a religion, based on primitive New Testament patterns, as directed by prophecy.

Both of these new religions initially emphasized culturally familiar themes, especially an apocalyptic biblical worldview focusing on millennialism and dispensationalism, much like other New England sects

deriving from the radical Reformation.[22] The early Shakers subscribed to a mostly traditional, patriarchal image of God and related beliefs derived from the Genesis story.[23] Their beliefs dualistically distinguished a sinful subordinate material world from a perfect superordinate spirit world. Earthly existence was seen as the result of original sin, the fall of man caused by woman, rooted in the sexual act, all of it energized by God's creation of separate, opposing, and universal male and female dynamics. Shaker salvation, the solution to the problem of material existence (original sin), was redemption to God through Jesus Christ.

The book of Revelation and the example of Christ informed the Shakers' notion of salvation.[24] Through divine, visionary inspiration Ann Lee ascertained that Christ's Second Coming already had transpired in her life, the millennium was underway, and the objectives of the new dispensation would be accomplished through those who were obedient to her message. Human perfection, the primary goal of salvation, was to be accomplished through the regular, public confession of sin and by overcoming the temptations of earthly existence. Since sin originated in the sexual act, celibacy was required for Shaker perfection and redemption.

The Latter-day Saints, not unlike the Shakers, believed that since the original Christian church had been corrupted it was being restored by Joseph Smith in preparation for Christ's Second Coming (Advent) and his thousand-year reign on earth (the millennium).[25] Restoration of the true Church of Jesus Christ, they believed, constituted a new dispensation—especially since it involved the keys to the priesthood and, thereby, exclusive Mormon authority for the scriptures and laws of God (gospel and ordinances).[26]

The Mormons, like the Believers, accepted the Bible as God's word and they tended toward scriptural literalism, selectively emphasizing Old and New Testament themes in support of their claims. Similarly, they frequently referred to the biblical books of Genesis and Revelation. Yet, very much unlike the Shakers or other New England sects, the Latter-day Saints elevated the *Book of Mormon* and the *Doctrine and Covenants* (containing the prophecies of Joseph Smith) to the same level of scriptural authority as the Bible.[27] They also rejected the doctrine of original sin, favoring instead a belief in human freedom of will and choice. Like the Shakers, the Mormons' image of God as the "Eternal Father" was exclusively male and entirely consistent with biblical tradition at this time.

While the worldviews of these new religions were similar, their ideas about what God required from them differed significantly. Shaker millennialism aimed to realize the Kingdom of God by withdrawing from the world and perfecting the individual in harmonious communities. Mormon millennialism was more collectively oriented to the revolutionary,

political transformation of the world by building Zion, the theocratic Kingdom of God on earth.[28]

Routinization of Charisma

New religions often do not endure beyond the founding generation.[29] When a new sect is created charismatically, its survival and development requires the routinization (rationalization) of the founder's charisma. Perhaps surprisingly, the emergent Shaker sect survived the passing of Ann Lee and the founding generation.[30] This was accomplished by developing explicit doctrines, related practices, and especially by forming an elaborate social organization that rationalized the charismatic religion of Mother Ann and the other Shaker founders.

The idea that woman was the source of original sin, acceptance of Ann Lee's experience of being in Christ, and an understanding of her as "the woman clothed by the sun" (and the "morning star") referred to in Revelation (2:28, 12:1-6), were all elaborated in subsequent Shaker belief.[31] The United Society's transformation from a precarious to a stable sect was achieved under the leadership of Joseph Meacham, Lucy Wright, and other Shaker Elders. Over the next forty years, the United Society's growing membership collected in nineteen communities located in eight states from Maine to Kentucky.

The Mormons' early kingdom-building gatherings, some of them based on communalistic principles (including economics), in Ohio and Missouri encountered serious difficulties.[32] Shakerism and Mormonism both emphasized charismatic experience. However, charisma was restrained almost from the beginning in Mormonism by the hierarchical principle inherent in the exclusively male priesthood.[33] Mormonism survived these early kingdom-building crises partly because Joseph Smith successfully routinized charisma further within an increasingly formal organization that concentrated charismatic power for the entire movement in his presidency of the priesthood. Beginning in 1839, a rapidly growing Mormon membership started erecting a new kingdom on the Mississippi River at Nauvoo, Illinois.

ALTERNATIVE IMAGES OF GOD

Shakerism and Mormonism were created and developed on the basis of charismatic authority within the supportive environment of American culture. They, unlike many emergent religious innovations, successfully routinized and constrained charisma within formal social organizations. It is through this rationalization process that Shakerism and Mormonism developed alternative concepts of God that included a female component.

Shakerism's God Concept

Whether or not Ann Lee taught a gender-inclusive God doctrine is debatable.[34] This doctrine is articulated, however, in an exceedingly important 1808 publication of Shaker beliefs, and confirmed by another, perhaps even more significant Shaker publication in 1823.[35] God, according to these statements, transcends gender. Yet, as "Supreme Intelligence," God is composed of a "Two-in-One Spirit" that combines a duality of substance, which is non-gendered, and a duality of order, which is gendered. Divine gender is activated when the dual, male-female, aspects of God—envisioned as "Almighty Power" (or "Divine Majesty") and "Infinite Wisdom" (or "Holy Wisdom")—are set into order.[36] The Shakers associated "Almighty Power" with the role or throne of "Eternal Father," while the role or throne of "Eternal Mother" was attributed to "Infinite Wisdom," thereby excluding Jesus Christ from the conventional trinity.

Later the Shakers sometimes identified the Holy Spirit as the female component of God.[37] The son of God thereby may be seen as the result of a union between God, as male, and the Holy Ghost, as female; whereby the Virgin Mary becomes merely the vessel of Christ's birth. In Shaker imagery, the Eternal Mother always is subordinate to the Eternal Father. Jesus Christ and other spirit personages (sometimes called the "Sons of God" and "Morning Stars") are located below God and above human beings in an intermediary hierarchical position. Mother Ann likewise always is envisioned as subordinate to Christ. This gender-inclusive image of God also is the source of a Shaker belief that the male Christ had redeemed man and, therefore, a female Christ, namely Ann Lee, was necessary for the redemption of woman.[38]

Mormonism's God Concept

At the end of Joseph Smith's life, he taught that God was a material being, an exalted man. He thereby inverted the predominant metaphysical idealism of Christianity, including that of the Shakers, and otherwise deviated substantially from Christian orthodoxy.[39] He declared that the eternal elements—chiefly spirit in the form of intelligence (mind, soul)—was another, higher form of matter. This matter, although it is called "intelligence," was envisioned as immortal (timeless), and co-equal or co-eternal with God, the Father. It forms the essence of everything, including those beings that have been humanly embodied and those that still await human embodiment.

Smith's teachings resulted in the inescapable conclusion that there is a plurality of gods, and that human beings also can become god-like or even gods. The Bible's patriarchal God, according to the Mormon prophet, is distinct in having acquired a special knowledge of how to

organize the eternal elements of the universe thereby gaining supremacy over other exalted, celestial beings or gods.[40] The Godhead he envisioned included Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost also as material personages.[41] Nevertheless, Smith observed: "We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance."[42] Presumably, what he meant is that as material beings Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost—along with other separate and distinct exalted beings and gods—are unified in the Supreme Intelligence of Eternal God, the Almighty Patriarchal Ruler.

There is no public record that the Mormon prophet explicitly identified a Heavenly Mother.[43] It, like most of the other novel doctrines he taught, probably was introduced initially to an elite, informal inner-circle of the prophet's most intimate friends and associates—those who already had begun to practice plural marriage secretively.[44] They clearly understood that a Mother in Heaven logically derived from Smith's teachings about God. A poem by Eliza R. Snow, one of the prophet's (secret) plural wives, published in the Mormon *Times and Seasons* shortly after his death, expressed this idea publicly.[45] Everything known about the Eternal Mother confirms that she was subordinate to the Eternal Father's authority. All of the evidence, though mostly circumstantial, demonstrates that this idea of God, the Mother in Heaven, originated with Joseph Smith and that it was part of the alternative image of God that he taught at Nauvoo.

Joseph Smith was murdered on 27 June 1844, a few months after his most important public statements about this novel image of God. While he therefore had little opportunity to elaborate this imagery systematically, it is the very keystone of this innovative religion and what subsequently became an elaborate theology of salvation. It brings coherence to the disparate beliefs and practices that Smith had introduced over the previous fourteen years. The prophet, as early as 1832, presented a unique image of heaven. It consisted of three kingdoms—terrestrial, telestial, and celestial—or ascending degrees of glory. Viewed retrospectively, it hinted strongly at the plurality of gods, material existence (embodiment) in heaven, and the possibility of human exaltation to godhood.[46] Previously, Smith also introduced the idea of baptism by proxy for the deceased (a necessary provision for people who lived before the Mormon restoration), and he clarified its practice with further instructions in 1841.[47] The Mormon prophet's most controversial teachings about eternal (plural) marriage and family relationships as well as sacred Temple rites—all of them introduced by no later than 1843—fundamentally are interrelated with his alternative image of God.

EXPLAINING ALTERNATIVE GOD IMAGERY

Durkheim's sociological theory, as previously discussed, predicts that God imagery is an externalization (or projection) and objectification of existing human relationships. It consequently anticipates that Shaker and Mormon images of God derived from corresponding social relationships. Charismatic authority supplies a mechanism whereby this can be accomplished socially. Whether or not alternative visions are acknowledged collectively and institutionalized depends, in part, on the extent to which they deviate from existing cultural conventions and social arrangements. These contentions do not preclude the consideration of other possibilities as either rival or complementary ways of accounting for why and how the Shakers and Mormons formulated alternative God concepts. Yet, whether or not Shakerism and Mormonism conform with these expectations must be demonstrated empirically. Furthermore, an adequate account of these alternative images of God must show how this happened socially.

By including a female counterpart to the traditional biblical image of the male God, the Shakers and Mormons were consistent with concurrent changes in gender imagery within American culture.[48] American democracy rejected the more authoritarian politics of European societies and a considerable portion of their corresponding social structural hierarchies. American politics and society were far from egalitarian, but by the early nineteenth century many people understood that the democratic impulse might be applied to gender relationships.[49] Older cultural depictions of women were undergoing significant change. The emergent Victorian image of women as innocent and virtuous was transforming the earlier, biblically-derived view of women as the source of original sin. Finally, the culture of the American frontier challenged traditional ways of life, opening new social structural possibilities, including gender relationships.

The Believers' gender-inclusive image of God therefore was consistent with emergent tendencies within American culture that increasingly viewed women more favorably. This emergent cultural situation was especially influential on the second and subsequent generations of American-born Shakers. It was these American Believers who took the example of Ann Lee's female leadership and emerging lines of dual authority as provocation for a gender-inclusive image of God. This, in turn, provided the means for enacting and legitimating greater gender parity as social structural conditions of Shaker communities.

The Shakers' belief in charisma provided the mechanism for introducing an alternative image of God, no matter whether this notion originated with Ann Lee or her followers. Ann Lee's leadership vividly symbolized the subsequent possibility of female leadership and authority.

It is not at all unusual for women to have charismatic experiences. Some scholars even think that the prevalence of women's ecstatic religious experiences in male-dominated cultures serves as a mechanism whereby women gain power and, thereby, are able to compensate for their social inequality.[50]

It is unusual, however, in patriarchal cultures for women's charismatic gifts to be understood by others as anything more than subjective experiences. There is, in other words, a categorical difference between the cultural recognition of an individual's ecstatic experiences as personally meaningful and accepting these experiences as collectively meaningful and prescriptive for group life. When this happens, subjective experience becomes objectified and, thereby, a potential means of legitimating the social structures defined and sanctioned by prophetic vision.

Once Ann Lee's visions were accepted by other people as prophetic, they thereby were objectified and she was recognized as a socially legitimate source of authority. Deviating in this way from traditional male authority consequently opened the door to the possibility that women, in addition to men, might possess and exercise social authority and power. Yet even when this happens, there is nothing inevitable about the institutionalization of female authority. The Believers, for instance, easily could have seen Ann Lee's leadership as an exception to tradition, but not as a principle that merited institutionalization.

The next two successors to Ann Lee's Shaker leadership, James Whittaker and Joseph Meacham, both were men. Meacham, however, appointed Lucy Wright as leader of the women, fulfilling what many believed had been Mother Ann's intentions. The Believers' commitment to celibacy already had produced the separation of men and women in their communities and, consequently, the need for parallel lines of authority. Even so, from the Gospel Order's completion in 1792 through Lucy Wright's death in 1821, gender parity was not institutionalized beyond dispute.[51] Rather, it is Wright's performance of the leadership role, along with other sociocultural factors, that seems to have secured institutionally the practice of more equitable dual lines of authority.

It is possible that the early Shakers were familiar with previous images of God that envisioned a female component. Even so, the Shakers' gender-inclusive image of God reflects an emphasis on religious experience, an emergent departure from traditional gender roles, and the enactment of alternative gender roles in daily life. It, in other words, is explained sociologically as an externalization and objectification of Shaker social structure.

Mormonism's gender-inclusive image of God, like that of the Shakers, was consistent with tendencies within American culture away from conventional biblical images of women as the source of original sin and thereby traditional expectations for women's roles. Mormonism, in fact,

substantially incorporated the emergent Victorian image of women. Joseph Smith's introduction of an alternative image of God and related beliefs was legitimated by charismatic authority, although it had not been rationalized or institutionalized at the time of his death. While the notion of a Heavenly Mother may have been a largely unintended consequence of Joseph Smith's materialistic image of God, this idea reflected the manner in which the Mormons were enacting gender relationships. The Mormons' gender-inclusive image of God, in other words, confirms sociological expectations that images of God are projections of human relationships.

CONSEQUENCES OF GENDER-INCLUSIVE GOD IMAGERY

It is significant that Shakerism and Mormonism did not envision the Mother God as equal to the Father God. Even so, if God imagery serves to define and sanction social structural relationships, it is reasonable to expect that Shakerism and Mormonism resulted in more equitable relationships between men and women. More specifically, the amount or degree of parity between genders should be related to the envisioned relationship between the Father and Mother God. Some feminist theorizing about new religions predicts that the Shakers' negative image of women constrained more equitable gender relationships, while the Mormons' more positive image of women enhanced more equitable gender relationships. It also leads to the expectations that the Shakers' elimination of ordained clergy facilitated greater gender equality, while the Mormons' exclusively male priesthood inhibited gender equality. And it anticipates that Shakerism, unlike Mormonism, should have resulted in more equitable gender relationships because the Shakers provided women with an alternative to marriage and motherhood.

Consequences for Shakerism

The social structure of Shaker communities, as expected, eventually resulted in more equitable relationships between men and women.[52] In worship and community leadership Shaker women substantially were equal to the men. The Believers stressed direct access to religious experience, unlimited by ministerial authority, and Shaker women fully participated in governance, including positions of authority at all levels within the community. This extent of gender parity is somewhat surprising in that it exceeds the Shakers' less than equal image of the relationship of the male and female aspects of God, as well as even the more optimistic feminist expectations for American society at this time.

Shaker women also achieved greater equity than most of their American contemporaries in other areas of social life. Their commitment to celibacy freed them from the ordinary cultural expectations for marriage, sexual relations, and motherhood. Ironically, however, the necessity of celibacy derived from an exceedingly negative biblical image of women as not merely different but inherently inferior to men. It and the Shaker image of God also reinforced a traditional notion of women's place, particularly in the division of labor and economic relationships. Shaker women performed traditional female roles with respect to household chores (preparing food; cleaning, making, repairing and washing clothing; caring for children; and so on), as well as the production of goods for sale to the larger world.[53] Shaker men also performed traditional male roles, including most relations (religious and economic) with the larger society. Furthermore, Shaker norms for the distribution of property and inheritance favored men over women.

Consequences for Mormonism

Mormonism, unlike Shakerism, generally did not result in greater gender parity, contrary to sociological and feminist expectations. By all indications Mormon men and women performed mostly traditional gender roles in religion, community governance, economic and daily life, as well as relations with the larger society. Practically and symbolically, the secondary status of women in Mormon culture derived substantially from the development of an exclusively male priesthood. While the Mormon priesthood therefore fulfills the expectations of feminist theorizing, it only partly explains why this new religion otherwise does not conform with scholarly expectations.

Interestingly, the Saints' biblical image of women was not as negative as that of the Believers. Mormon women were not seen as inherently more sinful than men. They were defined as different; the difference dictated corresponding, traditional role expectations, as well as separate spheres; and part of the male role was authority over all matters of any importance, including women. This still highly patriarchal but more positive appraisal of women, as feminist theorizing predicts, probably did reduce the oppressive consequences of patriarchy for Mormon women, even if it did not result in greater parity.

While men and women were not equal, especially in authority and power, women were not seen by Mormonism as inherently inferior to men. Difference, in other words, did not necessarily involve the application of differential, hierarchical values to gender images and roles. Women's roles (like motherhood), for example, were different from men's roles (patriarchal fatherhood), but not fundamentally more or less glorious. Mormon culture endeavored to balance male authority with corresponding responsibilities (as with social and economic obligations for the welfare of

women and children), without acknowledging inequality, thereby seeking to avoid the potentially abusive power of patriarchy and tyranny.

The Mormon view of gender mostly was consistent with the Victorian imagery of the larger society. Yet, contrary to Victorianism, Mormonism found women to be uniquely capable within their own sphere and the male Saints were expected to support and develop the sisters' talents. There are indications that the Mormon perspective on women did moderate patriarchy to the benefit of the sisters. Mormon theocracy incorporated a democratic principle whereby the membership, including women, were provided an opportunity to ratify patriarchal decisions. Although subsequent Mormon efforts to extend the secular vote to women were motivated by a need for greater political power in dealing with federal authorities, the idea that women should have the right to vote was consistent with internal principles and precedents. Utah Mormon women were among the first to be elected to local offices, including legislative, in any of the states. Mormon women were encouraged to acquire formal education, even in matters such as law and medicine, from which American women were excluded traditionally. Mormon colleges enrolled significant proportions of women and, by the turn of the century, impressive numbers of Utah Mormon women were involved in professional careers.

Besides the exclusively male priesthood, Mormon polygyny provides the strongest support for the conclusion that the Saints' gender-inclusive image of God did not result in more equitable gender relationships. It is difficult to argue that plural marriage did not support and reinforce patriarchy. It is noteworthy, however, that plural marriage never was required, a majority of Mormons never participated, and it eventually was abandoned entirely. While higher-ranking priesthood members, especially the Mormon leadership, did tend to have the greatest number of wives, the manner in which this was accomplished does not support Ruether's conclusion that a few men controlled the distribution of marriageable women.[54] While the revelation on plural marriage promised women greater glory in exchange for their participation, this does not unequivocally support the sociological conclusion that belief in a Mother God ironically reinforced patriarchy.[55] In fact, there is sound evidence that for some Mormon women plural marriage did provide some freedom from the obligations of traditional women's roles as anticipated by feminist theory.

Outsiders typically objected to plural marriage on the basis that it oppressed and dehumanized women.[56] Yet the Saints—women included—commonly defended this highly patriarchal practice on precisely opposite grounds. It, they argued, honorably provided the opportunity of marriage and children to women who might otherwise remain single, and it was a positive solution to many of the social evils deriving from the conventional American practice of monogamy. Males

as well as females were expected to refrain from pre-marital sexual relations, and extra-marital sex was seen as a grievous offense for any Mormon. Social evils like adultery and prostitution, deriving from the lustful character of men, were supposed to be resolved by the plural marriage option to everyone's benefit.

Before they were permitted to take a second wife, Mormon men were expected to demonstrate that they were religiously and economically prepared for this added responsibility. Men also were expected to seek the permission of the first wife. A plural wife was permitted to divorce her husband for almost any reason, including dislike of plural marriage, but husbands ordinarily were not permitted divorce except when justified by adultery or desertion.[57]

For some Mormon women, plural marriage offered certain advantages. Older women could find security in a supportive family. Through plural marriage, barren women could participate in motherhood. Insofar as serving the sexual needs of one's husband was an obligation, it might be avoided entirely or shared with other wives. Multiple wives provided Mormon women with options for dividing up household and economic responsibilities, perhaps to the greater satisfaction of some or all of them. In some instances, plural marriage resulted in tremendous solidarity among sister wives.[58] This Mormon sorority uniquely provided an adult friend for many purposes, particularly those occasions when the husband was working long hours or otherwise away from the home for extended periods.

In all of these ways, Mormonism differs less significantly from Shakerism than commonly has been supposed by scholars. Furthermore, the Saints, somewhat like the Believers, developed separate male and female organizations. Mormonism's female Relief Society was primarily a religious organization. It therefore did not influence daily life in the more thorough ways of the Shakers' gender specific institutions, but it did provide women with an organizational base. If the development of a women's organization had resulted in greater opportunities for Mormon women, then the Latter-day Saint case would have much more closely resembled the Shaker case and it would appear to be far less anomalous from the standpoint of sociological theory. What needs to be explained—to avoid rejecting or modifying the applicability of Durkheimian theory to this case—is why the development of a separate organization of Mormon women did not open up alternative gender roles for them.

The solution to this puzzle largely concerns the evidence and its interpretation. Joseph Smith's creation of the female Relief Society and, thereby, a separate female line of authority was an entirely plausible and coherent extension of his thinking about God, especially the image of the Heavenly Mother. This kind of social development is exactly what the theory—particularly the contention of Mary Douglas that institutions

think—anticipates will happen. Douglas, following Durkheim, sees institutions as cultural solutions to problems of collective existence (as does Peter Berger for that matter, for the same reasons in the same ways). Institutions thereby delimit social actions (tell us what we can and can't do). Insofar as individuals conform with the institutions (which we do because there rarely are few known alternatives), Douglas, Durkheim, and to some extent Berger contend that institutions do the thinking. Obviously, such a bold social realist contention appears very strange from the standpoint of individuals, like us, located in the context of the radically social nominalist culture of North America. Douglas has applied this extensively to how different cultures view and resolve the problems of environmental hazards and risks. Some observers believe that, in organizing the Relief Society, the Mormon prophet either extended or intended to offer priesthood to women.[59] While it obviously is impossible to know what Smith intended to do or might have done had he lived, the development of a female form of the priesthood follows logically from Smith's teachings about God and actions toward women.

In some sense, Mormon women do acquire "priesthood" through the Temple endowment established by Joseph Smith. Exactly what this means is uncertain since no particular office is specified. Yet Mormon women logically acquire this "priesthood" independently of men, at least insofar as unmarried women receive a Temple endowment—notwithstanding the contemporary tendency to regard a woman's "priesthood" as exclusively dependent on that of her husband. Nevertheless, the very ambiguity of Mormon women's priesthood indicates that this logical extension of the Heavenly Mother image to include a separate female line of authority was not institutionalized during Joseph Smith's life. It is beyond the scope of this essay to address specifically the question of why subsequent Mormon prophets did not pursue this logically coherent alternative institutionally. This problem, however, is very much like that of explaining the institutionalization of other doctrines introduced by the founding Mormon prophet. What is known about this situation suggests that Brigham Young and his successors selectively understood and interpreted Joseph Smith's teachings and applied them to substantially different circumstances.

CONCLUSIONS

The early Shakers and Mormons developed gender-inclusive images of God, thereby deviating substantially from the traditionally patriarchal imagery of more orthodox biblical religions. These alternative, gender-inclusive images of God projected, externalized, and objectified emergent social structural relationships within Shakerism and

Mormonism, as anticipated by sociological theories of religion. In both cases the formulation of an alternative depiction of God was facilitated by the belief in charisma and its use to create and justify new forms within the supportive environment of American culture.

The Shakers' new vision of God as Father and Mother was provoked by the acceptance of Ann Lee's charismatic claims and leadership, and the development of dual, male and female lines of authority that emerged from their commitment to celibacy. Joseph Smith's novel image of God is more difficult to explain. It probably was a result of a variety of factors: the prophet's fertile imagination and willingness to innovate, even radically, upon tradition; his abiding interest in popular and controversial religious issues of the day, including those raised by Shakerism, especially their innovative beliefs about God, gender, and sexuality; his inclination to deal with and synthesize a seemingly disparate array of influences and ideas; and his unfinished efforts to develop more systematically the theological implications of a substantially new religion, particularly its God imagery.

The consequences of these alternative notions of a gender-inclusive God were different for Shakerism and Mormonism; although not as different as commonly has been supposed by scholars. For Shakerism, the idea of an Eternal Mother encouraged and justified the development of dual, male and female lines of authority and substantial gender parity in religious life and community governance. While the practice of celibacy liberated Shaker women from the usual obligations for marriage and motherhood, they otherwise performed traditional social and economic roles in community life. Insofar as Shaker women did not achieve complete parity with the men, this may be seen as a reflection of the constraints of the larger culture and/or the subordination of the Eternal Mother to the Eternal Father. While Shaker culture is almost nonexistent today, their dual image of God influenced the subsequent development of New Thought and Christian Science. Unfortunately, it is beyond the limitations of this essay to explore these developments and their consequences.

In the case of Mormonism, a gender-inclusive image of God did not substantially change the manner in which traditional gender roles were envisioned or enacted. One of the reasons for this, as anticipated by feminist theorizing, was the development of an exclusively male priesthood. Mormonism's more positive evaluation of women, reinforced by its God imagery and related beliefs, probably did moderate some of the more oppressive consequences of patriarchy. But Mormonism, unlike Shakerism, did not institutionalize the more egalitarian implications of its notion of a Heavenly Mother.

This was a consequence of the founding prophet's death and his lack of opportunity to develop further the theological and institutional implications of his novel image of the Mother and Father in Heaven.

Faced with different problems and circumstances, subsequent Mormon prophets have yet to do much with this idea, theologically or otherwise. Interestingly, however, Heavenly Mother is being elaborated, particularly by Mormon women, in folk culture.[60] This image, along with Mormonism's open canon, means that the Mother in Heaven image may be elaborated informally and/or formally in the future.

The implications of these two cases of gender-inclusive images of God for contemporary religions, particularly feminist critiques of patriarchal religions, are mixed. On the one hand, they suggest that God imagery is significant for religion and the social order it defines and sanctions. Gender-inclusive portrayals of God do seem to modify patriarchy and lead to greater gender parity. In the case of Shakerism, the delineation of a female aspect of God seems to have helped moderate an otherwise harshly negative biblical image of women. On the other hand, positive images of a male-female God do not alone result in greater gender parity or its institutionalization. Mormonism's idea of the Mother God and its more positive biblical evaluation of women received little institutional expression. Although gender parity probably can be institutionalized on the basis of some notion of gender distinctiveness—difference rather than sameness—it is exceedingly difficult to accomplish when women always are subordinate to exclusively male authority.

ENDNOTES

[1] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: The Free Press, 1965). Also see Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, ed. and trans. Rodney Needham (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

An earlier version of this essay, "Gender-inclusive Images of God: An Exploratory, Comparative Study of Shakerism and Mormonism," was presented at the Mormon History Association annual meeting, Snowbird, Utah, 18 May 1996. The author appreciates the comments of Priscilla J. Brewer, Lawrence Foster, and Lavina Fielding Anderson on various preliminary drafts of this essay.

[2] Elaine Pagels, "What Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1976): 293-303. She identifies three characterizations of a divine Mother in the gnostic writings of early Christianity: one envisions a godly dyad of male and female elements, the female component being an eternal, mystical Silence; another describes her as Holy Spirit; and a third refers to her as Wisdom, a feminine form of creative power (294-97).

[3] See Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973); Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds., *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979); Judith Plaskow and Carol Christ, eds., *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989); and Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, eds., *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).

[4] Barbara Brown Zikmund, "The Feminist Thrust of Sectarian Christianity," in Ruether and McLaughlin, *Women of Spirit*; 205-24; Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller, eds., *Women and Religion in American, Volume 1: The Nineteenth Century* (San

Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981); Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether, eds., *In Our Own Voices: Four Centuries of American Women's Religious Writing* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995); and Catherine Wessinger, ed., *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

[5] Ruether, "Women in Utopian Movements," in Ruether and Keller, *Women and Religion in America*, vol. 1, 46-53; and Ruether, "Gender in Utopian and Communal Societies," in Keller and Ruether, *In Our Own Voices*, 347-49.

[6] Marjorie Procter-Smith, *Women in Shaker Community and Worship: A Feminist Analysis of the Uses of Religious Symbolism* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1985); Marjorie Procter-Smith, "'In the Line of the Female': Shakerism and Feminism," in Wessinger, *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions*, 23-40; Marjorie Procter-Smith, "'Who Do You Say That I Am?': Mother Ann as Christ," in *Locating the Shakers: Cultural Origins and Legacies of an American Religious Movement*, eds. Mick Gidley and Kate Bowles (Exeter, MA: University of Exeter Press, 1990), 83-95; Linda A. Mercadante, *Gender Doctrine and God: The Shakers and Contemporary Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990); Barbara Brown Zikmund, "The Feminist Thrust of Sectarian Christianity," in Ruether and McLaughlin, *Women of Spirit*, 205-24; Jean M. Humez, ed., *Mother's First-Born Daughters: Early Shaker Writings on Women and Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); and Sally L. Kitch, *Chaste Liberation: Celibacy and Female Cultural Status* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

[7] See Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 88-93; Ann Braude, "The Perils of Passivity: Women's Leadership in Spiritualism and Christian Science," in Wessinger, *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions*, 55-67; J. Gordon Melton, "Emma Curtis Hopkins: A Feminist of the 1880s and Mother of New Thought," in Wessinger, *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions*, 88-101; Dell deChant, "Myrtle Fillmore and Her Daughters: An Observation and Analysis of the Role of Women in Unity," in Wessinger, *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions*, 102-24; and Gail M. Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins: "Forgotten Founder" of New Thought*, forthcoming.

[8] Ruether, "Women in Utopian Movements," 46-100; and Ruether, "Gender in Utopian and Communal Societies," 341-82. Interestingly, Ruether reprints Joseph Smith's revelation on eternal (plural) marriage in both works.

[9] Catherine Albanese, "Mormonism and the Male-Female God: An Exploration in Active Mysticism," *Sunstone* 5, no. 3, (1980): 52-58.

[10] Zikmund, "The Feminist Thrust of Sectarian Christianity," 214.

[11] Mary Farrell Bednarowski, "Widening the Banks of the Mainstream: Women Constructing Theologies," in Wessinger, *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions*, 211-31; and Mary Farrell Bednarowski, *New Religions and the Theological Imagination in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

[12] Mary Farrell Bednarowski, "Outside the Mainstream: Women's Religion and Women Religious Leaders in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48, no. 2 (1980): 207-31.

[13] Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), for an influential elaboration of Durkheim's theory.

[14] See Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Priscilla J. Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986); and Edward Deming Andrews, *The People Called Shakers: A Search for the Perfect Society* (New York: Dover, 1963).

[15] Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); and Klaus J. Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[16] John Heeren, Donald B. Lindsey, and Marylee Mason, "The Mormon Concept of Mother in Heaven: A Sociological Account of Its Origins and Development," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 23, no 3 (1984):396-411. Unfortunately, this essay does not apply the central sociological idea that images of God are an externalization of social relationships or systematically pursue a sociological interpretation of the origins, development, or institutionalization of the Mother God concept.

[17] See Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); and R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

[18] The immensely popular use of theories of sociocultural change and crisis to account for new religions ultimately degenerates in tautology, as I have demonstrated elsewhere. See Danny L. Jorgensen, "Dissent and Schism in the Early Church: Explaining Mormon Fissiparousness," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 28, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 15-39.

[19] See Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephriam Fischoff (Boston: Beacon, 1963).

[20] Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

[21] Joseph Smith, Jr., trans., *The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon upon Plates taken from the Plates of Nephi*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961).

[22] See Stephen A. Marini, *Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[23] Mercadante, 19-46; See also Andrews, 5-25.

[24] Andrews, 8-27; Mercadante, 41-44; and Louis J. Kern, *An Ordered Love: Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias—the Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 74-85.

[25] See Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

[26] Mormon salvation required: 1) faith in Christ; 2) repentance of sin (one's own, not those of Adam); 3) baptism (by immersion); and 4) the gift of the Holy Ghost (through laying on of hands). See Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, by Himself and Apostolic Interregnum* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1976-1980), "Articles of Faith," 4: 535-44, hereafter cited as *HC*.

[27] The *Book of Mormon* was understood as a second testimony of the gospel and mission of Jesus Christ. The prophecies of Joseph Smith were published eventually as *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), hereafter cited as *D&C*.

[28] See Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965); and Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press , 1967).

[29] Danny L. Jorgensen, *The Esoteric Scene, Cultic Milieu, and Occult Tarot* (New York: Garland, 1992).

[30] Andrews, 5-25.

[31] Andrews, 12-13, 23-24; Stein, 66-79; Mercadante, 44-45; and Procter-Smith, "'Who Do You Say That I Am?'" 83-95.

[32] Marvin Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1989); and Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830-1846* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

[33] See Danny L. Jorgensen, "Dissent and Schism in the Early Church," 15-39.

[34] Mercadante, 55-57.

[35] Benjamin S. Youngs, *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing Containing a General Statement of All Things Pertaining to the Faith and Practice of the Church of God in this Latter-day* (Lebanon,

Ohio: Press of John M'Clean, 1808); and Calvin Green and Seth Youngs Wells, *Summary View of the Millennial Church, or United Society of Believers (Commonly Called Shakers) Comprising the Rise, Progress and Practical Order of the Society: Together with the General Principles of Their Faith and Testimony. Published by Order of the Ministry, in Union with the Church* (Albany: Packard and Benthuysen, 1823).

[36] Mercadante, 55-57.

[37] Mercadante, 74-115.

[38] Kern, 82-85.

[39] However, Jacob Neusner, "Conversations in Nauvoo About the Corporeality of God," *Brigham Young University Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996-1997): 7-30, argues that Joseph Smith's materialistic image of God was consistent with other biblical interpretations.

[40] The principal source of Joseph Smith's public statements about this materialistic metaphysics of the universe and gods is his 7 April 1844 funeral sermon for King Follett. A portion of it, as recorded by scribes, was published in the *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, IL: 1839-1846) 5, no. 15 (15 August 1844):612-17. The entire record was reprinted in several other places, but see *HC* 6:302-17. Just before his death on 27 June 1844, Smith preached another, related sermon on "The Christian Godhead" and "Plurality of Gods." See *HC* 6:473-79.

[41] Joseph Smith (in "The Christian Godhead—Plurality of Gods," *HC* 6:225) preached that: "I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three [are] distinct personages and three Gods. If this is in accordance with the New Testament, lo and behold! we have three Gods anyhow, and they are plural: and who can contradict it?" Subsequent commentators maintained that there is unity in this trinity and consequently only one God. The oneness of the plurality of Gods is the oneness of the eternal mind or intelligence.

[42] "Introduction," *HC* 1:lxxxv.

[43] Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, eds. Maureen Ursenback Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 64-77.

[44] Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question," (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1982); Andrew F. Ehat, "'It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth': Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God," *Brigham Young University Studies* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1980):253-79; D. Michael Quinn, "Latter-day Saint Prayer Circles," *Brigham Young University Studies* 19, no. 1 (Fall 1978):79-105; D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844," *Brigham Young University Studies* 16, no. 2 (1976):187-234; and D. Michael Quinn, "The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844-1945," *Brigham Young University Studies* 20, no. 2 (Winter 1980):163-97.

[45] Eliza R. Snow, "My Father in Heaven," *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 15 (November 1845):1039. The third verse reads: "I have learn'd to call thee father Through thy spirit from on high; But until the key of knowledge Was restor'd, I knew not why. In the heav'ns are parents single? No, the thought makes reason stare; Truth is reason-truth eternal Tells me I've a mother there."

[46] *D&C*, 76; also see Sections 88 and 131.

[47] *D&C*, 127; also see Section 137.

[48] See Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 226-47.

[49] Mercadante, 70, for example, observes that in the United States a women's rights movement was publicly visible by the late 1840s.

[50] See I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971).

[51] Stein, 53, cites several primary sources in support of the contention that: "The issue of 'petticoat government' would not go away during Wright's tenure in the ministry."

[52] See Kern, 114-34; Foster, 226-47; Procter-Smith, *Women in Shaker Community and Worship*, 220-26.

[53] Procter-Smith, *Women in Shaker Community and Worship*, 223, observes that: "This essentially negative view of women was modified somewhat as a result of the revival of 1837-47, when women came to be regarded as the spiritual superiors and guardians of men, by virtue of their redemption by rejection of their sexuality. This superiority, however, did not contradict the native sinfulness of unredeemed womankind, and it always depended on women recognizing and willingly remaining in their 'sphere.'"

[54] Ruether's contention in "Women in Utopian Movements," 49, that Mormon polygyny was "[o]riginally the privilege of the leadership" substantially misunderstands this situation. To the extent that it is accurate this contention only technically applies to a very brief period of time, from around 1842/3 to about 1845. Thereafter, plural marriage increasingly became an option for any priesthood member which, because most men held the priesthood, included almost any Mormon man. While it also is the case that the principle favored higher-ranking priesthood members, their economic situation and, thereby, ability to support additional wives was an equally important principle. Furthermore, the greater obligation of the leadership to support Joseph Smith's plural wives and many other women who because of age and other factors were less desirable candidates for marriage virtually eliminates any force of this contention.

[55] This conclusion, advanced by Heeren, Lindsey, and Mason, "The Mormon Concept of Mother in Heaven," 409, ignores very important contradictory evidence.

[56] See Arrington and Bitton, 187-239; and Jill Mulvay Derr, "'Strengthening Our Union': The Making of Mormon Sisterhood," in Beecher and Anderson, 153-207.

[57] See Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 318-19.

[58] Derr, 163-68.

[59] See D. Michael Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," in Maxine Hanks, ed., *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature, 1992), 365-409. Also see Ian G. Barber, "The Ecclesiastical Position of Women in Two Mormon Trajectories," *Journal of Mormon History* 14 (1988):63-79; and Danny L. Jorgensen, "The Fiery Darts of the Adversary: An Interpretation of Early Cutlerism," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 10 (1990):192-209.

[60] Wilcox, 70-74

Presumed Immanent: the Raëlians, UFO Religions, and the Postmodern Condition

Bryan Sentes and Susan Palmer

In 1974, Claude Vorilhon (later Raël), a French race-car driver, pop singer, and journalist, published *Le Livre Qui Dit La Verité* (*sic*) (*The Book Which Tells the Truth*), his first book describing his meeting with extraterrestrials and their revelations concerning humankind and the cosmos. Today, the Raëlian religion is the largest "flying saucer religion" in the world, claiming a membership of 35,000 in eighty-five countries.[1] It is millenarian and evangelistic in its goals, yet world-affirming in its orientation towards society. Raëlians do not fit the anti-cult movement's stereotype of a cult (which new religious movement does?), nor do they correspond neatly to Roy Wallis's tripartite typology of "world rejecting/affirming/accommodating" new religious movements (NRMs).[2] Thus, Raëlians present an enigma: they are fundamentalists but also modernists. Their actions are based on the belief in the literal and infallible truth embodied in their sacred texts, Raël's accounts of his meetings and communications with his extraterrestrials, the Elohim, "those who come from the sky." These texts bear at least a *prima facie* consistency with Robert S. Ellwood's suggestion that the appeal of "UFO cults" might reside in their offering "classic religious eschatologies revamped to meet the fears and dramas of the modern world."[3] In this study, we will explore the Raëlian eschatology within the context of the "fears and dramas of the modern world" and the historical horizon within which the modern world and Raëlianism both find their context. Briefly, Raëlianism replaces the supernatural with the extraterrestrial and technological in order to demystify and demythologize primarily the Abrahamic religions, simultaneously (if unconsciously) mythologizing and ideologizing science and technology. The Raëlian hermeneutic and attendant worldview ground their unique—if somewhat extreme—solutions to some of the most troubling topics of the late twentieth century, such as ecology, sexuality, and globalization, concerns shared by many other UFO religions.

Despite its explicit protestation that its members are not ufologists,[4] the Raëlian religion would not exist if it were not for the historical advent

of the UFO phenomenon. In his *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies*, Carl Jung proposes that flying saucers

> are manifestations of psychic changes which always appear at the end of one Platonic month and at the beginning of another. Apparently they are changes in the constellation of psychic dominants, or the archetypes, or "gods" as they used to be called, which bring about . . . long-lasting transformations of the collective psyche.[5]

The historical developments accompanying or marking Jung's "changes in the constellation of psychic dominants" are the advent of a global culture and its simultaneous division into two mortally-adversarial camps armed with the newly-discovered and harnessed energies at the nucleus of the atom. Regarding this transformation, Jung insightfully points out that "the whole collective psychological problem that has been opened up by the Saucer epidemic stands in compensatory antithesis to our scientific picture of the world."[6] Where Jung, perhaps, would see this compensation relative only to the historical developments following World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, a bolder and more far-reaching thesis would propose that the appearance of UFOs on our historical horizon as objects inspiring religious behavior "stands in compensatory antithesis" to the scientific worldview as such and its practical, social, and spiritual effects since the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, and that this standing "in compensatory antithesis" is ambivalent, being simultaneously an affirmation, critique, and transcendence of science and technology and the mortal threats they are seen as presenting, e.g., the environmental crisis and the danger of nuclear war. New religious movements arising within the context of the contemporary developed world, whose sources of revelation are extraterrestrial, spontaneously take their space age deities to be merely natural or immanent rather than supernatural or transcendent, precisely because they exist within the horizon of our postmodern condition, i.e., within the horizon of the death of God.

THE DEATH OF GOD AND THE POSTMODERN CONDITION AS THE ASCENDANCY OF THE NATURAL SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION OF THE WORLD

Both the death of God and postmodernity are admittedly ambivalent notions. Philosophically, the postmodern condition has been articulated as an "incredulity toward metanarratives" (overarching, universal explanations, e.g., the Christian eschatological version of human history)[7] or the death of the Cartesian subject as the epistemological and metaphysical foundation of the modern, scientific worldview.[8] Less philosophically, however, the death of God signifies the replacement of

a theological interpretation of the world by a natural scientific interpretation. The death of God is, then, the withdrawal or dispersion or disappearance of the metaphysical, the supernatural, or the supersensuous world upon which hitherto the sensuous, natural, physical world relied for its substance, meaning, and value.[9] Contemporary science and technology do not need to include God, the Absolute, or Being in their theories, measurements, calculations, or planning; the discourse of science and technology that dominates our practical affairs devalues the ideas of God, the Absolute, and Being. The social effects of this change in dominant worldviews are well-known. Existing religions were increasingly required to justify themselves against the theoretical and practical worlds articulated and constructed during the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, often fighting a losing battle, so that today secular consciousness understands the earth to be but one planet orbiting one of billions of stars, it and its sun billions of years old, this planet the home of *Homo sapiens* who are only one of millions of species, each but a momentary genetic variation proper to the momentary environment within which it lives.

NRMS WITHIN THE HORIZON OF THE DEATH OF GOD

New religious movements arising within the context of the disappearance of the supersensuous world articulate themselves, often with a popular fluency, in the discourses of the natural sciences and seek to justify their beliefs by means of para- or pseudoscientific investigation or argument. For example, Sir Oliver Lodge dedicates *The Survival of Man* (1915) (a work on life-after-death) to "the founders of the Society for Psychical Research, the truest and most patient workers in an unpopular religion of science."[10] The researches of the society were attempts to reinvent, transform, or translate beliefs about the unseen or invisible world into the discourse (and truth conditions) of the natural sciences. As J. Gordon Melton observes, since 1750, many of those who claim contact with otherworldly beings articulate themselves relative to the scientific discourse of the day.[11] Something new has appeared in the past five hundred years to which religions old and new have felt required to react either by attacking or conversing. Simply put, the present takes as given the scientific worldview; so, new religious intuitions that seek to articulate themselves often take for granted the truth of that worldview and seek to harmonize it with religious sentiments. Thus NRMs whose theology is centered around otherworldly beings paradoxically attempt to articulate a religious worldview within a purely immanent horizon wherein the gods no longer hail from a region outside of space and time (i.e., outside nature) but from some distant planet, star, or dimension.

Not only are these UFO religions' gods now only extraterrestrial or interdimensional beings, but, because of their miraculous technology, their immanence is ambivalent and marginal to the immanence of nature the natural sciences assume. However, since these beings must coexist with the laws of nature that the natural sciences propound and technology exploits, the peripherality of these beings is interpreted as a paranormality, an existing within a realm yet-to-be-understood by science. The technology of the flying saucer is miraculous not in terms of transcending the laws of nature, but in terms of our present ("primitive") understanding of these laws. John Saliba's solid and comprehensive study confirms this collapsing of the miraculous into the super-technological, especially in the case of Christian interpretations of UFO phenomena.[12] These two ideas—that in time our science will come to understand paranormal phenomena (and thereby acquire new technologies of paranormal power) and that the ufonauts are technologically and spiritually more advanced or superior to us—orbit an affirmation of science and technology that takes them to be natural to all forms of intelligent life, on and off the earth, thereby ideologizing the First World's dominant cultural practice. Furthermore, these two absolutely contingent (and perhaps profoundly short-lived) cultural accidents (i.e., science and technology) are understood not only as natural but as progressing or evolving. Alongside or bound up with this assumption of science as a naturally evolving universal tendency of life is the belief that the way out of the profound problems the industrialization of the earth has presented is technological ingenuity itself. Indeed, the argument often offered for funding a search for extraterrestrial intelligence (well-known by its acronym, SETI) is that any race advanced enough for interstellar communication will have undergone the crises we ourselves presently face and, therefore, may share their solutions to our most pressing ecological problems. Thus, an optimism is part and parcel of the mere appearance of flying saucers as extraterrestrial spaceships (whether "nuts-and-bolts" or of a "higher etheric vibratory plane") and of the revelations and admonitions of their pilots. Within the context of the developed world, whose development is taken as the product of a natural tendency of intelligence, the flying saucer appears, furthermore, as both critique (as existing at and thereby showing the limits of a particular viewpoint) and transcendence (as ultimate and assured goal) of the present.

Those NRMs for whom the UFO is a vehicle of enlightenment occur not only within the horizon of the death of God, but, more narrowly, within that of the UFO phenomenon as such. More specifically, their membership belongs to that social group which affirms what in ufological circles is called the extra-terrestrial hypothesis (ETH), which proposes that "real" UFOs (i.e., those that are not misidentifications or hallucinations) are spaceships manufactured and piloted by intelligent,

extraterrestrial creatures. Some proponents of the ETH are "contactees" who claim to have had communication, whether face-to-face or telepathic, with the ufonauts and to have received from them religious messages or missions. Around some of these contactees, NRMs have formed, such as George King's Aetherius Society,[13] Ruth Norman's Unarius,[14] and Marshall Herff Applewhite's and Bonnie Lu Nettles' Human Individual Metamorphosis[15] (later to become Heaven's Gate), among many others.

THE RAELIAN RELIGION: INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

While a passing familiarity with the discourses of UFO religions suggests they all address the same family of concerns, each has evolved its own answers and solutions. Those of Raël are strikingly original. They offer, on the one hand, a critical view of society, politics, morals, and the environment, while, on the other hand, outlining an optimistic vision of the transcendence of these quandaries. Raël's creative theology corresponds closely to the characteristics noted by Jung in his study of the psychological significance of the flying saucer, characteristics which Jung felt accounted for our deep fascination for this phenomenon. Raël addresses the profound trepidation evoked by the threat of a global nuclear holocaust by criticizing our aggressive abuse of the fruits of science and technology, and by encouraging our corresponding aspirations to become equal to our creators, who are "25,000 years ahead of us."

The "truth" communicated to Raël by his extraterrestrial teachers is essentially an interpretation of the Bible analogous to that of proponents of the ancient astronaut hypothesis. Saliba sums up the ancient astronaut Biblical hermeneutic as follows:

> God becomes an astronaut, a superior being who lives in a more advanced civilization in some other faraway galaxy. Divine revelations are nothing but teachings from space creatures and miracles are awesome interventions by intelligences who are technologically superior to the human race. The supernatural, in this view, is reduced to the super-technological. God is a superior humanoid creature living on another planet. He has made himself immortal through technology and has created the human race . . . .[16]

This view (always marked by reading Ezekiel's vision as a UFO sighting report) has found popular expression for some decades now. The year 1968 is a watershed for the widespread paperback publication of this genre of ufological literature: Erick Von Däniken's first two books were published in German; in England, W. Raymond Drake's theosophically-inclined *Gods and Spacemen in the Ancient East*; in America, Otto Binder's

Unsolved Mysteries of the Past; and most significantly Jean Sendy's quasi-cabalistic *La Lune: Clé de la Bible.* This last book, along with Sendy's two others (all published in French before 1970), essay an ancient-astronaut reading of Genesis and the Bible at points identical to Raël's. Similar views are expressed in Jacques Bergier's *Extraterrestrial Visitations from Prehistoric Times to the Present* and Serge Hutin's *Alien Races and Fantastic Civilizations*, both published in French in 1970. That views strikingly similar to Raël's precede the publication of his own does not necessarily entail any plagiarism on his part, but their presence and popularity certainly aids in understanding the appeal of Raël's overtly religious articulation of these views.[17]

RAEL'S FIRST ENCOUNTER AND THE FOUNDING OF MADECH

The story of the Raëlian religion (first known as MADECH, then, between 1975 and 1995, as the Raëlian Movement International) begins on 13 December 1973, in the Clermont-Ferrand region of France. Vorilhon relates in his first book, *Le Livre Qui Dit La Verité* (*The Book Which Tells theTruth*), how, on this date, he witnessed a flying saucer land and met its small, greenish, humanoid occupant, who identified himself as one of the Elohim of Genesis.[18] Vorilhon boarded the flying saucer, and the extraterrestrial explained over the course of six days the "true" meaning of the Bible, the essence of which constitutes the majority of Raël's "Message." Broadly, the message is that all life on earth is neither the end product of divine creation nor that of continuing evolution, but the creation of extraterrestrial biotechnologists who made all life "from scratch" by means of their complete knowledge of—and ability to synthesize and manipulate—DNA. *Homo sapiens* is "created in their own image." The Elohim's revelation is, essentially, a reading of the Bible as the story of an extraterrestrial biotechnological research project, whose drama bears a curious resemblance to present-day research and debate. The reason the Elohim created life on Earth is that the population of their own planet feared the consequences of experiments in biotechnology and the creation of artificial life forms. The Elohim scientists were required to remove their research to a distant planet for safety's sake.[19] Their creation of creatures in their own image, as well as their revealing to their creations their true artificial nature (and thereby the newly-made human beings' power to create new life, in turn, by technological means), were both surreptitious and illegal acts, whose consequences were the expulsion from Eden and the Flood, i.e., the termination of the experiment and the sterilization of laboratory Earth. In this reading of Genesis, Yahweh becomes the leader of the scientists who created all life on Earth; the Serpent, those Elohim who gave to humankind the knowledge of good and evil, i.e., the awareness of their

being artificial life forms; and Satan, the leader of the faction on the Elohim's home planet critical of the scientists' research and its results.[20] That this scenario bears on present anxieties concerning biotechnology needs little explanation. In fact, the Raëlian religion pointed to the widely-publicized cloning of Dolly as confirmation of the Elohim's revelations, i.e., that humanity is attaining a level of technology already reached by the Elohim in Earth's distant past.[21]

The message given to Vorilhon by his extraterrestrial teacher is comprised not only of this ancient-astronaut interpretation of the Bible, but also of a set of "New Commandments" founded upon this vision of humanity as an artificial and purely material creation of a technologically advanced and spiritually enlightened race of extraterrestrial scientists. With this prescriptive portion of the message, Vorilhon was given a new, charismatic name, "Raël" ("light of God," "light" or "Ambassador of the Elohim," "messenger").[22] Raël is told to promote world government by "the most intelligent," a system called "Geniocracy," wherein "[o]nly those who have an intellectual coefficient of at least 50% above the average will be eligible for a public post, and those who will be able to vote will have an intellectual coefficient of at least 10% above the average."[23] This one-world government also includes the institution of a single, world-wide currency and an international, artificial language.[24] In addition to the global unification of currencies, the Elohim's prescribed economic reforms also include an economic system they call "Humanitarianism," based primarily upon the abolition of inheritance.[25] The condition for this one-world economy and government is the elimination of military conscription.[26] Raël is then given the mission to spread the message of humankind's true origins and destiny and to build an embassy "on neutral territory" where the Elohim will land and meet the representatives of all nations if a sufficient number of human beings come to believe in them and humanity abandons its warlike ways.[27] In this case, the Elohim will share their advanced scientific knowledge with humanity, ushering in a "Golden Age" of peace and prosperity. The practical implementation of the message began with the founding of MADECH (*Mouvement pour Accueil des Elohim Createurs de l'Humanitê*) in 1974 and the publication of Raël's first book.

RAEL'S SECOND ENCOUNTER

Raël's second close encounter and contact allegedly occurred on 7 October 1975 and is recounted in his second book, published in French the same year, *Les Extra-terrestres M'Ont Emmené Sur Leur Planète* (*Extraterrestrials Took Me to Their Planet*).[28] As the title attests, this book recounts a twenty-four-hour visit to a paradisal planet "relatively close to the Earth," where Raël is further enlightened as to the nature of humankind and its creators. His Elohim teacher now identifies himself

as Yahweh, "president of the council of eternals." Raël is introduced to Jesus, Moses, Elijah, Buddha, and Muhammad, now immortal by means of serial cloning. Not only does a 700-member Elohim council of eternals inhabit the planet, but 8,400 "people from Earth . . . who, during their lives, reached a sufficient level of open-mindedness on the infinite, or who enabled humanity to progress from its primitive level by their discoveries, their writings, their way of organizing society, their exemplary acts of fraternity, of love or of unselfishness."[29] Raël is shown the machine that instantaneously manufactures the clones whereby the Elohim and deserving human beings maintain their immortality. A temporary clone of Raël himself is produced from a cell sample taken from between his eyes. Not only are the deserving rewarded with immortality by means of cloning, but "[a]ll those on Earth who preached violence, wickedness, aggressiveness, and obscurantism . . . will be recreated to undergo the punishment which they deserve after being judged by those whom they made suffer or by their ancestors or descendants."[30] This technology, together with extensive automatization, accomplishes "all the dirty work [and] all the work that is uninteresting [i.e.,] all the maintenance work" by means of "biological robots."[31] Not only do these robots perform all the onerous and tiresome labor, but they also provide erotic pleasure, as six female robots, one of each human race, demonstrate during Raël's first and only night on the Elohim's planet.[32] Later, back on Earth, Raël is telepathically given supplementary commandments and sixteen "Keys" which highlight and expand the original message. Humanitarianism and geniocracy are reaffirmed and explained in somewhat greater detail. "The transmission of the cellular plan" is introduced, whereby a Raëlian's genetic code is transmitted to the Elohim and a square centimeter of bone tissue from between the eyes is secured to facilitate being cloned on the planet of eternals after death. A system of tithing is advocated, to help Raël, "the Guide of Guides . . . devote himself full time to his mission."[33] A relatively detailed code of behavior is presented, covering diet (e.g., prohibiting stimulants and recreational drugs), sexual behavior, child rearing and education, and meditative practices.

THE SCHISM WITHIN MADECH, THE FOUNDING AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE RAELIAN MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL, AND THE PRESENT-DAY RAELIAN RELIGION

In 1976 the Raëlian Movement International emerged out of a schism within MADECH. The membership of the new movement was divided into two levels: the more committed "Guides" who composed the "Structure" and the more loosely affiliated "Raëlians" who received the bulletin *Apocalypse*. This restructuring and the articulation of social and ethical values combined to create a relatively stable structure of

organization and beliefs that continues to this day. Following this consolidation, Raël was to devote an entire volume to his teachers' political philosophy,[34] as well as to the practice of "sensual meditation." In this meditative method, the practitioner aims at attaining telepathic communication with the Elohim, activates his or her psychic potential, and grows new neural pathways.[35] In 1979, Raël published *Accueillier Les Extra-Terrestres* (later translated and published in English as *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space: They Created Humanity in Their Laboratories* (1986)), wherein his charismatic claims are amplified.[36] It is revealed to him that the Eloha Yahweh is his father and Jesus his half-brother; he is the "last of forty prophets," being born in "the Age of Apocalypse," i.e., in the era following the detonation of the first atomic bomb, the discovery of DNA, and the revelation of humankind's true nature, through Raël, by the Elohim. Despite these amplifications, this latter book is essentially a reformulation and repetition of earlier material. Though there have been some additions to the message since the mid-1980s, none are so radical as to substantially alter the basic character of the religion. Indeed, the development of and the debate around biotechnology, and the popularization of the idea of "terraforming" serve—admittedly, to a limited extent—to harmonize the religion's concerns with more mainstream society.

Today, the message continues to be spread according to annual instructions Raël receives telepathically from the Eloha Yahweh, his father. These instructions name a particular nation which is to be the special focus of the movement for that coming year. The movement's own version of its history is organized according to year and country in this way. Furthermore, in 1985, the movement instituted Planetary Week, to be held commencing each April 5, focused around a different theme each year. Each national branch of the religion is encouraged to hold a conference to publicize the message. To court the press, often an outrageous or controversial act is performed. Actions considered outrageous by more mainstream society are not restricted to the branches' conferences. As the *Toronto Star* reported on 11 November 1992, the Raëlians distributed 10,000 condoms to Roman Catholic high school students in Montreal, Canada, putatively to protest the Montreal Catholic School Commission's decision against installing condom dispensers in its high schools. Consistent with the goal of one-world government and planetary political unity is the movement's advocation of racial integration—not through intermarriage and procreation, but through interracial sexual relationships. In photographs, Raël is sometimes depicted as surrounded by a racially mixed circle of bikini-clad young women, reminiscent of promotional photographs for a Miss World Beauty Pageant.[37] In addition, as the *Montreal Gazette* reported on 30 September 1997, the religion opened UFO Land near Valcourt, Quebec, as a theme park presenting the message by means of multimedia

displays. Most recently, on 18 June 1999, the religion organized a bilingual "conference-debate" entitled "Yes to Human Cloning" in Montreal.[38]

THE RAELIAN RELIGION: BELIEFS, VALUES, AND POLITICS

Beliefs

The Raëlian religion, from its inception, rigorously excises all residue of the transcendent in its rereading of the Bible according to its own version of the ancient astronaut hypothesis. Cosmologically, any supernatural realm where a First Cause, for life or the cosmos, might reside is excluded by positing an infinite regression of causes in answer to the question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" The cosmos extends infinitely into the past and future.[39] Likewise, the material (i.e., atomic) order extends into the infinitely small and large. The atom is depicted as a microcosmic solar system; the solar system, a macrocosmic atom, and so on. As Raël explains it:

> Once we have attained sufficient open-mindedness we can understand that in space the Earth is but a particle of the atom of the atoms of the hand of a gigantic being, who himself contemplates a starlit sky which composes the hand, the stomach or the foot of a being even more gigantic, who finds himself under a sky, etc., etc. and this ad infinitum. The same process applies for the infinitely small. On the atom of the atoms of our hands, there exist intelligent beings for whom these particles are planets and stars, and these beings are composed of atoms of which the particles are the stars and the planets on which there are intelligent beings, etc., etc. . . . also to Infinity.[40]

It is no exaggeration, then, to characterize the Raëlian cosmology as being one of absolute immanence. That this immanence is, furthermore, exclusively material is reinforced not only by the identical atomistic structures of the micro- and macrocosmos ("as above, so below" in Raëlian terms), but by the derision terms such as "immaterial" or "impalpable" receive, especially when predicated of more orthodox depictions of God. Already in his first book, Raël's Elohim teacher speaks in a manner which echoes the more popular understanding of the death of God:

> In scientifically developed countries . . . [n]o one can believe any longer in a "heavenly God" with a white beard, perched upon a cloud, omniscient and omnipotent, which is what the Church wants us to believe in. Neither can they believe in delightful little guardian angels, nor in a devil with horns and hooves. . . .[41]

In its views concerning the origins of humanity, the Raëlian religion is no less consistent in its insistent monistic materialism. Where almost all other proponents of the ancient-astronaut biblical hermeneutic interpret *Homo sapiens* to be a hybrid of "those who come from the heavens" (in Genesis "Sons of God") and protohuman females ("Daughters of Men") (Genesis 6:2), Raël is more radical: his Elohim reveal that humankind is literally made in their image by means of biotechnology. Indeed, the Elohim are responsible for all life on earth. Furthermore, Raël explains in a section of his *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space* entitled "Questions Which Are Most Often Asked" that the Elohim in turn are themselves the creation of another, superior race, who in turn are themselves created in the same manner.[42] This regress of artifice, Raël is told, is infinite: there is no original life whose source is evolution or some supernatural Creator. Evolution is refuted by the Elohim on the grounds that chance mutation coupled to natural selection is incapable of developing higher organisms. As Raël writes:

> As Einstein said, there can not be a watch without a watch-maker. All those people who believe that we come from the monkey through a slow evolutionary process, believe that the beautiful watch which we are, has built itself, by accident. It is a bit like saying that if we put all the components of a watch together in a bag and shook it around for a while, we would eventually get a perfect working watch.[43]

The Raëlian religion's thoroughgoing atomistic materialism erases not only the distinction between God and Nature but between soul and body; just as there is only material nature, so there is only a physical body. Nonetheless, the traditional promise of immortality for true believers is maintained, as remarked above: immortality by means of cloning. The initiatory rite of the Raëlian religion is the "transmission of the cellular plan," whereby a new member's genetic code is telepathically transmitted to the Elohim by a Guide, insuring the practicing member's recreation after death on the planet of eternals, as well as formalizing that member's recognition of the Elohim as his or her creator. Furthermore, the new member is encouraged to sign a contract permitting a mortician, upon the member's demise, to excise one square centimeter of the "frontal bone" (near the pineal gland or "third eye"), which is then sent to a bank in Geneva, Switzerland to be stored, awaiting collection by the Elohim. According to Raël:

> The cellular plan, or genetic code, of each individual, is registered in an enormous computer which records all our actions during our life, from the time of our conception, from the meeting of the ovule and the spermatozoon, the moment when a new genetic code is registered, hence, a new individual. The individual will be followed through his lifetime, and at the end of his life, the computer will know if he has the right to eternal life on the planet where the Elohim accept in their midst, only the most worthy of men and women.[44]

This characterization of human beings as "nothing more than self-programming, self-reproducing biological computors (*sic*)"[45] grounds the Raëlian promise of immortality for the deserving. In the Raëlian view, the person is identical to his or her genetic code. During his first encounter, Raël's Elohim teacher explains the means by which an individual gains immortality technologically:

> When we are in full possession of our abilities and our brain is at its maximum efficiency and knowledge, we surgically remove a tiny part of the body which is conserved. When we die, from a minute particle of our body which had already been preserved, we fully recreate the body, as it was at that time. I say as it was at that time, meaning with all its scientific knowledge, and of course, its personality.[46]

This version of the serial recreation of the individual is later modified, in that an actual, physical particle is not necessary, as "the enormous computer which records all our actions" also records our genetic codes, whereby those deserving are "recreated young, with a body in full possession of its force and its resources."[47] Where the Raëlian belief concerning immortality by means of cloning may well appear questionable to those familiar with the arguments of identity theory and functionalism in the philosophy of mind, there is no denying that a version of science and technology is being used here to articulate a new religious intuition in terms immediately familiar to a populace for whom the science of genetics and biotechnology and their consequences for how we conceive of life and the person have become quotidian.

Values

Given the centrality of the technology of cloning to the Raëlian religion's worldview, it comes as no surprise that the religion gives its whole-hearted support to developments in biotechnology. The Raëlian religion has come out explicitly in favor of genetically-altered foods, vegetable and animal, on the grounds that since all living matter is originally artificial, the more genetically artificial an organism, the more "natural" it is.[48] The Raëlian support for the development of cloning technology, on the other hand, has been more than merely rhetorical. In a press conference held 11 March 1997 in the Las Vegas Flamingo Hilton, Raël announced he had created Valiant Venture Ltd. with a group of investors. The company offers "Cloneaid" for parents wishing to clone, rather than procreate, a child—at a cost of US$200,000. The venture also offers "insuraclone" that for $50,000 will store a client's child's cells so the child may be cloned in the event of an untimely death. This company was founded in the Bahamas, where cloning is not illegal.[49] Furthermore, on 13 January 1998, the religion announced its support, moral and financial, for the research of Chicago-based scientist Dr. Richard Seed, who claimed that he will have cloned a baby by mid-1999.

Though no Raëlian himself, Dr. Seed's own words, as reported in an article in the *Ottawa Citizen*, express sentiments not dissimilar to Raël's: "Cloning and the reprogramming of DNA is the first serious step in becoming one with God." That such activities have generated controversy is no surprise. The Bahamian government froze the assets of Valiant Venture Ltd. Dr. Brigitte Boisellier was fired from her position as director of a research project for a chemical company in Lyons, France, reportedly for speaking publicly in favor of cloning and admitting to being a Raëlian on television. Dr. Boisellier has said, "Why do people always think about the bad things scientific advances can bring? Why not assume that people are good and will use this knowledge in a responsible way?"[50] Her optimism is matched by a kind of "happy positivism": she has remarked that what can be done, will be done, and it is better to do it openly and legally so as to prevent exploitation. Such *amor fati* relative to technology is characteristically Raëlian.

The Raëlian enthusiasm for cloning is only one aspect of its general approval of all reproductive technology. The Raëlian affirmation of reproductive technologies finds its context in relation to the religion's approach to individual sexual behavior. Since "life was made to be enjoyed,"[51] heterosexual sex is to be emancipated by artificial means from procreation. The use of contraception, including abortion, is prescribed as a means to accomplish this emancipation, as well as a means to solve problems of overpopulation.[52] All manner of polymorphous consensual sexual activity, hetero-, bi-, or homosexual, is likewise affirmed. Indeed, Cloneaid explicitly offers its services to homosexual couples wanting children. As Raël himself succinctly phrases it in *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space*, "each individual has the right to do with their body as he or she sees fit."[53] The extreme value placed on sexuality is best exemplified by the practice of directed hedonistic sensuousness ("sensual meditation"), which is perceived as means to altered states of consciousness, mystical panenhenic states of oneness with the universe, and telepathic communication with the Elohim. Sexual activity in particular and sensuality in general are said to produce brain cells and to improve neural links.[54] As Raël writes in the Keys:

> the moment you approach closest to perfect harmony with infinity is when this takes place in your room of sensual meditation with someone you love, by physically uniting with him, and placing yourselves in harmony with infinity during your union.[55]

Politics

Where the Raëlian approach to sexuality and reproduction would exploit and intensify the possibilities presented by recent biomedical

developments and social changes, likewise the religion's social and political values affirm contemporary trends, namely global industrial and technological development. The Eloha Yahweh not only advocates universal automation of the means of production, but also criticizes organized labor's resistance to it.[56] As remarked above, the social system that would manifest humankind's moral maturity is that of a one-world, geniocratic government, having one global currency and one global language, a vision consistent, in part, with recent world economic trends, e.g., the formation of the European Economic Union and its adoption of the Euro. Already in Raël's second book, the Eloha Yahweh says, "Once the European military is unified, so can the European economy be by creating a single European currency."[57] However, where recent history has proven amenable to the Raëlian valorization of development, it has been less so in regards to geniocracy. Despite writing a book-length manifesto and the subsequent founding of a short-lived political party, Raël writes in *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space* that a

> political ideology does not weigh very much when compared to the Messages of the Elohim. . . . The priority of priorities is the building of the Embassy asked for by our Creators so that we can welcome them in the company of the ancient Messengers, Moses, Jesus, Buddha and Mohammed. This is my only reason for being on this Earth. This must become the only reason for living of all those people who wish to help me.[58]

The belief that the relative intelligence of a citizen is unproblematically determinable through "scientific" testing again highlights the religion's faith in the absolute truth available to the scientific method. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, the Raëlian religion's political ideology has not escaped criticism, particularly in Europe. Because of its overtly elitist dimensions, geniocracy was denounced as "fascist" by the Guyard Report on Sects in France. In its own defense, the Raëlian religion explicitly argues that it is neither a cult nor a sect.[59] Furthermore, in more recent articulations of its politics, the Raëlian religion has emphasized tolerance and human rights. That all religions ultimately spring from pretechnological humanity's misinterpretations of supertechnological phenomena is offered as grounds for religious, cultural, and racial pluralism.[60] Indeed, the Raëlian religion has gone as far as to post the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights on its website, stating that the Declaration

> is the text written by Man which applies the best to the Message transmitted by the Elohim. This charter which is already contained in the Message, invites the individual to adopt a panoramic, non-sectarian, and non-fanatic vision of our world. It brings him/her to naturally respect and better yet, to love each other's differences.[61]

The utopia to be brought about by the technological developments and social values the Raëlians so affirm is portrayed most concretely in Raël's description of his visit to the Elohim's planet of the eternals. The lifestyle on the Elohim's planet and in the Golden Age promised by technology is characterized as one of material ease due to sufficient means of production supplied by automated mechanical means and a workforce of "biological robots," artificial human beings identical to ourselves in every way except their intellect, which is designed solely for a single practical purpose. Automation and mechanization are explicitly advocated by the Eloha Yahweh; he explains to Raël that

> [y]ou could very soon live in a genuine terrestrial paradise if only the technology which you have was actually put into service for the well-being of people instead of serving violence, the army, or the personal profit of a few. Science and technology can totally liberate humanity not only from the anxiety of hunger in the world, but also from the obligation to work to live. Thanks to automation machines can quite easily look after the daily chores. Already, in some of your most modern factories, only one person is needed now to simply oversee a computer which commands and carries out all the operations for the building of a car for which not so long ago several hundred people were needed. In the future, even that one person will be unnecessary.[62]

The "biological robots" who comprise the labor force of this "terrestrial paradise" are

> created in the same way we [the Elohim] created people on Earth, in a one hundred percent scientific way, but they are voluntarily limited and absolutely submissive to us. They are also incapable of acting without any order, and are very specialized. They don't have any aspirations of their own, and have no pleasure, except the ones that their specialization requires. They grow old and die like us but the machine which makes them can make far more than we really need. Besides, they are incapable of suffering, of feelings and cannot reproduce themselves. Their life span is similar to ours, that is to say, with the help of a small surgical intervention, about seven hundred years. When one of them must be destroyed because of old age, the machine which created them produces one or several others depending on our needs. They come out of the machine ready for functioning and with their normal height for they have neither growth nor childhood. They know how to do only one thing, to obey people and Elohim and are incapable of the slightest violence.[63]

One is reminded of the eugenic social engineering in Huxley's *Brave New World*, where artificially inseminated ova are altered *in utero* to the minimal physical and mental demands of their future careers. This life of ease, security, and pleasure (by means of plentiful and readily-available sex "robots") can be enjoyed endlessly, by means of immortality through cloning.

Despite the intense value Raëlians place on science and technology, their belief that all life is synthetic inspires an admiration and respect

for living organisms. The variety of plant and animal life on earth is attributed to the artistic faculties of the Elohim biotechnologists. The beauty and variety of nature is held forth not only for appreciation, but also as further evidence against evolution:

> You yourself could have realized that an accidental evolution would have little chance of producing such a large variety of forms of life, of colors of birds and their amorous demonstrations, of the shape of the horns of certain antelope .... The evolution of the forms of life on Earth is the evolution of the techniques of creation and the sophistication of the brilliant work realized by the creators which led eventually to the creation of people similar to them.[64]

In fact, the Raëlian Genesis states that teams of scientists held competitions over whose creations were most beautiful. Each race is said to have been the creation of one particular team, each in one location on earth's protocontinent, Gondwanaland. Accordingly, the Raëlians have cultivated an appreciation for the beauty of nature; the awe they express over nature's wonders, in their videos and other media, is however not that of the Romantic before the Sublime, but that of an appreciator of an artist's abilities. As Raël writes: "Respect nature for as long as you are not capable of recreating it, and for as long as you are not capable of becoming a creator yourself. By respecting nature, you respect those who created it, our parents, the Elohim."[65] Interestingly, this conception of organic life as an artificial creation grounds an empathy for all organisms, vegetable and animal, while not leading to the extremes of biocentricism. As Raël writes:

> Never make animals suffer. You may kill them to feed on their flesh but without making them suffer. For although death is nothing, suffering is an abomination and you must avoid animals suffering as you must prevent human beings from suffering. . . . Plants, too, are alive and suffer in the same way as you do. So do not cause plants to suffer. They are alive just as you are.[66]

This approach to nature and the advocacy of the use of reproductive technology are the religion's primary points of engagement with ecological concerns.

CONCLUSION

The thorough-going centrality of "science" for the Raëlian worldview is the feature of the Raëlian religion that most marks it as the kind of NRM characterized and argued for in this study. The Raëlian "demythologization" of the Bible is simultaneously a mythologization or mystification of science. Indeed, Raël echoes Sir Oliver Lodge: "Science should be your religion for the Elohim your creators created

you scientifically."[67] Not only should science replace religion, but being scientific is claimed to be the very essence of human being; as the Eloha Yahweh says during Raël's first encounter: "Humanity's objective is scientific progress."[68] Scientific progress is the objective not only of humanity, but of all intelligent, humanoid races. Though the Elohim cannot travel in time or foresee the future, they explain that just as the life cycle of a biological organism can be studied, known, and predicted, the same is true for the technological and moral development of any society of intelligent beings.[69] Within this Raëlian view, technological societies experience either a harmony or disharmony of technological and moral development. In the latter case, the society self-destructs, as our own threatens to do. However, should the society mature morally, its use of technology results in a Golden Age where the problems development and industrialization engender, such as pollution, overpopulation, hunger, and the energy crisis, are themselves solved by "the wise use of science." This ideologization of science and technology (hardly restricted to the Raëlian religion) grounds the sense of the claim that the Elohim are "25,000 years ahead" of humanity's present scientific and technological development. Science and technology are repeatedly characterized as a natural pursuit of intelligent beings. In this way, a social and cultural phenomenon is portrayed as if it were natural, necessary, uniform, and universal, i.e., the phenomenon is ideologized.

Despite being primarily a transformation of the Bible, Raëlianism appears more immediately relevant to our most urgent concerns. While religions originating before the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions have sought ways to accommodate to a changing environment and to answer new concerns, the Raëlian Religion might be said to be inspired precisely by the selfsame issues which characterize the present moment in world history. The Raëlian view, then, affirms existing, traditional theological structures (e.g., the narrative of Genesis), while performing a kind of Hegelian *Aufhebung* (sublation) identical in its logic to that performed on the notion of technology itself by the class of NRMs here studied.

In summary, the advent of the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions usher in today's dominant discourse and practices within which religions, orthodox and otherwise, must define themselves. The present stands within the horizon of the death of God, understood as the domination of the assumption of the immanence of the world and the consequent disappearance of the metaphysical, the supernatural, and the supersensuous (at least overtly) or their fall into the merely paranormal. The paranormal or paraphysical is that realm of nature yet to be understood (and so ultimately controlled) by science. This assumption that science will continue along the path of discovery, knowledge, and power naturalizes or ideologizes science and technology. When our

science and technology poison the biosphere, split the atom to release potentially species-suicidal energies and manipulate the genetic code of living organisms, humanity has taken upon itself powers and potentialities hitherto exclusively the domain of superhuman deities. That science and technology, whose worldview determines how things are, bring us to an unprecedented impasse demands they must in some way be transcended (i.e., survived). The flying saucer appears within this horizon as a symbol of just such transcendence, promising that precisely the causes of our quandary will be our means of salvation.

ENDNOTES

[1] <http://www.rael.net/web/amouv.html>, accessed 23 June 1999.

[2] Roy Wallis, *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

[3] Robert S. Ellwood, *Religious and Spiritual Groups in America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 334.

[4] <http://www.rael.net/web/amouv.html>, accessed 23 June 1999.

[5] C. G. Jung, *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies*, trans. R. F. C. Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 5.

[6] Jung, 135.

[7] Aho's analysis of the postmodern condition is both more sociologically oriented and pointed than Lyotard's now-classic presentation though certainly consistent with the latter's basic thesis. See James A. Aho, "The Apocalypse of Modernity," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem*, ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 61-72; J.-F. Lyotard, "The Postmodern Condition," trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, in *Philosophy: End or Transformation?*, ed. Kenneth Baynes, et. al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987). Likewise, Heidegger's characterization of the metanarrative as place-holder for God is both relatively early and germane . See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), 64:

> Into the position of the vanished authority of God and of the teaching office of the Church steps the authority of conscience, obtrudes the authority of reason. Against these the social instinct rises up. The flight from the world into the suprasensory is replaced by historical progress. The otherworldy goal of everlasting bliss is transformed into the earthly happiness of the greatest number. The careful maintenance of the cult of religion is relaxed through enthusiasm for the creating of a culture or the spreading of civilization. Creativity, previously the unique property of the biblical god, becomes the distinctive mark of human activity. Human creativity finally passes over into business enterprise.

[8] The philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer succinctly articulates this version in *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 103-4:

> Self-understanding can no longer be integrally related to a complete self-transparency in the sense of a full self-presence of ourselves to ourselves. Self-understanding is always on-the-way; it is on a path whose completion is a clear impossibility. If there is an entire dimension of unilluminated unconscious; if all our actions, wishes, drives, decisions, and models of conduct (and so the totality of our human social existence) are based on the obscure and veiled dimension of the connotations of our animality, if all our conscious representations can be masks, pretexts, under which our vital energy or our social interests pursue their own goals in an unconscious way; if all the insights we have, as obvious and

self-evident as they may be, are threatened by such doubt; then self-understanding cannot designate patent self-transparency of our human existence. We have to repudiate the illusion of completely illuminating the darkness of our motivations and tendencies.

[9] Heidegger, 54-55.

[10] Sir Oliver Lodge, *The Survival of Man* (London: Methuen, 1909).

[11] J. Gordon Melton, "The Contactees: A Survey," in *The Gods Have Landed: New Religions from Other Worlds*, ed. James R. Lewis (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 4.

[12] John A. Saliba, "Religious Dimensions of UFO Phenomena," in Lewis, *The Gods Have Landed*, 35.

[13] Roy Wallis, "The Aetherius Society: A Case Study in the Formation of a Mystagogic Congregation," *Sociological Review* 22 (1974): 27-44.

[14] Diana Tumminia, "How Prophecy Never Fails: Interpretive Reason in a Flying Saucer Group," *Sociology of Religion* 59, no. 2 (1998): 157-70.

[15] Robert W. Balch, "Waiting for the Ships: Disillusionment and the Revitalization of Faith in Bo and Peep's UFO Cult," in Lewis, *The Gods Have Landed*, 137-66.

[16] Saliba, 34.

[17] Von Däniken's relevant books in German are *Erinnerungen in der Zukunft* (Germany: Econ Verlag, 1968) and *Zurück an den Sternen* (Germany: Econ Verlag, 1968), translated respectively as *Chariots of the Gods*, trans. Michael Heron (New York: Putnam, 1970) and *Gods from Outer Space*, trans. Michael Heron (New York: Putnam, 1971). The English-language books remarked are W. Raymond Drake, *Gods and Spacemen in the Ancient East* (London: Sphere, 1968) and Otto Binder, *Unsolved Mysteries of the Past* (New York: Tower, 1968). In French, see Jean Sendy, *La lune: Clé de la Bible* (France: Editions René Juillard, 1968); translated as *The Moon: Outpost of the Gods*, trans. Lowell Blair (New York: Berkeley Medallion, 1975). Sendy's other relevant books are *Those Gods Who Made Heaven and Earth*, trans. Lowell Blair (New York: Berkeley Medallion, 1972) and *The Coming of the Gods*, trans. Lowell Blair (New York: Berkeley Medallion, 1973), both published in French by Robert Lafront (Paris) 1969 and 1970 respectively. See also Jacques Bergier, *Les Extra-Terrestres dans l'Histoire* (Paris: Editions J'ai Lu, 1970), translated as *Extraterrestrial Visitations from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, trans. Henry Regnery Company (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1973); and Serge Hutin, *Alien Races and Fantastic Civilizations* (New York: Berkeley Medallion, 1975), published in French by Editions J'ai Lu in 1970.

[18] Raël's first book in translation is the first half of Claude Vorilhon ("Raël"), *The Message Given to Me by Extra-terrestrials: They Took Me to Their Planet* (Tokyo: AOM Corporation, 1986).

[19] Vorilhon, *Message*, 14.

[20] Vorilhon, *Message*, 20-30.

[21] <http://www.rael.net/web/ascience5.html>, accessed 24 June 1999.

[22] Vorilhon, *Message*, 105-6.

[23] Vorilhon, *Message*, 109.

[24] Vorilhon, *Message*, 113.

[25] Vorilhon, *Message*, 111.

[26] Vorilhon, *Message*, 114.

[27] Vorilhon, *Message*, 115-17.

[28] Vorilhon, *Message*.

[29] Vorilhon, *Message*, 197.

[30] Vorilhon, *Message*, 205.

[31] Vorilhon, *Message*, 198.

[32] Vorilhon, *Message*, 206-8.

[33] Vorilhon, *Message*, 215.

[34] Claude Vorilhon ("Raël"), *La Geniocratie* (Brantome: l'Edition du Message, 1977).

[35] Claude Vorilhon ("Raël"), *Sensual Meditation* (Tokyo: AOM Corporation, 1986).

[36] Claude Vorilhon ("Raël"), *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space: They Created Humanity in Their Laboratories* (Tokyo: AOM Corporation, 1986).

[37] Susan Palmer, "The Raëlian Movement International" in *New Religions and the New Europe*, ed. Robert Towler (Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1995), 194-210.

[38] <http://www.netside.net/~valiant/PRO61499.html>, accessed 23 June 1999.

[39] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 52.

[40] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 52.

[41] Vorilhon, *Message*, 90.

[42] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 53.

[43] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 88.

[44] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 29-30.

[45] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 74.

[46] Vorilhon, *Message*, 124.

[47] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 31.

[48] <http://www.rael.net/web/genetics.html>, accessed 24 June 1999.

[49] <http://www.rael.net/aclone.html>, accessed 23 June 1999.

[50] Personal communication from Dr. Bridgette Boisellier.

[51] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 61.

[52] Vorilhon, *Message*, 121.

[53] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 86.

[54] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 61-70.

[55] Vorilhon, *Message*, 263.

[56] Vorilhon, *Message*, 190.

[57] Vorilhon, *Message*, 184.

[58] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 51.

[59] <http://www.rael.net/web/amouv.html>, accessed 23 June 1999.

[60] <http://www.rael.net/web/avaleur1.html>, accessed 24 June 1999.

[61] <http://www.rael.net/web/avaleur1.html>, accessed 24 June 1999.

[62] Vorilhon, *Message*, 190.

[63] Vorilhon, *Message*, 198.

[64] Vorilhon, *Message*, 103-4.

[65] Vorilhon, *Message*, 244.

[66] Vorilhon, *Message*, 244.

[67] Vorilhon, *Message*, 255.

[68] Vorilhon, *Message*, 27.

[69] Vorilhon, *Let's Welcome our Fathers from Space*, 118.

Ásatrú in Iceland: The Rebirth of Nordic Paganism?

Michael Strmiska

The question of a life after death is one of the classic human dilemmas, one central to the belief systems of many religions. In this article, I will pose a variation on this question: "Can a *religion* have a life after death?" That is to say, "Can a religion be reborn?"[1]

In our current world situation, increasing contact with other cultures and faiths has not only opened the eyes of many people in the Western world to the global diversity of human spirituality; it has also, for some, opened the way to a reconsideration of forms of religion that exist not in exotic corners of the world but in their own dimly remembered pasts, in national, ethnic, or cultural heritages. This reevaluation of the religious byways of the past has given rise to "Neopaganism," the attempted reconstruction and revival of indigenous, pre-Christian, so-called "Pagan" religions in Europe, America, and elsewhere.[2]

My purpose here is to consider one such Neopagan movement, the Ásatrú in Iceland. Investigating the origins, activities, organization, and beliefs of this movement, I will attempt to show that however much this religion attempts to revive elements of the pre-modern Pagan past, it is in fact a quite postmodern movement. The self-understanding of the religion's beliefs and conception of the sacred are riddled with uncertainty and historical confusion. Within the movement there are many possibilities of understanding and experience and the believers lack the means to resolve these ambiguities in a clear and compelling manner—a dilemma entirely reflective of our current historical period, rather than of the era to which the movement harkens back.

My understanding of religion follows that of the French sociologist Émile Durkheim, and after him the Romanian historian of religion Mircea Eliade, with their varying but related conceptions of religion as collective experience and activity directed toward something defined as sacred, something of higher order and greater meaning than the things of ordinary life. I am also indebted to Jonathan Z. Smith for his elaboration of the concept of religion as "sacred persistence," collective activities undertaken to preserve and sustain cherished forms of approaching, understanding, and experiencing the sacred.[3] The concept

of sacred persistence alerts us that over time, the focus of concern in a given religious tradition may shift from the original sacred thing or experience which formed the basis and foundation of the tradition. That is to say, the form of relationship with the sacred becomes itself sacred and remains so even when the original sacred becomes remote or inaccessible. I believe that this is very much the case with Neopagan movements in general, and with Ásatrú in particular. The original inspiration, the contact with the original sacred of the old Pagan religion has been lost, but some of the forms, in fragmentary folklore, texts and cultural traditions, and something of the atmosphere and attitudes remain, and it is these which the members of Ásatrú seek to revive and recreate. This returns us to my original question: "Can a religion have a life after death?"

My interest in Ásatrú is both academic and personal. As a religious studies scholar *en route* to a Ph.D., my primary field of study, after a number of twists and turns, has emerged as comparative Indo-European religion and mythology, within which I have become increasingly enamored with the pre-Christian myths and religions of Northern Europe. Out of this interest, I have pursued contacts with Neopagan groups claiming to represent continuation or recreation of the bygone Pagan heritage. My first such contact, some twelve years ago, was very nearly my last. I ordered and received some publications from a Nordic Neopagan group based in Florida, and the materials were filled with racist, Neo-Nazi rhetoric that I found thoroughly disgusting. I discarded the materials, seeing no need for further communication with this group. The experience was a good introduction to the right-wing, racist form of American Nordic Neopaganism that Jeffrey Kaplan has so very well documented,[4] and I felt no desire to seek out any other Nordic Neopagan groups for almost ten years.

Nonetheless, my interest in the ancient Old Norse texts and the myths and religion described therein continued to grow, and succeeded in winning me a Fulbright Fellowship to study Icelandic language and literature at the University of Iceland in Reykjavík for the academic year beginning September 1996. While in Iceland, a number of acquaintances encouraged me to seek out the Nordic Neopagan group Ásatrú. This I did, introducing myself as a scholar of religion with a great affection for the old texts and myths and a strong curiosity to see how a group such as the Ásatrú was reviving and recreating old traditions. I was invited to a number of Ásatrú gatherings and became friendly with several members of the group, as they showed no symptoms of the Neo-Nazi attitude which I had earlier found so repugnant. When I left Iceland in May 1997, I had gathered a fair amount of information about the group and returned to Iceland for two weeks in February 1998 for further data collection and interviews both with my friends within Ásatrú and other knowledgeable persons inside and outside the group. Throughout my

contacts with Ásatrú, my attitude has been one of positive interest, with full acknowledgment of my personal affection for the old traditions with which the group associates itself. I can therefore make no pretense of being a detached, distant, or overly critical observer, but in what follows I try to give a fair and full account of this Neopagan movement and to honestly pursue the question raised at the outset of this article.

OVERVIEW OF ÁSATRÚ

The Icelandic Ásatrú society (*Ásatrúarfélagith*)[5] is a religious organization which traces its origins to the pre-Christian, Pagan, or Heathen[6] religious traditions of the earliest settlers of the Nordic island-state.[7] The first thing which must be understood about the Ásatrú Society is that it is an *Icelandic* cultural phenomenon, rooted in the history, texts, and folklore of a particular place and people. In this feature it is to be distinguished from other groups elsewhere in Scandinavia and America employing the same name. All Ásatrú groups are united in attempting to reconstruct and reinterpret for modern times the myths, beliefs, and folklore of pre-Christian Scandinavia, but they differ widely in the types of knowledge and assumptions which they bring to this enterprise. For members of American Asatrú groups, their first encounter with Nordic myth is very likely to have been through the popular "Thor" comic book or outdated nineteenth-century romantic reconstructions of Germanic-Nordic myth and religion, which have also been greatly influential in Europe.[8]

For Icelandic Ásatrúarmenn, the textual and folkloric traditions from which they draw are neither exotic nor foreign, but are basic components of their national cultural heritage. A visitor to the Icelandic capital city of Reykjavík quickly discovers that the old gods—or at least their names—are everywhere. Street names include Ódinsgata, Thorsgata, Baldursgata, Tysgata, Freyjugata, Aegisitha, and even Lokastigur.[9] A short walk from the restaurant Ódinsve, we find the health food store Yggdrasil, named after the great world-tree of Nordic myth, and many other examples could be cited. A very large number of Icelandic personal and surnames are formed from "Thor," for example, Thorlakur, Thordís, Thora, and Thorstein, among dozens of others. Even Thorlakur Thórhallson (d. 1193), the bishop of Skálholt who was later declared the patron saint of Iceland, had a thoroughly Pagan name, which was not considered any impediment to the bestowal of exalted Christian status.[10] This is one of many examples of how Icelandic Christianity was in many cases not so much anti-Pagan as built upon the Pagan, and shows how Icelandic culture has rarely applied an either-or, exclusionary logic to religious matters, but has often preferred to combine strength with strength, sacred with sacred. Though the establishment of Christianity

in Iceland did entail a ban on the worship of Thor, Odin, and the other Pagan gods and goddesses, belief in Christian saints and deities has never prevented Icelanders from continuing to revere the Elves and other hidden folk and invisible beings who are believed to reside in the countryside, as will be further explored below.

From the time of Iceland's formal adoption of Christianity as the official state religion in the year 1000 C.E., Iceland has never been a fanatically Christian country nor particularly orthodox in its Christianity.[11] A strong case can be made that the acceptance of Christianity was motivated more by economic and political considerations than authentic Christian fervor.[12] When the *Althingi* ("All-thing," the "meeting of all," the quasi-parliament of early Icelandic society)[13] adopted Christianity in the year 1000, the Christian establishment in Europe, consisting of both the church and kings and other leaders exercising their rule in close coordination with the church, had achieved a nearly monopolistic control of trade and politics in the European world. It was evident that good political and economic relations with Christian Europe depended on at least a semblance of Christian conversion, and so this semblance was achieved and good relations secured, but this does not mean that a deep and meaningful transformation of religious consciousness nor a wholescale rejection of the Pagan spiritual heritage took place.[14]

Iceland became "Christian" with few persecutions and very little religious violence, but not in the same way as medieval Europe or to the same degree as the modern United States. The nation's laws were altered to restrict the old Pagan religion to private observance, and then later, with increasing Christian control of legal and institutional authority, to ban it altogether. Yet an enduring affection for the old ways remained embedded in the culture alongside knowledge of the Bible and the myths and doctrines of Christianity, as the Sagas, long Iceland's most popular literature, attest. A line was drawn against Paganism, but not a very sharp or severe line, and in Iceland's relatively high degree of tolerance as compared with Europe or America, we find the fertile field in which the seeds of Ásatrú were able to take root some ten centuries after the supposed Christianization of Iceland.

The everyday, Pagan-derived nomenclature of streets and persons in Iceland is a mundane but significant indicator of how the lore of the ancient gods remains a living part of the Icelandic cultural memory as well as a source of national pride. The widespread use of the names of Pagan gods does not mean that the Icelanders "believe in" these gods, only that they revere and enjoy their past tradition. Such reverence may reach a higher level of intensity and self-consciousness among Ásatrúarmenn than many other Icelanders, but the root emotions and attitudes are very much the same, with the difference being a matter of degree. A number of distinguished Icelandic scholars and

intellectuals whom I interviewed at the national university in Reykjavík expressed a barely muffled contempt for Ásatrú, but it was clear that they did in fact share Ásatrú's strong devotion to the Icelandic past and cultural heritage, especially its ancient literature.

It is the mythical Eddas and semihistorical Sagas, based partially on oral tradition and largely set into written form by clerical scribes and educated laymen in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which are the most respected representations of Iceland's cultural heritage. They were focal points of Icelandic nationalism, which gained increasing momentum in the nineteenth century and eventually succeeded in winning independence from Denmark in 1944.[15] Now, more than fifty years after the foundation of the modern nation of Iceland, the Eddas and Sagas remain staples of the educational curriculum and are continually revisited and revitalized in artistic and literary creation. One outstanding recent example is the celebrated 1987 novel *Gunnlathar Saga* (*Gunnlöth's Saga*) by Svava Jakobsdóttir, in which a woman falls into a reverie while gazing at the Gundestrap Cauldron in the National Museum of Copenhagen and finds herself "unstuck in time," to use Kurt Vonnegut's phrase. She then relives the episode of Odin's love-affair with the giant's daughter Gunnlöth from the Eddic poem *Hávamál*. Neither novel nor novelist have anything to do with Ásatrú, but Svava Jakobsdóttir's imaginative reworking of past Pagan tradition draws on the same love of ancient heritage that also inspires Ásatrú.

A recent government-supported collaboration between Ásatrú and the Icelandic theater community illustrates the degree to which Ásatrú has become accepted within the Icelandic establishment. This is a theatrical performance dramatizing the Eddic poem *Skírnismál* that was first produced by Ásatrú in December 1995 and has now become an annual winter pageant timed to coincide with the winter solstice on 21 or 22 December.[16] *Skírnismál* is the tale of the love of the fertility god Freyr for the beautiful giantess Gerth (also written Gerd). Freyr sends his servant Skírnir to Gerth as a Cyrano de Bergerac-like emissary in the hopes of winning her hand, which Skírnir finally manages through an adroit combination of magical spells and threats. In the context of the production, Freyr's passion for Gerth is seen as symbolizing nature's desire for new life and vitality in the depths of winter, a theme with particular resonance in Iceland, where the shortest day of the year is very short indeed, with only a few hours of light separating the brief and fragile dawn from the all engulfing darkness.

The original production in 1995 was funded both by Ásatrú and a grant from the national government, and was staged in the basement of the Reykjavík Ráthhús (City Hall) with a distinguished audience that included the prime minister and the mayor of Reykjavík. The government funding, the staging of the pageant in a government facility,

and the two government leaders' attendance at the event illustrates how little discord there is between mainstream Icelandic interest in the country's past cultural heritage and the Ásatrú agenda of reconstructing past Pagan tradition. Such government involvement with an explicitly Pagan theater production, based on an explicitly Pagan text and sponsored by an explicitly Pagan religious group would be unthinkable in the United States, with its markedly Christian identity, the increasing influence of Christian fundamentalists at all levels of the political system, and the tendency of candidates for public office to pepper their speeches with references to the Bible and "Judeo-Christian values."[17]

However, not all of Icelandic society is of one mind about the country's past heritage. With Iceland having achieved independence and a high level of prosperity, asserting the uniqueness of Icelandic culture and celebrating its past splendors has become less of a priority for many Icelanders. Against the backdrop of the emerging tapestry of European economic and political union, internationalism has come to match nationalism as a driving force in the self-definition of Icelandic identity. As Icelanders look toward the future and try to find their place at the table of European integration, the general desire of Icelanders to understand themselves as "Good Europeans" has also affected scholars' views of the Icelandic past, including the semi-canonical Eddas and Sagas. It has been the dominant trend in recent literary studies of the Old Icelandic texts to emphasize the influence of the medieval church, the European Union of medieval times, and to show, therefore, that from the very earliest times Iceland was a European Christian nation drawing on the best of European church-based culture.[18] In this heavily biased reading of the past, the kind of ancient, pre-Christian, and Pagan traditions celebrated by Ásatrú are viewed as embarrassing, incomprehensible anachronisms, and are accordingly rejected by many scholars as insignificant matters undeserving of exploration.

Nonetheless, the very vehemence with which some contemporary scholars attempt to disprove or disinherit the Pagan features of these texts calls to mind Shakespeare's notion of the lady who protests too much. The Old Icelandic texts are a blend of church-derived literary form and Pagan myths and lore, and while scholars of medieval literature tend to be fixated on the medieval Catholic church as the mainspring of Western civilization and to interpret early Icelandic history, culture, and literature within this church-centered framework *only*, scholars of comparative religion have long detected in the Icelandic texts strong indications of archaic Indo-European influence far predating the Christian determination of these texts often assumed by medievalist scholars.[19]

For the average reader unburdened by any scholarly baggage, it is quite plain to see that the Pagan gods and myths are prominent and aesthetically pleasing features of these ancient texts. Without the colorful

presence of the Pagan gods, whether occupying the narrative foreground in the Eddas or performing more of a background, supporting role in the Sagas, the ancient Icelandic literature would be as lifeless and emasculated as the castrated rams whose singed faces and pickled testicles are standard fare for Icelanders during the winter feast of Thorrablót.[20] Clearly, the Pagan gods and myths and the texts which have immortalized them are vital and enduring elements of the Icelandic cultural heritage, however much this may displease certain quarters.

By highlighting the Pagan, pre-Christian aspects of the Icelandic past and attempting to reconfigure these to suit modern times, Ásatrú helps to preserve a link to cultural resources which some would prefer to abandon. That these cultural resources are also spiritual resources, and that Ásatrú is a religious group as well as a cultural heritage movement, becomes more explicit when we consider Ásatrú rituals, ethics, and beliefs about the sacred.

SVEINBJÖRN BEINTEINSSON AND THE EARLY HISTORY OF ÁSATRÚ

The problem of the definition of Ásatrú as a religion or merely a cultural heritage movement was inherent in the founding of the group in 1972. Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson (1924-1993) was both a farmer and a poet well respected for his skill in composing and performing poems in a wide variety of early Icelandic styles. He and a group of friends and fellow history and literature enthusiasts, including Jormundur Ingi Hansen, the current *Allsherjargothi* (High-Priest) of Ásatrú, decided to form an association dedicated to the pre-Christian customs, myths, and beliefs of early Iceland. Some wanted this to be a primarily scholarly society investigating Iceland's Pagan religious heritage, but Sveinbjörn, Jormundur, and several others insisted that this be an explicitly and self-consciously religious group. From the very beginning, then, a wide variety of motivations and interests were present in Ásatrú ranging from the literary to the scholarly to the religious. Sveinbjörn, as both a poet and a religious person, embodied the complex intersection of these different agendas.

Sveinbjörn and his compatriots approached the Ministry of Justice (the branch of government responsible for religious affairs) to request official recognition of their new-old religion, hoping thereby to entitle their organization to a share of the revenues generated by the national religion tax and to empower them to perform marriages, funerals, and other religious ceremonies. They did not at this early time call their movement "Ásatrú," preferring instead the name "Vor Sithur" (Our Custom), which was felt to reflect more accurately their priorities in seeking to reconstruct and reinterpret ancient religious traditions,

beliefs, and customs. The name "Ásatrú," meaning belief or faith (*trú*) in the ancient gods (the *Aesir*, hence *Ása-trú*) became a necessity when government officials, obviously skeptical toward the idea of a non-Christian religion in officially Lutheran Iceland,[21] made clear that it would be easier for the group to win recognition with a name which indicated a belief in some form of deity. Facing the problem of how to operate within a Christian-determined paradigm of what is and is not religious, Sveinbjörn and his colleagues adopted the name Ásatrú despite the fact that most members of the group did not "believe in" or "worship" the ancient gods so much as cherish them as symbols of the ancient heritage whose spiritual values, ideals, and customs they hoped to preserve and promote. This greater concern with Pagan cultural and spiritual heritage than with actual worship of the Pagan gods, the *traditions* of the sacred as opposed to that which was originally held as sacred, remains a characteristic feature of Ásatrú today.

The name Ásatrú is problematic for another reason, also. By referring to belief (trú) in the Aesir, the term Ásatrú may appear to exclude or invalidate reverence for other divine or sacred creatures. This is certainly a misrepresentation of the belief-system articulated in the Eddas and Sagas, which includes an extensive catalogue of varied divine beings, both benevolent and destructive, ranging from the Aesir gods to the fertility-oriented Vanir gods to the Elves, Dwarves, Giants, fate-carving Norns, battle-guiding Valkyries, guardian spirit Fylgjar, female deities known as Dísir, and localized nature spirits known as Landvaettir. The name Ásatrú also ignores the rich Icelandic folk-belief, surviving into modern times, involving the existence of Elves and Dwarves, carried over from the old literature, as well as Trolls and *Huldufólk* (Hidden People), the invisible inhabitants of hillsides, lava-formations, and other natural features who resemble the Fairies of Celtic tradition or the *kami* of Japanese Shinto. Although the ancient Aesir and Vanir deities may be said to be "people of the book"[22] in that their lore is related in the Eddas and Sagas, the Huldufólk are creatures of folklore without representation in any prestigious literature. Considering this wide range of divine beings which inhabit the Icelandic religious imagination, "Ásatrú" is clearly something of a misnomer, but one that was accepted as a practical and political necessity.

Miracles are good public relations for any aspiring religion, and the early days of Ásatrú can boast at least one noteworthy and uncanny event which might be classified as a "miracle." One day during the summer of 1972, when Sveinbjörn and his associates were involved in negotiations with the government over establishing Ásatrú, they were leaving the offices of the Ministry of Justice when a mighty lightning bolt flashed across the sky, struck a power station in the capital, and plunged much of Reykjavík into darkness. Such powerful electrical storms are almost

unknown in Iceland, despite the ready availability of many other forms of inhospitable weather involving rain, snow, gale-force winds, and of course, ice. Several of my Ásatrú informants rather gleefully interpreted this lightning storm as divine intervention on the part of the thunder-god Thor, expressing in no uncertain terms his great displeasure at the government's continuing refusal to acknowledge Ásatrú. Following this demonstration of the power of the ancient gods, so the legend is told, the government had a sudden change of heart, and soon decided to grant official recognition to Ásatrú.

Do Asatrúarmenn "believe" this was a miracle? An unequivocal answer is neither possible nor very useful for conveying the actual quality of Ásatrú thought and sentiment. No member of Ásatrú with whom I spoke about this unusual lightning insisted in somber tones that it be understood as a miracle, but many took a mischievous delight in the possibility. This mixture of reverence and humor is a distinctive characteristic of the Ásatrú religious attitude, winking at the sacred more often than worshipping it, but with an extremely affectionate and knowing wink, like that shared between friends or lovers. Religion need not necessarily lack humor nor does a humorous attitude necessarily imply disrespect for what is sacred; it may simply communicate a sense of intimacy.[23]

GROWING MEMBERSHIP, INCREASING ACCEPTANCE

Following Sveinbjörn's death and a high level of publicity generated by the funeral, which was broadcast on national television, Ásatrú experienced a rapid growth in membership which has continued to the present. Ásatrú's membership of 120 at the time of the funeral has grown to 320 in the subsequent years, a small figure by international standards but significant in the Icelandic context.[24] Asked to explain this steady growth in the group's membership, members and observers suggested several reasons: 1) the publicity around Sveinbjörn's funeral reawakened interest in the group; 2) a series of scandals in the state Lutheran church, particularly a sexual harrassment case against a prominent church official, motivating disgruntled church members to seek alternative religious organizations; 3) a feeling among young people that it is *toff* (cool) to be in Ásatrú, based on a perception of this organization, so ultra-traditional and ultra-conservative in its regard for the past, as something "rebellious" and "alternative" (for this reason appealing to such people as a group of motorcycle enthusiasts who call themselves *Oskaborn Ódins*, the Dreamchildren of Odin); 4) a growing general acceptance of Ásatrú due to its having not only survived, but flourished into its third decade of activity and now become part of the mainstream Icelandic culture. As Jormundur Ingi pointed out to me, Ásatrú now

has many younger members who have never known a time when Ásatrú did not exist. To them, Ásatrú is nothing new or shocking, but an established organization occupying a secure and relatively unthreatening position in their consciousness.

THE ORGANIZATION OF ASATRU

Ásatrú today has several governing structures responsible for the day-to-day operation of the organization and for special events such as the seasonal Blót-feasts and the Allsherjarthing (the General Assembly, more literally "the Thing or Assembly of All People," harkening back to the ancient *Althingi*). These structures overlap and are intended to prevent any one person or governing body from becoming overly dominant or autocratic, though in practice the Allsherjargothi has considerable influence over the society as a whole. The main governing structures are the Logrétta (Administrative Council, more literally the "Law-Court"), the Framkvaemdastjórn (Executive Board), and the Allsherjarthing. The Allsherjargothi (the "Gothi of All People"), the Ásatrú High-Priest, is the overall leader of Ásatrú. This position has gradually evolved into a lifetime appointment, with the possibility of recall or impeachment through a majority vote at the General Assembly. The term *gothi* (pl. *gothar*) goes back to the settlement period of Icelandic history, referring to wealthy, landowning farmer-chieftains with control of temples built on their land where seasonal feasts and sacrifices were held.[25] There was no separation of religious and political functions, no distinct castes of rulers, farmers, warriors or priests. Any or all of these roles would be performed by the Gothar and their retinue on different occasions.

In today's Ásatrú, the Allsherjargothi is the main spokesman for the association, responsible for public relations and representing the group on ceremonial occasions. His most important ceremonial role is in consecrating the National Parliament each year, with an equivalent Christian blessing administered by an official of the state church. The Allsherjargothi likewise consecrates all Ásatrú meetings that he attends and takes the lead role in all Ásatrú rituals and activities. The Allsherjargothi is legally empowered to perform weddings, funerals, and other such life-cycle rites as well as to sanctify contracts of all sorts, for which he is entitled to charge small fees. The other Gothar are also empowered to perform the same rites and collect the same fees. Neither the Allsherjargothi nor the Gothar receive a salary.

While the Gothar together with the Allsherjargothi are the spiritual and ceremonial authorities of the organization, it is the Executive Board which constitutes the primary management of the Ásatrú and handles its everyday operation and finance. The board consists of the Lawspeaker,

an alternate Lawspeaker in case of the official Lawspeaker's absence, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and one Member-at-Large without specific duties. The Lawspeaker's role, based on the position of the same name in ancient times, is to preserve official documents and promote knowledge of the laws of the organization, appoint board members to specific positions, except for his own position, which is decided by the Administrative Council, and to organize board meetings and call them to order. The Executive Board meets at least four times per year and is responsible for organizing Blót-feasts and deciding the timing and location of the General Assembly.

The Administrative Council is composed of the Allsherjargothi, the other Gothar, and the Executive Board. The Administrative Council meets three times a year in addition to the annual General Assembly meeting on the last Saturday in October. The meetings of the Administrative Council are open to the general membership of the Ásatrú, but only Administrative Council officials are empowered to vote. Administrative Council meetings review and may alter Executive Board decisions and may address disputes between members and the overall direction of the organization. The Administrative Council selects the Lawspeaker from among those elected to the Executive Board. Decisions of the Administrative Council may be subject to further discussion and vote at the General Assembly.

The General Assembly is in many ways the most powerful governing structure. As the most democratic and inclusive structure, open to all members in good standing, who may be as young as twelve years of age, it is sometimes extremely turbulent. The General Assembly elects the members of the Executive Board to two-year terms, with two others elected to one-year terms as alternates. Changes in the association's laws and procedures can only be made, and major initiatives and expenditures undertaken, with the two-thirds majority approval of the Allsherjarthing.

In a General Assembly which I attended in 1996, there was intensive debate about plans to purchase land and construct a *hof* (temple). Some in Ásatrú feel this is a necessary step in the further establishment of the religion, while others strongly object to Ásatrú becoming more formalized and churchlike, and wish it to remain informal.The Allsherjargothi and other Administrative Council members presented reports and proposals, with other society members expressing opinions frequently and noisily. The obvious tensions and heated emotions seemed to illustrate both the success of Ásatrú in functioning as a democratic institution which places a high value on the involvement of its members, and also the inherent difficulties in allowing open debate among a large number of diverse and strong-willed people.

Several of my Ásatrú informants expressed exasperation at the presence of "strange," "abnormal," and disruptive people in the Ásatrú,

meaning people burdened with emotional or addiction problems or endowed with extraordinary cantankerousness. However, when I asked if they would want to see such persons banned from the Allsherjarthing or excluded from the organization altogether, not one person endorsed this idea. No one wanted to see Ásatrú lose its open, inclusive, and generally tolerant character.

Ásatrú movements in America and Scandinavia have been known to espouse racist and Neo-Nazi ideology, with the desire to preserve Nordic cultural and spiritual heritage conflated with a racist dream of Nordic racial purity. Some such groups interpret the ancient Nordic apocalyptic myth of Ragnarok as a final, cataclysmic race war which they intend to win.[26] I am not aware of any member of Icelandic Ásatrú espousing such sentiments or ideology. The Ásatrúarmenn I spoke with in Iceland were all appalled at such groups and their Neo-Nazi ideas of "pure blood" and racial purity, and vehemently disavowed any affiliation with them. A criticism of the Allsherjargothi that I heard from several Ásatrúar was that Jormundur Ingi's frequent contacts and visits with overseas Ásatrú groups put Icelandic Ásatrú at the risk of becoming linked with racist or Neo-Nazi groups. Even among such critics, however, no one believed that the Allsherjargothi had any interest in or sympathy for such race-based religious groups. Their chief concern was that Jormundur might be inadvertently drawn into some embarrassing affiliation with such people. When I questioned him on this point, Jormundur asserted that he would not knowingly enter into any formal relationship with any Neo-Nazi Ásatrú groups, and that if he did have informal contacts with any such groups, he would break off communication upon learning of any Nazi ideology or racism.

In interviews with other Ásatrúarmenn I found great interest in non-Nordic, non-European native peoples and religious traditions. Jón Ingvar Jónsson, former Ásatrú Lawspeaker, was quite eloquent on this point:

> It's more interesting that we should communicate with people in native religions [than with people in foreign Ásatrú groups]. . . like native people in Australia, Indians in America, people like that. About Ásatrú, some people say it is racism, and it is very hard to hear that, because for me . . . I think that no person is better than another. . . . There are Ásatrú people all over the world, and I respect them highly for their interest . . . but they have not so much in common with us. We should help them with their studies, but we should be more interested in native religions, because, for instance, Ásatrú people [in other regions] . . . they are always going further from their own origin, from their own culture. They are stepping away from their culture, their history, their tradition . . . . What we are trying to do is build on our ancient tradition, to know our history, to try to live and understand our background . . . Ásatrú people in Australia are maybe not doing that, but what they're doing is good, they are interested and that's OK . . . but if they would think about the native religion [in Australia], they would go and try to build . . . on the ancient values [of Australian native religion].

Therefore, we [Ásatrú in Iceland] have more in common with native peoples and religions than with [foreign forms of] Ásatrú.[27]

Iceland is however an extremely homogenous nation, and the true test of Icelandic Ásatrú's seeming tolerance and inclusiveness will come if and when non-white, non-native Icelandic people seek to become members of Ásatrú.

RITUAL IN ÁSATRÚ

Ásatrú ritual displays two marked features: 1) a conscious attempt to recreate or at least pay tribute to past tradition as this is known from ancient texts and folklore; 2) an open invitation to ritual participants to innovate, omit, or alter ritual elements according to their personal tastes and priorities. As a result, there is a constant tension between conservative and innovative impulses. Ásatrú rituals may be divided into public and personal rituals or ceremonies. The main public rituals are the seasonal Blóts, organized by and for the Ásatrú community as a whole. These are sacred feasts in honor of ancient sacrifices,[28] timed to coincide with the summer and winter solstices and spring and autumn equinoxes in an annual ritual calendar. The personal rituals, usually performed by a family with the necessary presence of a Gothi or the Allsherjargothi, are weddings, name-blessings, coming-of-age rites (akin to the Christian confirmation ceremony), and funerals.

To the present time, weddings have been the most frequently performed personal rituals. Because there is no manual of Pagan ritual from ancient times, and because Sagas, Eddas, and other early sources do not contain detailed descriptions either of weddings or of any other rituals, it has been necessary for modern Ásatrúarmenn to creatively interpret and combine ancient texts to develop a suitable old-new ritual. In a description of the Ásatrú wedding ceremony which he kindly provided me,[29] Allsherjargothi Jormundur Ingi Hansen discusses a number of sources from the Eddas:

The most important one is the marriage of Sigurdrífa and Sigurd [from *Sigrdrífúmál* (*The Lay of Sigrdrífa*)], perhaps better known as Brunhild and Siegfried in Richard Wagner's magnificent opera, *The Ring of the Niebelungen.* It contains most of the elements used, the Ring of Fire and the Sacred Mead given to the bridegroom by the bride. The marriage of Ódin or Wotan to Gunnlöth in *Hávamál* mentions the second day of the marriage feast and the three drinks of the Sacred Mead. Then there is the marriage of Freyr to Gerth [in *Skírnismál*] which again mentions the Sacred Ring of Fire. The marriage ceremony preferably takes place outside, if possible under a tree and/or close to water, and there should be a Ring of Fire, *Vafurlogi* (surrounding flame).

The outdoor setting is carefully chosen to represent Pagan reverence for nature and specific natural features of sacred import in the Eddic texts, particularly the tree echoing the World-Tree Yggdrasil, the water reflecting the Well of the Norn Urth, and/or the Well of Mímir, the fire speaking of ancient sacrifice.

The Gothi calls on a wide variety of gods to witness and bless the wedding, consecrating the occasion with the following formula from the Eddic poem *Sigrdrífumál*:

Hail to the Day, hail to the sons of Day
Hail to the Night and her Daughters
Look upon us with kindly eyes
And grant to us all victory

Hail to the Gods, hail to the Goddesses
Hail to the bountiful Earth
Grant us speech and wisdom and healing hands
As long as we shall live.[30]

This same formula is used in consecrating the funeral rite as well.

The wedding proceeds with the Gothi reciting other selected passages from the old mythological literature and also asks the blessing of gods and goddesses in a more straightforward manner. The Gothi invokes the world-tree Yggdrasil, the three Norns who rule mankind's destiny, and the goddesses Frigg (guardian of home and marriage), Freyja (goddess of love and fertility), and Vár (protectress of all pacts made between men and women). Turning to the groom, he quotes *Hávamál* verse 47:

Young I was and traveled alone
thus I lost my way.
Rich I felt, when another I found
man rejoices in a companion.

And to the bride, the Gothi reads from *Hávamál* verse 50:

Withers the fir that stands alone
sheltered neither by needles nor bark
So is the one that no one loves
how long shall she live?

The bride and groom each state their equal intentions and responsibilities to each other in the same words: "I call upon all gatheredhere to witness that I (name) take this man/woman (name) as my husband/wife, and fully understand the responsibility and solemnity of this my decision." The Gothi then gives the bride a drinking-horn fill-

ed with sacred mead, echoing the Eddic marriage scenes, and she then pours libations to Frigg, Freyja, and Thor (guardian of all humanity). After drinking a single draught from the horn herself, she offers it to the groom, quoting once more from *Sigrdrífumál* (verse 5):

> Ale I bring you, you Oak-of-Battle,
> blent with strength and brightest honor
> mixed with charms and mighty songs,
> worthy magic and merry runes.

The groom then pours libations to Thor, Freyja, and Frigg, invoking the same deities as his bride but in the reverse order. He drinks three times from the horn, recites a verse from *Skírnismál* expressing Freyr's longing for his future bride Gerth (verse 42), then returns the horn to the bride that she may drink twice. Having each drunk three times from the sacred horn, they return this to the Gothi. He directs them to place their hands together over a ring or arm-band which he offers to them, and then ends the ceremony with the formula, "In the name of Vár, I proclaim you man and wife."

It is a simple ceremony that achieves a certain elegance and drama from its references to ancient literature and mythology, the use of medieval customs such as the drinking-horn and the arm-ring, and the beauty of the natural setting. The simplicity of the rite allows participants leeway to add or alter elements as they may desire. The same mixture of elements are present in the most solemn rite, the funeral. Two passages from Jormundur Ingi Hansen's description of Ásatrú funeral procedures will serve to illustrate how ancient heritage is selectively interpreted and applied on this very different occasion.

The first part of the ceremony takes place at the home of the deceased who is dressed in his/her best clothes or uniform if that is appropriate. The wife or husband, son or daughter places his grave-goods in the coffin, such as books, utensils of his or her profession, even food and drink. Favorite pets can also be buried in the coffin or beside it. This part of the ceremony is only attended by the closest family and best friends. The Gothi or family member speaks a few words of farewell and reads an appropriate section of the Edda or from other literature. The coffin is closed and marked with the sign of the deceased's favorite god, and if there are no special wishes, the sun-cross is used. Singing and music can also be performed.

The second half of the funeral takes places at the burial ground. Along with readings from the Edda and remembrances of the deceased by the Gothi, friends, or family, Jormundur Ingi suggests the following meditation, drawing on the myth of the tree Yggdrasil:

All things are transitory. The growth of the Earth flourishes in the sunshine but just as unfailingly withers in the autumn. Note, however, it sprouts once more next year. So it is with all life, we are born and grow and mature but wither in the autumn of life like the vegetation of the earth. Life and death are eternally connected. Without life there would be no death and without death there would be no rejuvenation of life. In the center of the world stands the World-Tree, mighty Yggdrasil, the tree of life, ever-green over the well of Urth. Our lives can be likened to the leaves on the Ash [tree]. As soon as one of the stags grazing on the tree bites a leaf, another bud springs to life. So, life is eternal though our allotted time in Midgard seems all too short.

At the conclusion of the funeral, the Gothi wishes the deceased well in whatever form of afterlife they were known to believe in or feel an affinity for. Ásatrú has no official doctrine or dogma concerning the afterlife, which follows directly from the ancient texts that describe a variety of different options, from the warriors' realm Valhalla to the cold and dreary Hel of the *Snorra Edda* to ancestors feasting together within the local landscape, as told in certain saga accounts:

> Everyone in turn casts earth on the coffin and those that so desire may also make sacrifices of small symbolic pictures of sun-crosses, Thor's hammers or horses into the grave. The torches [set at the four corners of the grave] are kept aflame as everyone leaves to join in the funeral feast, where the eulogy is given by a friend or relative.

A fuller exposition is necessary to analyze the many meaningful details inherent in this funerary ritual, but what is most evident is the free interpretation and flexible adaptation of ancient poetry, lore, and customs without the intrusion of any dogmatic ideology. There is reverence for divine and sacred beings and above all, for nature, but neither fear of punishment nor any expectation of divine intervention or salvation.

Weddings and funerals and other private rituals are important but exceptional events. The regular ritual life of Ásatrú is the seasonal Blót. The one and only Ásatrú ritual I have experienced at first-hand is a Haust Blót (Autumn Blót) in September of 1996, which was also my first meeting with members of Icelandic Ásatrú. My apprehension at being an intrusive foreigner interfering with another people's sacred customs was eased by the kindness and immense personal grace of Jón Ingvar Jónsson, then the Lawspeaker, who had invited me to attend the event after we had exchanged several messages through e-mail.

On a Friday evening, I rode with Jón Ingvar and about a dozen other men and women in a chartered bus to a beautiful rural location about a half hour north of Reykjavík en route to Borgarnes, in the village of Kjalarnes. We walked a short distance from the road to a roughhewn stone circle nestled in the side of a dark, imposing ridge. Looking down

from our spot halfway up the hill, we saw a beautiful view of the sun setting over farmlands bordering the ocean. A fire was built in the center of the stone circle as people greeted each other and others continued to arrive to a total of about fifty, at which time it was growing dark. Most people came dressed in ordinary clothes, but some wore old-style garments. Another member of the Executive Board, Jóhanna Pálsdóttir, engaged in setting up several elegantly carved posts between which was stretched a plain green banner about 4 feet high by 20 feet wide. Small lamps were placed here and there in the hillside around and above us, providing the light of myriad small fires to echo the large bonfire around which we gathered in a circle.

The Blót was officially inaugurated by a Gothi who recited a formula of consecration and read from the Eddic poem, *Voluspá.* The Lawspeaker Jón Ingvar Jónsson chose to read a nineteenth-century poem, *Ásareithin* ("The Ride of the Aesir") by Grímur Thomsen, reflecting on the passing of the old gods and the importance of historical memory (*saga*, meaning both "story" and "history"). A drinking horn was then passed around the circle, and before each person took a drink, he or she made a toast to the god(s), goddess(es), or sacred being(s) of their choice. This activity fully illustrated the inadequacy of the term "Ásatrú," as many chose to salute not the Aesir gods such as Ódin and Thor, but the Vanir gods Freyr and Freyja and other sacred beings such as the Landvaettir (landspirits), the Elves, and the Dísir (female spirits or deities). Some made very brief and perfunctory toasts, others more elaborate and poetic statements, some quoting from ancient literature, some offering their own compositions or spontaneous utterances. Jóhanna played flute in the background, as a man strummed a guitar or tapped on a small drum. At one point, people began to clasp hands and sway together to the music, but this did not progress to the point of actual dancing. Hand-carved wooden drinking cups were distributed and continually refilled with *Brennivín* (Burnt Wine), the strong, schnapps-like native Icelandic liquor affectionately known as the "Black Death." *Hangikjöt*, a smoked leg of lamb which is a traditional Icelandic delicacy, was also available for each participant to carve into and eat. A collection was later taken up to pay for the food and drink.

The other main activity involved the green banner which had been set up by Jóhanna Pálsdóttir. She distributed paintbrushes and white paint and invited all in attendance to paint some symbol or design onto the banner. A wide range of white shapes appeared on the banner ranging from a tree, perhaps the world-tree Yggdrasil, to human-like figures, a Viking-era ship, and runes, the pre-Roman written characters of the early Scandinavians. When all those in attendance had applied their contributions, the banner was taken down and hurled into the fire as a sacrificial offering which was believed to contain something of each person present. After these activities, the gathering gradually dissipated

into small groups of friends drinking and conversing. It was now about 10:00 P.M., and people began to leave.

According to my informants, this Blót is fairly representative of many others in recent years. The consecration, recital of poetry, toasting of sacred beings, and festive eating and drinking are standard features of Blóts. Most Blóts are also performed out of doors, except for the winter solstice Blót (*Jólablót*, *Jól* related to English "Yule") which may be staged in a restaurant or other such indoor facility because of the often harsh winter weather.

The improvised music, the possibility of dancing, and the communal banner-painting are activities which have been the cause of more than a little controversy and ill-feeling in the Ásatrú community. One faction, led by Johanna Pálsdóttir, is eager to have more of these exuberant, participatory activities, and to move in a direction of more ecstatic and sensually exciting experience.[31] Another camp, representing the Allsherjargothi and other older members, prefer more staid and dignified procedures. For them, a cheerful evening of shared food, drink, and heartfelt recitations of poetry in a consecrated setting is sufficient. The two factions have had difficulty reconciling their different needs and priorities, leading to the departure from Ásatrú of Johanna Pálsdóttir and Jón Ingvar Jónsson among others. These differences are deeply felt, and their implications for the future of Ásatrú remain unclear. They may lead to the creation of new structures within Ásatrú to allow more ecstatic pursuits, or perhaps the creation of one or more new groups outside the existing Ásatrú which will be similar in spirit but feature more spontaneous and experimental ritual activities.

The Blót which I attended impressed me on the most basic level as a friendly drinking party with folkloric and religious overtones, a group of sympathetic people enjoying a pleasantly inebriated descent into past tradition, but there was something more as well. The stark natural setting was a very important part of the evening, a greater-than-human presence literally looming over our tiny human forms gathered for warmth around the fire. The Blót therefore succeeded in providing a festive encounter with two very highly cherished Ásatrú values: reverence for nature, and respect for past cultural and spiritual tradition. The latter was emphasized in many forms, including the old-style stone enclosure, the carved wooden drinking cups, the use of fire and candles rather than electric light, the traditional food and drink, the wearing of traditional clothes, and last but not least, the reciting of ancient poems and myths within a supportive and appreciative community.

ÁSATRÚ ETHICS

In the Old Norse religious and mythological literature, there is no single text giving a definitive statement of Pagan ethics, but rather many

different brief statements and observations scattered across the literature. The single text which contains the fullest discussion of ethical issues is the Eddic poem *Hávamál* ("The Speech of the High One", i.e. Odin), a text prominent in Ásastrú ritual life, as we have seen, that is also a featured text in the Icelandic public school curriculum. *Hávamál* is a mixed bag of advice and mythology that scholars have judged to be drawn from quite various sources and time periods, but this miscellaneous pedigree does nothing to diminish the high regard in which it is held in Iceland. Icelanders revere the text as inspiring, human-based, and humanly-meaningful literature, not as direct revelation from infinite deity. As elsewhere, the sacredness is given through the shared meaning of tradition, not imposed by religious authorities or proven by philosophers.

A large part of the appeal of *Hávamál* consists in its earthy, pragmatic wisdom, a code of ethics grounded not in abstract notions of justice and order, but in the struggle to survive and enjoy life with friends and family despite the difficulties posed by enemies and nature. The core of Icelandic society for most of its history has been the farmer, and *Hávamál* gives us a hard-bitten farmer's kind of earthy wisdom, where wit, cunning, and generosity are more highly prized than moral exactitude. Some characteristic maxims of *Hávamál* include:

> To his friend a man should be a friend
> and repay gifts with gifts;
> laughter a man should give for laughter
> and repay treachery with lies (verse 42).
>
> A farm of your own is better, even if small
> everyone is someone at home;
> A man's heart bleeds when he has to beg
> for every single meal (verse 37).
>
> Average-wise a man ought be,
> never too wise;
> for he lives the best sort of life,
> he who knows a fair amount (verse 54).
>
> Silent and thoughtful a prince's son should be
> and bold in fighting;
> cheerful and merry every man should be
> until he waits for death (verse 15).
>
> Fire is best for the sons of men,
> and the sight of the sun
> his health, if a man can manage to keep it,
> living without disgrace (verse 68).

> Cattle die, kinsmen die
> you yourself shall die
> I know one thing which never dies:
> the reputation of each dead man (verse 77).[32]

There is propounded here no absolute ethical standard, no aspiration to saintliness or moral perfection, but simply the attempt to live a life of enjoyment, accomplishment, and integrity within an acceptance of human limitations. This down-to-earth, matter-of-fact view of life is profoundly humanistic without denying the importance of the sacred or the supernatural. Gods, Elves and other supernatural beings are conceived in largely human terms, as are relations with these beings and among them. The ethics of *Hávamál* and other ancient Norse texts are very much relational or relationship-centered; one seeks to be on good terms with other people, with the natural world and the supernatural world as well, while not shrinking from conflict and from defending one's rights when the need arises. The Sagas in particular celebrate tough, shrewd heroes who fight on against the odds and do not back down, even at the cost of death.[33] This reflects the attitude of the gods in facing the final battle of Ragnarok. They are fated to fall in combat against the giants, as Odin learns in *Voluspá*, but prepare in full earnest and make their maximum effort nonetheless. The sense of living a dignified life without any hope of a miraculous salvation is central to the ethics and worldview of the ancient Norse texts, valued in Icelandic culture in a general way and also within Ásatrú, though members are always free to pursue their own interpretations and adaptations.

THE SACRED AND THE SUPERNATURAL IN ÁSATRÚ

The classification of Ásatrú as a religion depends largely on how we define religion. If religion is defined as absolute belief in and dependence upon a transcendent deity with the hope of future salvation, then Ásatrú is clearly *not* a religion. If religion may be more broadly defined as the shared pursuit and cultivation of activities and attitudes which bring people into contact with something which they define as sacred, then Ásatrú may indeed be so classified.[34] For Ásatrúarmenn, what is sacred is not only the ancient gods but the historic traditions, cultural heritage, and natural landscape with which the Nordic gods and other supernatural beings are associated. All of these things are indeed *Vor Sithur*, "Our Custom," a source of pride and inspiration as well as amusement for members of Ásatrú.

There are Ásatrúarmenn who would reject the above characterization of Ásatrú as a religion. Former Lawspeaker Jón Ingvar Jónsson, for instance, in explaining his reasons for leaving the group, declared quite

emphatically, "I believe in nothing." No sooner had he made this dramatic announcement, however, then he began to tell me of different aspects of Ásatrú that were indeed highly meaningful to him and to which he was quite devoted: the closeness to nature, the old poetry, the respect for the past. What he did not "believe" in was the *literal* reality of the gods or other such beings, accepting them only as metaphors and guiding figures in cautionary tales.

No member of Ásatrú spoke of a literal belief or direct experience of these beings, but a number of people mentioned knowing other people in or out of Ásatrú who did believe in Huldufólk, Elves, and other spiritual beings dwelling in and protecting the landscape of Iceland. I developed the suspicion that some of the people I interviewed may indeed have had their own belief or experience of Elves or other hidden beings, but chose to keep their feelings private by speaking instead of unidentified "other people." Baldur A. Sigurvinsson interpreted this in terms of Icelanders' desire to present themselves, especially to foreigners, as completely modern, sane, and scientific, without any beliefs or ideas that might give rise to ridicule, and suggested that a longer and more intimate acquaintance with Icelanders might open the way to a more honest and open discussion of these hidden matters.[35] Or perhaps not.

An objective demonstration of the fact that many Icelanders regard Elves and Huldufólk as a reality is found in the government's road-building policy. The public works administration employs one official for the sole purpose of routing roads away from locations where they might disrupt the dwellings of hidden supernatural beings. Psychics known to possess the ability to perceive the dwellings of such hidden beings are consulted to make sure that a projected road will not trespass upon or disturb the Elves or Huldufólk. It is believed—based, I am told, on actual past experiences—that interference with these beings is an extremely risky business, as they may retaliate by causing sickness, mechanical malfunction, or other calamities. Treating them with kindness and respect will produce benefits or at least avoid conflict.

Assuming that some Ásatrúarmenn believe in or have experience of Elves and Huldufólk as do other Icelanders, such belief is another way in which the love of the land and respect for nature is expressed in Ásatrú. The Elves and their other invisible kin are not transcendent deities separated from mankind by an unbridgeable gulf, occasionally popping by to work a miracle or drop off a scripture. They are part of the natural landscape, and their primary concern is to preserve the land in which they dwell alongside humans. The Huldufólk are in this way not so much *super*natural as *ultra*natural, representing not an overcoming of nature in the hope of a better deal beyond but a deep reverence for the land and the mysterious powers able to cause fertility or famine. The gods of the ancient myths are also associated with powers of nature: Thor with storm and lightning, Freyr with the growth of crops, Freyja

with sexuality, fertility, and death, and Njorthur with the fecundity of the ocean. The land is also where the ancestors are said to dwell, either in mounds or inside mountains, in such texts as *Eyrbyyggja Saga* and *Landnámabók.*[36]

Again and again, the link with the land is reiterated, on multiple levels of meaning. Jormundur Ingi Hansen called my attention to a passage at the beginning of the medieval lawbook *Grágas* in which it is declared that ships approaching Iceland with dragon-heads mounted on the prow must conceal or remove such devices to avoid alarming the Land-Spirits. One can but sadly observe that the Landvaettir today must pass some very unhappy hours when they contemplate the growing pollution in Iceland caused by the total lack of recycling facilities—despite the increasing amounts of garbage that come with Iceland's enthusiastic adoption of modern consumer culture, and the almost total lack of sewage treatment facilities for human waste, most of which is simply dumped into the ocean untreated.[37] It is interesting to speculate that Ásatrú, as a group rooted in ancient heritage with a high level of concern for the integrity of the natural landscape, may be able to play a useful role in raising the ecological awareness of the nation in future times.

We see, then, that the sacred in Ásatrú weaves together a number of diverse elements, ranging from myths, values, and traditions associated with the ancient texts, to the history and cultural heritage of the nation going back to the earliest times, to a love of the land and a reverence for the forces of nature which may be imagined or experienced as supernatural beings. This is a very Icelandic sacred, deeply rooted in the texts, traditions, and earth of Iceland. It is also a very postmodern, ambiguous sacred, with more diversity than dogma, with many beloved narratives but no monolithic metanarrative, allowing a broad range of interpretations and experiences only loosely tied together with the thread of reverence for the Pagan traditions of the past, *Vor Sithur,* "Our Custom."

CAN A RELIGION HAVE A LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Returning to my original question, I find reasons to answer in both the affirmative and the negative. Iceland's reborn Ásatrú has now been in existence for more than twenty-five years, so it can certainly be said that something reconstructed from the remnants of the old Pagan faith has been successfully reintroduced into the twentieth century and is even showing signs of thriving, at least as far as can be told by rising numbers of members. However, there are also less hopeful tea leaves available for the reading. Much of Ásatrú's increase in membership in the 1990s followed upon the death and highly publicized funeral of the

movement's founder, Allsherjargothi Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson. The current Allsherjargothi, Jormundur Ingi Hansen, does not enjoy the nearly unqualified esteem in which Sveinbjörn was held. Without the glue of Sveinbjörn's charisma to hold the diverse membership together, schisms have appeared, resulting in the departure of some gifted and formerly highly committed individuals.

The dispute between Jóhanna Pálsdóttir and Jormundur Ingi Hansen is rooted in fundamental questions of how Ásatrú defines and relates to its sacred. The desire of Pálsdóttir and others for a more ecstatic, exuberant kind of ritual speaks to a desire for more immediate and provocative experience of the sacred than is available in the more reserved and cerebral rites preferred by Jormundur and others, in which the old poetic bones of the Norse Pagan sacred are respectfully handled and recited, but not nearly made to dance.

This dispute points to a fundamental problem which goes to the very heart of the Neopagan enterprise. By Jormundur's own admission, the surviving texts and other related materials concerning the original Norse Pagan religion are too fragmentary and incomplete to provide a definitive basis for all Ásatrú rituals and pursuits, and must be judiciously supplemented by ideas and practices improvised in the present or borrowed from other sources. This is where the dilemma arises. If Ásatrú, or any other Neopagan group, goes too far from its original core traditions, the sacred forms of the cherished Pagan past, it loses its claim to authenticity. But if it is so slavish and bookish in its fealty to ancient lore that it excludes new possibilities of encountering or conceptualizing the sacred, it closes itself off from spiritual vitality. At some point, the old forms of the sacred must be refreshed and replenished by contact with new experiences of the sacred. It cannot be said with certainty how or if Ásatrú will successfully negotiate this Neopagan equivalent of the passage between Scylla and Charybdis, but the result may well determine whether Icelandic Ásatrú has truly succeeded in giving new life to a long-dead religion, or is no more than a Nordic cultural heritage movement with religious overtones.

ENDNOTES

[1] My heartfelt thanks to Baldur A. Sigurvinsson and Hjörtur Smárasson, anthropology students at the University of Iceland (Háskoli Íslands), who freely shared their own research and reminiscences with the author and provided numerous forms of assistance, including humor, food, and translation. Baldur is a member of Ásatrú, but Hjörtur is not.

[2] Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986) is the best available general history of Neopaganism in America. A more recent collection of essays, mainly focusing on England, is Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, eds., *Paganism Today* (London: Harper Collins/ Thorsons, 1995).

[3] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Sacred Persistence," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 36-52. Smith focuses on canon formation and exegetical procedures, issues not entirely relevant to Ásatrú, but I find his general theme of the conservation and refinement of religious *forms* entirely applicable.

[4] See Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America: Millenarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 69-99.

[5] The term "Ásatrú" will here be used to denote the religion as a system of beliefs and also the society as a whole, "Ásatrúarmathur "(sing.), "Ásatrúarmenn" (pl.), its members.

[6] In this article, the words Pagan, Neopagan, and Heathen are capitalized as a gesture of respect for the religious traditions, past and present, to which these terms refer. It is understood that the conventional usage up to the present time has been to *not* capitalize these names, but I would assert that this is one of many ways in which Western culture, including scholarship, has long been biased, both consciously and unconsciously, against non-Christian European religions.

[7] For a general introduction to the Pagan Norse religion, the classic in the field remains E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964). The various works of H. R. Ellis Davidson are also useful points of entry. See Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* (New York: Penguin, 1964) and *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988). Britt-Mari Näsström, *Freyja—The Great Goddess of the North* (Lund: University of Lund, 1995) is excellent as regards Norse goddess traditions.

[8] Adolph Burnett Benson, *The Old Norse Element in Swedish Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1914); Oscar J. Falnes, *National Romanticism in Norway* (London: P S. King & Son, Ltd., 1933); John L. Greenway, *The Golden Horns: Mythic Imagination and the Nordic Past* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1977); Elisabeth Arwill-Nordbladh, "The Swedish Image of Viking Age Women: Stereotype, Generalization and Beyond" in *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*, ed. Ross Samson (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1991), 53-64.

[9] Odin (Ódin) is the sovereign god of poetry, magic, war, and wisdom; Thor (Thór), the god of thunder and power who protects humankind against the giants; Baldur, the son of Odin slain by mistletoe who returns from the dead to rule the cosmos after the battle of Ragnarok; Tyr, another god of battle also associated with oaths and honor; Freyja, the great goddess of fertility, beauty, war, and magic; Aegir, the god of the sea; Loki, the god of mischief and deceit who leads the forces of chaos in Ragnarok. The essential primary texts are *Snorri Sturluson: Edda*, trans. Anthony Faulkes (London: Everyman/J. M. Dent, 1987), and *The Poetic Edda*, trans. Carolyne Larrington (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). In this article, anglicized versions of Norse-Icelandic names will be employed where these are well established in modern English usage, hence, *Odin* for *Ódin*, *Thor* for *Thór*, etc.

[10] Árni Björnsson, *High Days and Holidays in Iceland* (Reykjavík: Mal og Menning, 1995), 46-48.

[11] Basic issues and useful discussions concerning the early Icelandic church are available in Jón Jóhannesson, *A History of the Old Icelandic Commonwealth—Islendingasaga*, trans. Haraldur Bessason (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1974), 118-221; and Jesse Byock, *Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas and Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 137-64.

[12] Pétur Pétursson describes a similar lack of Icelandic religious enthusiasm in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in his study, "Revivalism and Lay Religious Movements on Iceland: A Survey and an Account of the Current State of Research," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 11, no. 4 (1986):335-44. Pétursson quotes as follows a letter from a frustrated Swedish Pentecostalist missionary writing in 1921 (342):

> The position looks almost hopeless in Reykjavík, where most of our meetings have been held. We have achieved little success; just a few individuals who have sought salvation along with a sister who has received baptism in the Spirit. Apart from these cases, there has been no hunger after God among the people. It looks as if the Spiritists and Theosophists have the greatest power here—oh, how deplorable!

[13] The Althingi, often celebrated as the world's first democratic parliament, was the semi-democratic, quasi-parliamentary annual gathering of regional leaders and their retinues where laws were debated and revised, business deals arranged, conflicts mediated, and grievances were settled. The site of the Althingi remains an important national monument today as a symbol of the country's early independence before submission to Norwegian and then Danish control beginning in 1262, a period of foreign domination that was often ruthlessly, if not lethally exploitative for the bulk of the population. See Jóhannesson, 35-93; Jesse Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); and *Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas and Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[14] See Dag Strömbäck, *The Conversion of Iceland: A Survey*, trans. and annotated by Peter Foote (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College, 1975); and Jón Hnefill Athalsteinsson, *Under the Cloak: The Acceptance of Christianity in Iceland with Particular Reference to the Religious Attitudes Prevailing at the Time*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1978).

[15] Gunnar Karlsson, "A Century of Research on Early Icelandic Society," in Faulkes, *Viking Revaluations*, 15-25, and "The Emergence of Nationalism in Iceland" in *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in the Nordic World*, ed. Sven Tägil (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), 33-62; and Gísli Pálsson, *The Textual Life of Savants: Ethnography, Iceland and the Linguistic Turn* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995).

[16] I am grateful to Ingunn Ásdísardóttir, the theater director for the first year's production and a scholar of religion and mythology in her own right, for showing me a videotape of the production and sharing her experiences in working with Ásatrú in putting *Skírnismál* on the stage.

[17] It is acceptable, even endearingly risqué, for an American politician to play the transvestite and dress in drag, as Rudolf Guiliani did during a fall 1997 appearance on the popular comedy program "Saturday Night Live," but if the mayor of New York City had attended a Pagan event sponsored by a Neopagan group, he would have committed political suicide, so great would have been the outcry from devoutly Christian segments of the population. In 1998 and 1999, the mayor attempted to withhold city funding from museums exhibiting art which Guiliani believed offensive to Catholics. There is little reason to think that the mayor, himself a devout Catholic, would take similar action against exhibitions offensive to Pagans.

[18] Examples of contemporary scholars who view Old Icelandic literature through the lens of overwhelming Christian influence include Carol Clover, *The Medieval Saga* (1982), and Marianne Kalinke, *The Bridal Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland* (1990). The privileging of Christian influence takes on the authoritative aura of dogma in a recent standard reference work, Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eddas and Sagas: Iceland's Medieval Literature*, trans. Peter Foote (Reykjavík : Hid íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1988). Kristjánsson writes, "Snorri accepted [the Eddic mythological poem] *Voluspá* as a valid source of information about the old faith in the AEsir, but modern scholars have long since recognized that much in the poem must be of Christian origin" (43). Contrary to Kristjánsson's assertion, there are many scholars who see the Eddas and Sagas resulting from a blending of Pagan and Christian influences, for example, Ursula Dronke, *Myth and Fiction in Early Norse Lands* (Aldershot, Hampshire, U.K.: Variorum, 1996).

[19] Examples include the sociologist of religion Haraldur Ólafsson's fine study, "Indo-European Horse Sacrifice in the *Book of Settlements*," *Temenos* 31 (1995):127-43, illustrating the coherent if well-concealed Indo-European component inherent in early Icelandic religion, and the numerous works of Jón Hnefill Athalsteinsson, the eminent Icelandic folklorist and historian of religion, including "Old Norse Religion in the Sagas of Icelanders," *Gripla* 7 (1990):303-21 and *Blót í norrænum sith: rynt í forn tríarbrögth meth thjóthfræthilegri athferth* (*Sacrifice in Norse Antiquity*) (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan Félagsvísindastofnun, 1997).

[20] For a discussion of the historical evolution of the holiday, see Björnsson, 88-92

[21] More than 95 percent of Icelanders are registered as members of the National Lutheran Church, but this does not indicate a high level of Christian piety or participation, only the fact that all citizens are automatically reckoned as members of the state church unless they formally request otherwise. As most Icelanders do not care very much one way or the other about this, most remain listed on government records as members of the Lutheran Church, despite the fact that their only participation in church life is likely to be in the form of the automatic financial contribution which is annually siphoned from their taxes. The resentment many Icelanders feel toward this mandatory tax is leading some to join alternative religious groups like Ásatrú, and others to call for the separation of church and state. My thanks to naturalist Ole Lindquist and Professor Haraldur Olafsson for enlightenment on this point.

[22] The term "people of the book" is not intended as any slur on Muslims, Jews, or Christians, but is meant as comment on how the Norse Pagan tradition is based more in folklore and oral tradition than in scripture, as opposed to the monotheistic faiths with their carefully-crafted sacred literature and massive interpretative apparatus.

[23] See my "Odin, Loki, Thor: Grim Gods and Gallows Humor," *Explorations: Journal of Adventurous Thought* 14, no. 1 (1995):79-82.

[24] Though Iceland is somewhat larger in area than its North Atlantic neighbor Ireland, it has only 275,000 residents compared to the approximately 5 million population of Ireland. Some Icelanders say with a twinkle that the population of Iceland is actually much higher when the Elves, Huldufólk, and other invisible inhabitants are taken into account.

[25] For the political function of the Gothi, see Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* and *Medieval Iceland*; and Ross Samson, "Gothar: Democrats or Despots?" in *From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*, ed. Gísli Pálsson (Enfield Lock, Middlesex, UK: Hisarlik Press, 1992), 167-88. For the religious dimension, see Jón Hnefill Athalsteinsson, "The Function of the Tenth Century Gothi," *Temenos* 21 (1985):23-29.

[26] Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America.*

[27] Interview with Jón Ingvar Jónsson, computer technician, age 41, married, one son, former Lawspeaker, now withdrawn from Ásatrú. We spoke in his home in Reykjavík in February 1998.

[28] The term *Blót* is related to the English word "blood," with respect to animal sacrifices performed in past times. Modern-day *Blóts* are bloodless and free of animal sacrifice, though there is discussion of whether some substitute for the old practice of animal sacrifice should be developed. A fine recent Icelandic study of sacrificial practices in early Iceland is Jón Hnefill Athalsteinsson, *Blót í Norraenum Sith* (*Sacrifice in Norse Antiquity*), which contains an English-language summary.

[29] Jormundur Ingi Hansen has indicated he will be publishing the full texts from which I here take excerpts.

[30] *Sigrdrífumál* v. 3-4, trans. Jormundur Ingi Hansen, revised by M. Strmiska. This is an Eddic poem which can also be found in *The Poetic Edda* translation of Carolyne Larrington, 166-73.

[31] My impressions of these differences within the Icelandic Ásatrú community are based upon my interviews with Jón Ingvar Jónsson, Jóhanna Pálsdóttir, Jormundur Ingi Hansen, Baldur A. Sigurvinsson and Ole Lindquist in February 1998 in Reykjavík. My thanks to all for greatly enhancing my understanding of the different parties' views and priorities.

[32] Translation of *Hávamál* adapted from Larrington's translation of the *Poetic Edda*, 14-38.

[33] While quite a few Sagas conclude with the heroes converting to Christianity and heading off to Rome on a pious pilgrimage, this is usually the least memorable part of the story and reads rather like an advertisement for the Christian faith tacked on as a political necessity, providing a cover for the main body of the text just as health warnings on modern packs of cigarettes only slightly disguise the cigarette companies' desire to cause profitable addiction. One could also compare the standard paens to Marxist-Leninist communist ideology that authors were required to insert into U.S.S.R. scholarship, even where the

other contents had absolutely nothing to do with Lenin or Marx.

[34] I develop this line of thinking in greater depth in my article, "Religion as Art and Entertainment: Toward a Continuum Model," *Explorations: Journal of Adventurous Thought* 14, no. 3 (1996):35-54.

[35] Interview with Baldur A. Sigurvinsson, anthropology bachelor of arts student at the University of Iceland and research assistant for this article, in his home in Reykjavík in February 1998.

[36] *Eyrbyggja Saga*, trans. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (Edinburgh: Southside Publishers, Ltd., 1973), chapter 11; *The Book of Settlements: Landnámabók*, trans. with introduction and notes by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1972), chapter 85.

[37] I am grateful to the expatriate Danish historian, naturalist, and longtime Iceland resident Ole Lindquist for educating me about the dark and dirty side of Iceland's "unspoiled natural beauty."

Field Notes: Falun Dafa Practitioners: A Preliminary Research Report

Susan Palmer and David Ownby

Since late April 1999, the Chinese spiritual movement known as Falun Dafa, or Falungong,[1] has repeatedly made headlines around the world. Emerging in 1992 out of the larger *qigong* movement in China,[2] Master Li Hongzhi's Falungong sought to go beyond the claims of other *qigong* masters, who promised to heal illness and ensure health through the cultivation of "energy" *(qi)*. Indeed, Li Hongzhi added to existing *qigong* discourse both an ethical component and an attempt at systematic theory. By all accounts, Falungong struck a responsive chord, rapidly gaining large numbers of adherents, even among Communist Party members and government officials. The spectacular, yet peaceful, Falungong protest in late April of last year against state efforts to restrict Falungong activities strengthened the hand of anti-Falungong Chinese officials; identified as a threat to social and political stability, the Falungong "cult" has since become the object of a massive ongoing campaign of suppression. Falungong practitioners have for their part insisted that they are good, apolitical citizens and innocent "cultivators" of the truth revealed by Master Li Hongzhi in May of 1992. Most media reports have been caught up in this war of competing representations, and it is difficult to see how research based solely on the highly politicized (and voluminous) written record of the conflict between the Chinese state and the Falungong will succeed in telling us much about Falungong practice itself.[3]

Since September 1999, Susan Palmer, a researcher in the field of new religious movements (NRMs), and David Ownby, a specialist in the history of Chinese popular religions, have been studying Falungong groups in Montreal and Toronto as part of a larger project devoted to the Falungong.[4] The larger project ultimately will combine study of the written record (Li Hongzhi's transcribed speeches, documents produced by Falungong practitioners, many of which are available via the Internet, and documents produced by Chinese authorities) with fieldwork on Falungong groups in North America. This fieldwork includes participant-observation of Falungong activities (exercise/cultivation classes, discussion groups, public-relations exercises, "experience-sharing" conferences, etc.). Palmer and Ownby have also conducted interviews with several dozen practitioners and distributed a participant survey

questionnaire at the Montreal Experience-Sharing Conference, held February 12-13, 2000. Our research is in the preliminary stages, but we feel it is appropriate to share some of our findings, since there is a high level of interest in Falungong among scholars of NRMs. The following field notes are based largely on the survey circulated at the February Montreal conference since, as far as we know, there have been no academic studies of Falungong organization, beliefs, rituals, patterns of conversion, or demographic profiles. The results will be tested in future surveys and, of course, are only of suggestive value in our efforts to gain a sociological understanding of the Falungong in China.

Experience-sharing conferences are important moments for Falungong practitioners, given the relatively small size of Falungong communities in North America: Montreal has only a few dozen consistently active members; Toronto, a major North American center, at best has a few hundred members. (The Falungong organization does not require that "members" register and does not maintain lists of practitioners.) These conferences are organized on a roughly annual basis by Falungong groups in major centers; Toronto, New York, Washington, Boston, and Montreal—to speak only of the northeastern quadrant of North America—will thus each host an experience-sharing conference every year. Some Falungong practitioners travel considerable distances to attend these conferences, which serve as occasions for members to exchange experiences, renew friendships, meet new members, and discuss common concerns. For researchers, experience-sharing conferences represent the only time that large numbers of Falungong practitioners come together. In between conferences, practitioners cultivate on their own or attend loosely structured exercise or discussion sessions. Group exercise/cultivation sessions are generally held daily in larger centers; study/discussion sessions are usually held weekly. No specific demands are placed on practitioners in terms of attendance, and the amount of time they devote to Falungong activities varies widely.

The Montreal conference was attended by some 200 people, many of whom traveled by car or chartered bus from Toronto, Ottawa, Boston, New York, and New England. Of this 200, 78 responded to the questionnaire (there were both English and Chinese versions). 91 percent of the respondents (71) were Chinese-speaking, all but four born in China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan). Most of the Chinese were very recent immigrants, although a smattering of immigrants from the 1970s or earlier had also taken up cultivation. The average year of immigration was 1992, and 51 out of 67 responding to this question had immigrated no earlier than 1989. The ratio of 90 percent Chinese practitioners to 10 percent Western practitioners generally accords with our observations in other settings. Although the Falungong is eager to welcome Western practitioners and indeed displays Western practitioners

prominently in its events and literature, the core of the movement in North America remains decidedly Chinese.

The average age of the respondents was 41.88, and the mean age 37. Women respondents outnumbered men 44 to 34. 80 percent of respondents were married, and 63 percent had been married for more than ten years. Three practitioners were divorced.

The respondents were a highly-educated group, with 9 percent holding Ph.D.s, 34 percent Masters degrees, and 24 percent with a B.A. or B.Sc. In other words, fully two-thirds of respondents had at least a university degree. This high level of educational attainment presumably explains their high income level as well: Almost 15 percent reported annual incomes of more than $60,000 CAN; 13.5 percent reported earning between $40,000 and $60,000, and 21.6 percent earned between $20,000 and $39,000. Many of these well-off practitioners worked in various fields of high tech, computers, and finance. At the same time, as one might expect from a population of recent immigrants, several members were students, earning very little money, and 23 percent of respondents earned only between $10,000 and $19,000.

The issues of Falungong's appeal and recruitment patterns were addressed in our questionnaire. Of the Chinese respondents, 33.3 percent had joined Falungong in China; 59.4 percent in Canada, and 7.2 percent elsewhere. Most had been introduced to the practice through personal contacts, as the data below demonstrates:

How did you first learn about Falungong?

Friends	31
Relatives	21
Internet	6
Workmates	6
Other	4
Observation of Falungong cultivation sessions	2
Falungong Books	1

To the question, "What first attracted you to the practice?" respondents answered as follows (They were allowed to choose more than one response to this question.):

Intellectual content	47
Cultivation exercises	32
Health benefits	30
Spiritual benefits	6
Master Li	5
Other	3
Falungong Community	2

Respondents confirmed that Falungong had grown out of the larger *qigong* movement: 34 of the 65 who answered the question reported having practiced other forms of *qigong* before encountering Falun Dafa. Responses to the questions addressing the involvement of parents in the *qigong* movement showed that mothers were more likely to practice *qigong* or join Falun Dafa than fathers. 23 of the 57 respondents to this question said their mothers had practiced Falungong, and 17 of 52 reported that their mother had practiced other forms of *qigong*. Only 11 of 60 had fathers who were in Falungong, and 8 of 51 had fathers who had practiced other forms of *qigong*.

Of the seven Westerners, only one was male, and it is interesting to note that all but one described a previous involvement in alternative spirituality, healing, or psychotherapy. These systems included *reiki*, gnosticism, Sufism, yoga, Wicca, and one woman claiming to have been a "brahmin monk." Only one had experimented with *qigong* prior to discovering Falungong. Interviews confirmed that the Westerners (Canadians, U.S. citizens, and Europeans) to whom we talked tended to fit the profile of what one might call a "spiritual seeker." These are experienced veterans of a series of NRMs, including the eastern meditation groups of Sri Chinmoy and Pir Valayat Khan, and New Age (e.g. the channeled entity Lazarus).

It is unclear whether one might label Chinese Falungong practitioners "spiritual seekers" as well. Few of the spiritual alternatives tried by Western practitioners would have been available in China, and most Chinese practitioners depict their prior worldview as "scientific" or agnostic (one should hasten to note that Chinese practitioners often praise the "scientific" character of Li Hongzhi's teachings). At the same time, interviews confirm the datum reported above that many had tried other forms of *qigong* before discovering Falungong, and roughly 20 percent of Chinese noted a previous membership in a church organization (most often Christian or Buddhist).

In summary, the most surprising data to emerge from this initial survey is the high percentage of well educated and relatively wealthy practitioners among the Chinese contingent of practitioners. Of course, this profile is not unrelated to North American immigration policy, which favors well educated applicants who are likely to find their place readily in the North American economy. Were a survey of Falungong practitioners in China possible, we doubt that these results would be duplicated. Nonetheless, the survey results illustrate that high levels of education and material well-being are not *incompatible* with Falungong practice. This finding suggests that one must treat carefully Chinese government claims that Falungong practitioners are "ignorant" victims of clever charlatans. At the same time, the finding complicates one of our original hypotheses, namely that ethnic Chinese Falungong practitioners in North America might be seeking a patriotic, emotional

connection with Chinese culture to compensate for a presumed marginal status in North America.

Further research is required to place these results in the proper context. We successfully circulated another participant questionnaire at the Toronto Experience-Sharing Conference in mid-May and are currently adding these results to our data base. We hope to conduct interviews with most members of the Montreal Falungong community this summer. Reading and analysis of Li Hongzhi's writings are well underway. Over the course of the coming months, we will visit Falungong groups in Ottawa, New York, Boston, and New England.

To other researchers contemplating working on the Falungong (there are groups throughout North America, particularly in large cities), we might note that the practitioners we have dealt with have been extremely open and cooperative, facilitating access to practitioners and even ex-practitioners, and answering our questions patiently and at length. This is in part strategic. Many Falungong practitioners feel that the media in general have been unfair in its portrayal of their community, and they hope that researchers will provide a more objective, nuanced account. At the same time, we do *not* have the sense that practitioners coordinate their statements or activities to create a certain impression on us. Instead, our sense is that individual practitioners talk to us freely about what matters to them.

ENDNOTES

[1] *Falun* means "dharma wheel" or "wheel of the law." *Dafa* means "great law," "great way," or "great dharma." *Gong* refers to the physical act of cultivation, which may, of course, have spiritual or other expressions. The two terms, *Falun dafa* and *Falungong*, can be used interchangeably in most contexts, although technically speaking, *Falun dafa* refers to the doctrine and *Falungong* to the physical exercises.

[2] On the *qigong* movement, see Zhu Xiaoyang and Benjamin Penny, eds., "The *Qigong* Boom," *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 27, no. 1 (1994):1-94 (translations of Chinese materials on *qigong*); Xu Jian, "Body, Discourse, and the Cultural Politics of Contemporary Chinese *Qigong*," *Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 4 (1999):961-91; Miura Kunio, "The Revival of *Qi*: *Qigong* in Contemporary China," in *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques*, ed. Livia Kohn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989), 331-62; Nancy N. Chen, "Urban Spaces and Experiences of *Qigong*," in *Urban Spaces in Contemporary Chinese Culture*, ed. Deborah S. Davis (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1995), 346-59; and Thomas Ots, "The Silenced Body—The Expressive *Leib*: On the Dialectic of Mind and Life in Chinese Cathartic Healing," in *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, ed. Thomas J. Csordas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 116-36.

[3] This point is also made by Patsy Rahn in her paper, "The Falun Gong: Beyond the Headlines," presented at the American Family Foundation's annual conference, 28 April 2000. The full text is available at <http://sun.sino.uni-heidelberg.de/staff/bth/FalunRAHN.htm>.

[4] Palmer and Ownby live in Montreal. Toronto is a major North American Falungong center.

Book Reviews

Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Violence. By Mark Jurgensmeyer. University of California Press, 2000. 316 pages. $27.50 cloth.

In *Terror in the Mind of God* Mark Jurgensmeyer probes the sources of "religious terrorism." He asks (p.6): "Why does religion seem to need violence, and violence religion, and why is a religious mandate for destruction accepted with such certainty by some believers?" The author is also perplexed as to "why bad things are done by people who otherwise appear to be good . . . by pious people dedicated to a moral vision of the world" (p. 7).

Jurgensmeyer focuses primarily on a handful of movements or subcultures: Islamic militants, Jewish militants, right-wing Christian paramilitarists, anti-abortion extremists, Catholic and Protestant Irish terrorists, Sikh and Hindu terrorists, and Aum Shinrikyo. Chapters Two through Six describe these groupings or "Cultures of Violence" and their activities. The descriptions are interspersed with interviews with participants including some key figures such as Hamas and militant Zionist-Orthodox leaders, and Mahmoud Abouhalima, currently imprisoned for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. The author's descriptions suggest as a common theme a vision of a godly social order directed by religious law and ideals. Religious terrorists express rage against secular political elites who attempt to enforce some kind of separation of church and state and resist the superordinance of religious imperatives over civic affairs and social mores.

The final five chapters seek to explicate "The Logic of Religious Violence." Terrorism in general tends to be "performance violence" with significant symbolic and ritual dimensions. The "drama of religion" is especially appropriate to the "theater of terror," particularly as "images of martyrdom, satanization, and cosmic war have been central to religious ideologies" and are readily available as "agents of social empowerment, personal pride, and political legitimization" (p. 216). The author affirms a postmodern "crisis of legitimacy" entailing the devaluation of modern, secular forms of authority. A "common syndrome" among violent religious activists "begins with the perception that the world has gone awry and . . . that behind this social confusion lies a great spiritual and moral conflict, a cosmic battle between the forces of order and chaos, good and evil" (p. 224). De-legitimated secular governments are seen to be in

league with the forces of disorder. But they are being challenged by resurgent religious worldviews whose legitimacy is now to be purchased "with the currency of violence."

Jurgensmeyer's discussion of the gender factor is particularly interesting. Women sometimes participate in terrorist groups inspired by secular political ideologies (e.g., Marxist, ethno-nationalist) but are conspicuous by their scarcity in the more prominently religiously tinged movements. Such movements tend to manifest traditionalist gender ideologies and to appeal disproportionately to young males who are anxious over loss of status and identity in a sexually "liberated" gender-egalitarian society. Such a world appears to many young males to be disorganized and increasingly controlled by satanic forces of disorder who are engaged in a cosmic war against sacred traditions. Male-dominated politico-religious and paramilitarist associations are thus presently proliferating. Their ideologies tend to be vehemently homophobic, although the close-knit intimacy of their group life may sometimes have a latent homoerotic dimension.

For Jurgensmeyer, "the homophobic male-dominated language of right-wing religious movements indicates not only a crisis of sexuality but a clash of worldviews, not just a moral or psychological problem but a political and religious one" (p. 206). The author seems to view the rise of religious terrorism as arising from the interface of male gender humiliation with a more general crisis of confidence in public institutions and a pervasive sense of a loss of spiritual connection. In this context new movements emerge whose objectives appear to have a latent intangibility, and whose violent acts "are often devices for symbolic empowerment in wars that cannot be won and for goals that cannot be achieved" (p. 214).

A reader of this volume might get the impression that right-wing militias and other groups are primarily religious in their motivation. This could be misleading, e.g., is Timothy McVeigh primarily a Christian fundamentalist activist? Jurgensmeyer is very provocative but perhaps not entirely compelling in his assimilation of Asahara and Aum Shinrikyo to the same category inhabited by militant Muslims and right-wing militias. On the other hand it is important to realize that "religious terrorism" perpetrated by Muslims, Sikhs, Irish nationalists, et al., is much more pervasive than spectacular "cult" explosions such as Jonestown or Heaven's Gate. Jurgensmeyer's ideas and concerns must not become conceptually segregated from the concerns of *Nova Religio* and the different issues hermetically sealed in separate compartments. Interaction will open up a number of interesting questions and comparisons. For example, some "religious terrorist" worldviews appear to be characterized by something akin to the "catastrophic millennialism" which Catherine Wessinger identifies as present in volatile alternative religions, but without the "Armageddonist" or fatalist reliance on decisive

action by a supernatural agent to create the New Order. In any case it may behoove some of us to pay more attention to the work of scholars such as Jurgensmeyer or David Rapoport. In this connection *Terror in the Mind of God* has an extensive, topically subdivided bibliography.

Thomas Robbins, Rochester, Minnesota

How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate. By Catherine Wessinger. New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000. 305 pages. $22.95 paper.

Recently in these pages (*Nova Religio* 3, no. 2:368-81) Ian Reader suggested that a "post-Waco" phase of NRM scholarship involving heightened sensitivity to the negative effects of crude official stereotyping of "cults" and heavy-handed official intervention must now come to terms with a newer "post-Aum" phase entailing a renewed awareness of the endogenous capacity of some charismatic leaders and their devotees for mayhem. Catherine Wessinger has been an outstanding activist scholar whose post-Waco sensibility has led her and several scholars to attempt a pro-active mediation between government agencies (particularly the FBI) and volatile millennial movements. In *How the Millennium Comes Violently* Wessinger attempts to balance—perhaps a bit uneasily—post-Waco and post-Aum perspectives and to integrate the insights of both outlooks into a single coherent framework for understanding the volatility of millennial movements. In the process the author has written an extremely thoughtful, fair-minded, provocative, and perhaps indispensable book which nonetheless may not entirely succeed on all of the several levels at which it operates.

One level of Wessinger's enterprise entails the narrative of certain spectacular violent or almost violent events involving millennial groups. In addition to the tragic violence associated with the Peoples Temple, Branch Davidians (BD), Solar Temple, Aum Shinrikyo, and Heaven's Gate, Wessinger helpfully includes a chapter on the Montana Freeman episode in which a violent denouement was averted. Another chapter assesses the potential for violence of the apocalyptic movement known as Chen Tao, which has so far "disappointed" the baleful expectations of activists and media.

Some readers will be disappointed that the Solar Temple and Heaven's Gate are not given their own chapters but end up as "Other Cases Briefly Considered." The Solar Templars get only ten pages compared to the 57-page chapter on the Branch Davidians, a group whose violent episode has been treated as paradigmatic by some scholars. The Davidian chapter is slightly disconcerting in places due to an

occasionally fervent tone, e.g., the author's discussion of the infliction upon the Davidians of physical, symbolic, mental, constitutional, and judicial violence at the hands of officials and crusaders (pp. 58-60).

The key assertion of the all-important Davidian chapter is that the BDs were not a highly "fragile" group and were not suffering from stresses and weaknesses related to diminished charismatic authority, disconfirmed prophecies, a failure to attain goals, and other conditions which beset the Peoples Temple, the Solar Temple, and Aum Shinrikyo. Unlike Jim Jones, who underwent personal deterioration and a loss of authority prior to the ultimate disaster, persecutory treatment by federal agents "confirmed Koresh's prophesies and enhanced his status as the messiah in the eyes of his followers" (p. 57). The mass violence which erupted therefore reflected the officials' assault option rather than group volatility and instability although Wessinger remains agnostic as to whether the final Davidian deaths resulted from collective suicide or the flammable gas inserted by the FBI. On the other hand, one of the key sources of a movement's "fragility," according to Wessinger, is traumatic *high-level defections*. The author acknowledges that "Koresh felt severely threatened by [Marc] Breault's rejection of him as the messiah" and by the dissident's ability to use Bible study sessions to convey his doubts to other Davidians (p. 96). "Fragility," she implies, is a continuum.

Wessinger provocatively employs a two-pronged analytic scheme. One key concept is *catastrophic millennialism*, which involves an expectation of a cataclysmic transition to the millennium that will be brought about by superhuman agency. This notion is basically a social science generalization of the Protestant prophetic concept of "premillennialism." It is interesting that some "religious terrorists" described by Mark Jurgensmeyer in *Terror in the Mind of God* have violent, cataclysmic visions but without the fatalist premise of Wessinger's (possibly multidimensional) concept. The same holds for secular revolutionaries such as Leninists, Maoists, and Fascists. It is also worth noting that many premillennialist groups such as conventional fundamentalist churches are distinctly quietistic. Is this mainly because they are less "fragile"? One cost of the author's rejection of particularist Protestant conceptualization is a lack of interest in the pre/post-tribulationist divide and how a notion such as the Rapture may defuse tensions by implying that the saints will not have to endure the transitional chaos and violence. Absent such a notion, opposition to the group or the leader is more likely to be viewed in deeply eschatological terms and seen as emanating directly from Antichrist, Babylonians, etc. Nevertheless Wessinger shows that catastrophic millennialism tended to become more pronounced as the movements led by Jim Jones and Asahara evolved toward their violent denouements. Other scholars have perceived a similar dynamic in quasi-millennialist protest groups such as radical ecology and anti-abortionist movements which descend into violence.

The author's other vital concept entails a movement's *fragility*, which renders it more volatile and susceptible to a violent response to tensions at its boundary. A fragile group may fail with respect to exalted, unrealistic goals such as Asahara's political ambitions; it may become ineffective in recruitment as did Heaven's Gate; its leaders may appear to lose charisma and fail in their messianic role (a prospect faced by Solar Templar Joseph Di Mambro and Jim Jones). It may experience high-level defections as did the Peoples Temple, Aum Shinrikyo, and the Solar Temple. It may be beset by internal conflicts. The All-Highest may, as both a cause and effect of these vicissitudes, become increasingly unbalanced. Still, after the fact of a violent explosion, it may be too easy to find "fragile" elements in the star that became a supernova.

Many or even most groups may possess fragile elements. For Wessinger a "fragile" group is really a group that became violent *primarily because of its fragility* rather than because of its disruptive (e.g., revolutionary) ideology or its experience of physical attacks by enemies. Wessinger contrasts fragile groups such as the Peoples Temple and the Solar Temple with "revolutionary" groups such as the Montana Freemen or "assaulted" groups such as the Branch Davidians. The latter acted forcefully not because of their marginal fragility but because they faced an armed intrusion. A group may have fragile *and* revolutionary or assaulted elements; the issue is which elements are the most crucial in leading to group violence. "Aum Shinrikyo possessed a revolutionary ideology and was acquiring weapons of mass destruction . . . but, in fact, the violent acts committed by devotees were related to the fragility of Aum Shinrikyo . . . " (p. 24). The notion of violence proceeding from a group's weakness is very provocative, but some readers may find it elusive and conclude that it could raise more questions than it resolves.

Wessinger has a lot more to say including some interesting but somewhat miscellaneous insights or "General Observations" (pp. 270-84). She makes cogent criticisms of stereotypical notions of "cult" and "brainwashing" as inhibitors of communication and understanding. Yet she also understands that research should never become public relations. "We should not be in the business of giving 'clean bills of health' to particular groups. Aum Shinrikyo stands as a warning that NRMs sometimes contain nasty surprises" (p. 26).

Wessinger thinks that scholars such as those who contribute to this journal should be consulted by officials. "Worldview translators" can help defuse confrontations. This is true, but is there a hint here of the idea that *conflicts are caused by misunderstandings*? Some conflicts cannot be mediated or resolved by enhanced understanding and communicative efficacy. A totalistic movement may sometimes represent a "state within a state" whose extreme claims for autonomy cannot be indulged by the legitimate state. Either laws against statutory rape will be enforced or millennialist exceptions will be made when particular couplings "spread

the seed of the messiah." Child custody disputes such as the conflict over the Stoen child in Jonestown can be decided by a court or by the fiat of the Prophet. The bottom line may be irreconcilable conflicts of interest and ideology. *Did the FBI and the Branch Davidians misunderstand each other at Waco or understand each other too well?* Even with the face-saving eschatological revision cleverly devised for him by James Tabor and J. Phillip Arnold, could Koresh abide shuffling off to prison for weapons offenses and statutory rape? Could the State abide Koresh *never* surrendering and submitting to its authority? Someone had to make a huge sacrifice and accept humiliation!

But Waco also illustrates how smug condescension, labeling as pseudo-understanding, and dualistic rigidity can substantially exacerbate conflict. Better communication and clearer understanding are not panaceas, but they undoubtedly help. Wessinger's insightful volume will probably become a positive force for understanding and mediation.

Thomas Robbins, Rochester, Minnesota

Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World. Edited by Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts, and Geoffrey Samuel. Edinburgh University Press, 1998. 222 pages. £12.95 paper.

This book is a collection of papers on modern Paganism, emphasizing the "nature religion" theme, originally presented at a conference on the movement sponsored by the Religious Studies Department at Lancaster University, England, in 1996. Both academic scholars and Pagan spokespersons were present and were presented in the volume. The work represents an important forward step in the study of the modern Pagan movement. It offers not only descriptive or analytic history and sociology, but also allows the voices of contemporary Pagans to be heard in the context of academic discussion. Even more importantly, several of the papers raise vital philosophical issues confronting the maturing movement. Though these studies are based for the most part in Great Britain, the issues are certainly no less pertinent to North American Paganism.

Of the critical issues facing Paganism and its academic and self-understanding, four examples may be given. First, Wouter Hanegraaff, in "Reflections on New Age and the Secularisation of Nature," reflects on the underlying tension between the romantic, harmonialist view of nature characteristic of the New Age movement and much Paganism, and the darker, "red in tooth and claw" concept represented today, for example, in the writings of Annie Dillard. If, as Paganism seems to want, we resacralize nature as the true source of human life and value, what is it that we are sanctifying? Hanegraaff's treatment of this issue is rich

and complex, with several unexpected turns, and well worth pondering by all concerned about nature and the sacred.

Ronald Hutton, in "The Discovery of the Modern Goddess," deals with the changing politics over the decades of feminism and the myth of the Neolithic "Great Goddess" who, according to her modern prophets, presided over a peaceful and egalitarian ancient Europe before the incursion of warlike and over-masculinized Indo-Europeans. At various places, and in various hands, this deity—always much controverted archeologically—has inspired radical feminists and given her benediction to a romantic conservative mood that fostered, in the eyes of the critics, an ultimately restrictive and difficult image of women as one with "Mother Nature," and inherently more peaceful and nurturing than the other gender. As Val Plumwood, cited by Hutton, put it, the Victorian myth of woman as "the angel of the house" became the "angel of the ecosystem." For other women, though—for some reason more in America than in Europe—the Great Goddess has been a powerfully liberating force against patriarchal religion and the social systems that go with it. This is a fascinating and significant discussion.

Susan Greenwood, in "The Nature of the Goddess: Sexual Identities and Power in Contemporary Witchcraft," discusses among other matters the disputed origins of modern Wicca: her position is that modern witchcraft is less a traditional nature religion long carried on underground, in the manner suggested by Margaret Murray, or even a modern reconstruction of rustic, pre-Christian religion, than a development out of "high magic" in the manner of Aleister Crowley, the Order of the Golden Dawn, and their Hermetic sources. These were, she argues, the sources of Gerald Gardner, the chief creator of modern witchcraft.

Finally, Elizabeth Puttick, in "Goddess and Gopis: In Search of New Models of Female Sexuality," raises the old yet ever-new issue of women and sexual liberation offered by many Pagan and Wiccan movements: does it really liberate them, or only commodify and enslave women in subtle new ways?

This is only a sample of articles in this rich volume: there are also the statements of Pagans, such as Phillip Shallcrass' self-description of his life as "A Priest of the Goddess," Alastair McIntosh's poetic account of "The Gal-Gael Peoples of Scotland," and much else. *Nature Religion Today* will undoubtedly be one catalyst for important discussions of modern Paganism for years to come.

Robert S. Ellwood, University of Southern California

The Lustre of Our Country: The American Experience of Religious Freedom. By John T. Noonan, Jr. University of California Press, 1998. 436 pages. $35.00 cloth.

Noonan, professor emeritus at Berkeley's Boalt School of Law and a judge on the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, conducts a fascinating tour of the genesis, development, and broad influence of the American concept of religious freedom. Although readers of this journal may initially be drawn to his riveting account of the criminal prosecution on charges of mail fraud of Edna Ballard and other prominent members of the "I Am" movement in 1940-41 (pp. 141-76) or the widespread persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses from 1941 to 1943—which Noonan describes as "the greatest outbreak of religious intolerance in twentieth-century America" (p. 243)—they will also be deeply rewarded by his extraordinary eye for crucial historical and comparative details and his flair for story-telling.

Although James Madison, whose efforts to enshrine the principle of free exercise of religion in both the statutes of Virginia and the American Constitution are recounted in vivid detail, is in many ways the central figure of the book, Noonan himself is a close second. An opening chapter that describes the author's own encounters with issues of religious freedom in Irish Catholic Boston between the 1920s and the 1950s gives abstract issues vivid and concrete form. Noonan frequently leavens his exposition with autobiographical details, ample quotations from both familiar and obscure historical sources, fictional colloquies of experts, and other engaging narrative devices. His goal throughout is to demonstrate, despite the meandering legal interpretations of it, the power, influence, and implications of the Madisonian ideal of the free exercise of religion.

In the course of his presentation, Noonan offers a fresh translation of provocative excerpts from the unpublished account of Angelique de Tocqueville's observations about American religion in 1835, a vivid account of Theodore Parker's religious argument for the abolition of slavery and the furor it occasioned in the mid-nineteenth century, and chapters on the far-ranging impact of the American ideal of religious freedom on the French Revolution and Republic, the Constitution of post-war Japan, the post-communist understanding of religion in the former Soviet Union, and even the Second Vatican Council.

In sum, Noonan's meditations on religious freedom provide impressive depth and broad context for an issue that remains at the fore of contemporary controversies about "cults."

Eugene V. Gallagher, Connecticut College

Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America. By Gerald Sorin. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. 294 pages. $40.00 cloth, $14.95 paper.

To a field that already boasts a number of good general histories of Jews in America, Gerald Sorin has added another, which, while it does not quite render its predecessors obsolete, stands out for its strong interpretative framework and inclusiveness of gender and social issues. The author notes that the survival of Jews in America repeatedly confounds prognosticators who have long predicted their absorption by secular society and disappearance as a people. Using the classic terminology of sociologist Milton Gordon, Sorin asserts that acculturation, not assimilation, best describes the Jewish experience—that is, Jews adopted American ways without ever completely losing their ethnic distinctiveness or self-consciousness.

Sorin ably and clearly traces Jewish history from the first Sephardic immigrants in 1654 to the present. Three chapters describe the early American experience to 1820, mid-nineteenth-century dominance of German Jews, and post-1880 mass migrations from Eastern Europe. The next ten chapters topically examine various aspects of Jewish life from the late nineteenth century to the present, including diverging experiences in large cities and in the smaller towns of the hinterland; participation in the labor movement and politics; varieties of belief and behavior; interest in and influence on foreign policy, especially after the founding of Israel; social mobility; and the construction of Jewish identity in a modern pluralistic society. Attention to recent social and women's history enriches each of the chapters.

Sorin's frequent comparisons between the experience of Jews and other ethnic groups, which he develops at length in his conclusion, lends perspective to problems they have faced. Throughout, Sorin sustains the view that Jews have survived in America not by abandoning their religious and cultural traditions, but by actively transforming and reinventing them.

Author of two books on Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *The Prophetic Minority* and *A Time for Building*, Sorin is at his best in chapters dealing with that era. While his opinions on current events influence his presentation of recent history, he nevertheless explains quite well such themes and issues in recent Jewish history as rising intermarriage rates, secularization, philanthropy, ties between American Jews and Israel, political liberalism, Russian immigrants, and troubled relations with blacks.

With its fine bibliographic essay, *Tradition Transformed* serves as a good introduction to the field as well as a guide for further reading and research. It is probably the best brief history of American Jews available.

Mark Stoll, Texas Tech University

The ABC-CLIO Companion to the 1960s Counterculture in America. By Neil A. Hamilton. ABC-CLIO, 1997. 386 pages. $60.00 cloth.

Neil Hamilton has done a remarkably good job on a daunting assignment, that of surveying the 1960s alternative scene in a 400-entry encyclopedia. Inevitably, anyone who reads the book will have some quibbles with his choice of entries (some of my own are detailed below) or some of his interpretations, but the knowledge of the subject he brings to the task is impressive, and the work is as good an overview of the diverse 1960s era as has yet been created.

An excellent introduction sets the tone for what follows. In only four pages Hamilton locates the antecedents of the counterculture in earlier dissenting subcultures, provides a summary overview of the 1960s era, and describes the kinds of dilemmas involved in creating the book, arguing cogently, for example, that "miniskirt" deserves an entry because of its effect on sexual attitudes. The entries themselves address the topic broadly, paying special attention to the roots of the counterculture. A long entry on *Mad* magazine, for example, demonstrates the influence that publication had on a generation that would soon become rebellious. The volume concludes with a chronology of counterculturally significant events from 1960 to 1973.

Bibliographical notes accompany most entries, and a substantial bibliography of primary and secondary works is provided as well. There is something of an urban bias to the volume; granted, San Francisco was the capital of hip, and New York was the countercultural second city, but most of the country beyond those two metropolitan areas gets little attention. Anyone steeped in 1960s history will quarrel, inevitably, with some of Hamilton's choices for entries. Given the limited space he has to work with, why are there entries for Fluxus, Love Grass, The Something!, and Surfing, to name only a few? Would it not be more important to include Swami Satchidananda, the Good Friday Experiment, and the Mime Troupe (all omitted)? My largest personal quibble, given my own 1960s interests, is that the communes are almost entirely ignored. A single entry for "commune" is provided, but only one specific commune rates an entry, one that hardly defines the genre: 710 Ashbury Street (in San Francisco), the communal home of the Grateful Dead. The Farm (Tennessee), the largest of the 1960s-era communes, has no entry, and neither does its founder/teacher Stephen Gaskin. Neither Morning Star Ranch nor its impresario Lou Gottlieb is present. One looks in vain for Drop City, or Black Bear Ranch, or the Lama Foundation.

On the other hand, some of Hamilton's entries are inspired items that many lexicographers would have overlooked. Such inclusions as Banana Peels, Blue Jeans, Don't Trust Anyone over Thirty, Thoreau, and Volkswagen Microbus provide this volume with depth and empathy.

Quibbles aside, this opus, intended for the library reference market, is one of the most useful tools yet published for the study of that amazing era we call the 60s. We are all indebted to Neil Hamilton for putting it together.

Timothy Miller, University of Kansas

Speak to the Rock: The Azusa Street Revival, Its Roots and Its Message. By Robert R. Owens. University Press of America, 1998. 140 Pages. $34.50 cloth.

From the beginning of their movement, Pentecostals have had a bipolar self-understanding of their history. One pole, the "latter rain" understanding, emphasizes how the early church quickly ceased to exercise its full Pentecostal power and descended into the dark ages, only to be restored again in the events surrounding the Azusa Street revival inaugurating the prophesied second coming of Jesus Christ. The opposite pole seeks to root Pentecostalism within Christianity throughout the centuries. In this view, God has not left himself without a witness in any period, though some shine more brightly than others have. Owens' book is clearly situated in the latter.

His explicit purpose is to "examine the Holy Spirit Through-the-Ages Time-line (as developed by early modern Pentecostals) to see if there is a credible basis for Pentecostal claims to orthodoxy" and to "investigate the beginnings of modern Pentecostalism in order to place the Azusa Street Revival in the context of American religious history" (p. viii). He speaks as someone deeply immersed in the leadership of a Pentecostal church, yet as a historian (p. v).

Despite an impressive bibliography, the footnotes indicate that he draws heavily from standard secondary sources. Those interested in the history and backgrounds of Pentecostalism would do better to start with those sources. On the Azusa Street revival itself, a systematic account drawing together all the available sources and the construction of the significance of these events by the major participants is still needed. (Perhaps Cecil M. Robeck's forthcoming book on the Azusa Street revival will fill this gap.) Until then, scholars should consult the reprinted Pentecostal tracts and books in the series, *"The Higher Christian Life": Sources for the Study of the Holiness, Pentecostal, and Keswick Movements,* edited by Donald W. Dayton and published by Garland, as well as the early issues of *The Apostolic Faith* published in Los Angeles.

Douglas Milford, Wheaton College

Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape. Edited by Robert A. Orsi. Indiana University Press, 1999. 581 pages. $19.95 paper.

The sociological studies of religion based in modern U. S. cities presented in this volume will surely be of considerable interest and importance to students of new religious movements. First, we find here highly competent treatments of several groups that customarily come under the purview of readers of *Nova Religio*: Haitian Vodou in New York (Karen Brown), a Hindu temple in suburban Washington (Joanne Waghorne), Santería in Florida (David Brown), and the Salvation Army (Diane Winston). Moreover, essays on older religions in particular urban settings, especially where conflicted ethnic identities are involved, show that established faiths may there take specialized forms which indicate how blurred the line can be between new religious movements and new movements, or newly emergent institutions, in old religions. That reality is brought home by the papers on a Cuban Catholic shrine in Miami (Thomas Tweed), a unique synagogue and its leader in the South Bronx (Jack Kugelmass), a street *feste* in Italian Harlem (Robert Orsi), a Japanese Presbyterian church in Seattle, or intra-Catholic/intra-ethnic religious tensions in Brooklyn (Joseph Sciorra) and New York's Lower East Side (Wayne Ashley).

A fine introductory essay by the editor, Robert Orsi, illumines the importance of such studies for the historian or sociologist of religion. As he points out, some older scholars like Mircea Eliade have nostalgically tended to ground religion in nature and archaic rural life, whose seasons still underlie the festival cycles of modern faiths, and regarded their contemporary urban manifestations as little more than "survivals" of real religiosity. Such views were not a little afflicted by the secularization theories once very widely accepted in academia. But secularization itself is increasingly questioned, and papers like these show why: in a seemingly invincibly religious country like the United States, religion flourishes as well or better in the cities as in the countryside, as much now as in the past, indeed often showing its greatest creativity and adaptability amid supermarkets and high-rise apartments. Many of the major new religious movements most associated with this country, from Theosophy and Christian Science to Pentecostalism, originated in cities like New York, Boston, and Los Angeles. Urban also were the original settings of major new or transplanted forms of Judaism, from Reform to Hasidism; of new world expressions of immigrant religion; and of North American encounters with Asian, African, and Afro-Latin American religion. That process is as alive now as ever, as *Gods of the City* demonstrates.

This book belongs in the libraries of all serious students of contemporary American religion and will undoubtedly also find widespread classroom use.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk. Edited by Aurel Braun and Stephen Scheinberg. Westview Press, 1997. 293 pages. $79.00 cloth, $30.00 paper.

In choosing to put together a volume on the extreme right internationally, there is always a problem of what and what not to include. In part, this relates to the countries that deserve study. But it relates also to which political forces are encompassed by the notion of right-wing extremism. On both counts, this collection brings interesting questions to light. In examining countries from within Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and North America, the authors are able both to explore the movements active within particular states and to draw comparisons across national boundaries. In selecting which countries to consider, it is unfortunate that Italy, where the extreme right is both influential and ideologically interesting, was not included. But the examples that were selected have been well chosen and illuminatingly discussed.

In Eastern Europe, for instance, this means we can observe in different countries one of the most fascinating developments on the extreme right, the rise of Red-Brown movements which draw together authoritarian nationalists of the right with authoritarian nationalists of the left. In the case of North America, we can examine a different phenomenon, the links between religion and the right in Canada and the USA. But this latter example takes us to the problem we noted earlier. In a discussion of the extreme right, the inclusion of such organizations as Britain's National Front or the German People's Union alongside American Christian Identity groups or Russia's Pamyat is fully appropriate. The inclusion of Farrakhan's Nation of Islam or nationalist sectors of the Russian Communist Party poses greater, but not insurmountable, problems. But to categorize such groups as Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition as extreme right is to distort the term beyond repair. To claim that the Christian Right is comparable to the Nazis in its responsibility for hate crimes is polemic, not scholarship, while the suggestion that Christian Identity is linked with the Christian Right fundamentally misunderstands what is overwhelmingly an antagonistic relationship.

There is much to commend in this collection. Internationally, it is particularly useful in discussing how different democracies have sought to deal with the extreme right, while at the national level it presents valuable material on groups in a number of comparable but distinct contexts. At points, particular groupings need to be more clearly explained or slightly fuller accounts are called for in discussing the histories of the extreme right in particular states. The most important problem, however, is not so easily remedied. Both the Christian Right and the militias are recognizably part of the American right. To see them as part of the extreme right, however, is a step too far.

Martin Durham, University of Wolverhampton

Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962. By Albert N. Keim. Herald Press, 1998. 592 pages. $24.99 cloth.

Without question one of the most influential historians, thinkers, and religious leaders of the Mennonite movement during his lifetime, Harold S. Bender profoundly influenced Mennonite theology, institutions, and history during the nineteenth century. In this exhaustive account of his life and work, Albert Keim (Eastern Mennonite University) has succeeded in weaving an account of Bender's extensive contributions to Mennonite institutions with a discussion of the historical and religious contexts which shaped and were shaped by those contributions.

Harold Bender is best known among scholars for his historical research portraying sixteenth-century Anabaptism, with its espousal of pacifism, as the logical extension of Luther's protest. His work on Conrad Grabel developed the monogenesis theory of the origin of the Anabaptist movement, asserting that the movement originated in Zurich among followers of Ulrich Zwingli. Bender's contribution to Mennonite leadership took precedence over his scholarship, however, and Keim points out that an overwhelming number of institutional commitments prevented Bender from completing significant original research.

Bender's accomplishments are numerous and impressive: he served as dean of Goshen College Biblical Seminary, as secretary or chair of numerous Mennonite committees, as editor of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* and *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, and as president of the Mennonite Historical Society and the Mennonite World Conference. In each of these and numerous other roles, Bender demonstrated a commitment to what he perceived to be the primary values of the Mennonite movement that helped him to guide Mennonites through what Keim portrays as a turbulent period in Mennonite history. He played a major part, for example, in shaping the Mennonite response to conscription, in negotiating a more ecumenical posture toward mainline Protestantism, in responding to hermeneutic theological challenges, and in defining "the Anabaptist Vision."

Despite his obvious respect for Bender's achievements, Keim is willing to allow the reader a glimpse of Bender's shortcomings. He notes that Bender's single-minded dedication to religious work crowded out other commitments, including, at times, those to his family; that his unwillingness to delegate authority caused him to accomplish goals less quickly than he might have; that his overbearing personality led to clashes with colleagues at Goshen and with church leaders; and that Bender's willingness to consistently overextend himself diminished his effectiveness as a scholar and teacher.

It is dedicated attention to the details of Bender's overabundant activity that creates what is perhaps the only serious flaw in Keim's work.

Keim attempts to include not only all of Bender's significant activities in his biography, but a personal account of Bender's life. In combination with the important historical information Keim presents, as well as a smattering of sociological and theological insights, this emphasis results in a work which is cumbersome in a way that may appeal to dedicated students of Mennonite history, but will daunt the broader audience a more tightly integrated, carefully edited piece might have attracted. Nonetheless, Keim's work provides a seminal account of what was undoubtedly one of the most significant lives in the Mennonite movement of the nineteenth century.

Laura Vance, Georgia Southwestern State University

Exorcizing Evil: A Womanist Perspective on the Spirituals. By Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan. Orbis Books, 1997. 336 pages. $20.00 paper.

Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan's *Exorcizing Evil: A Womanist Perspective on the Spirituals* is ostensibly a textual analysis of one genre of African-American sacred music. In fact, less than one third of the book is actually devoted to the detailed analysis of eight songs. The larger part of the study is difficult to read because it lacks continuity in historical content. Even though a great deal of historical information is included, it seldom supports the writer's generalizations. A second major difficulty is found in the many complicated and often contradictory theoretical propositions set forth, particularly those regarding theodicy.

Kirk-Duggan's central thesis is that racism is evil and the Spirituals expose the evil in ways that possess a powerful potential for healing. Her argument is laid out in five parts: Insight: Introduction and Background; Innovation: Inside the Spirituals; Intent: Womanist Design; Illustriousness: The Wellsprings of Our Texts; and Inference: Our Living Texts.

Clearly, Kirk-Duggan performed a herculean task in terms of wide-ranging readings in history and theology, as well as primary research on the Civil Rights movement. However, she did not succeed at synthesizing and communicating her findings effectively. Indeed, it is hard to imagine who the intended audience for this book might be and what exactly they would be expected to gain from reading it.

Delmarshae Sledge, University of Pittsburgh

Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young. By Ronald W. Walker. University of Illinois Press, 1998. 432 pages. $49.95 cloth, $25.00 paper.

Ronald W. Walker's *Wayward Saints*, yet another outstanding book published by the University of Illinois Press, explores a Mormon group until now all but neglected by the various disciplines involved in Mormon Studies. Dissenters from the Latter-day Saints, the Godbeites split from the church in October 1869 in order to challenge the vision and leadership of Brigham Young. The author outlines the complex factors culminating in this schism through a collection of interwoven biographies of such key players as William S. Godbe, Elias L. T. Harrison, and Brigham Young.

Introducing the characters and backgrounds of these people as well as the historical circumstances of the era, Walker explains how and why this schism took place and then discusses the rather short but fascinating history of the new movement. He finds that the alienation experienced by Godbe and his associates was not primarily due to theological considerations as much as to the maturing of a "British Mormonism." People affiliated with this trend were mainly British immigrants. The more influential among them were successful merchants who were involved in business and trade and who believed in individualism and a strong economy as well as in the significance of art, education, and freedom of opinion. Brigham Young's vision of Zion, on the other hand, was rather agrarian, stressing unity, cooperation, and conformity with the authority of the church during a period when it was becoming increasingly clear that the Utah Mormon community needed to step out of its isolation and become part of the vibrant, expanding, and diverse society and culture that was the United States. The study discusses these two rival tendencies in equal measure, revealing the internal dynamics, the differences in their ideals and opinions, and the clashing personalities attempting, in their own way, to live up to the expectations of the common faith they had embraced, as well as to heed the call of the era in which they both lived.

Walker uses not an authoritative tone, but rather the voice of a humble historian who wishes to portray an era with all its opposing and challenging forces while offering some new insights into the internal affairs of a closed community. And he does a superb job.

Irén Annus, Attila József University

Edgar Cayce in Context: The Readings: Truth and Fiction. By K. Paul Johnson. State University of New York Press, 1998. 178 pages. $18.95 paper.

After reading *Edgar Cayce in Context*, you will have a clear idea of Cayce's influence and impact on the New Thought, Theosophical, and New Age movements. The author's main purpose is "to initiate consideration of Cayce in historical context as a major figure in twentieth-century

American spirituality" (p. 2-3). This book is an excellent primer on Cayce and includes introductory material on Helena Blavatsky, Mary Baker Eddy, Mesmer, Swedenborg, and even Phineas P. Quimby, the mental healer from Belfast, Maine.

K. Paul Johnson admits his bias in the book's acknowledgments: his cousins were not only family friends of Cayce, but one of them even wrote a book about him. He also describes himself as a "public librarian without advanced degrees in any academic discipline" (p. x). Both confessions are indicative of the objectivity he attempts and the even-handedness he displays throughout the work.

The brief introduction includes a straightforward biography of the subject, including Cayce's first few visions and his internal conflict between his reading skills and biblical faith. The rest of the book analyzes Cayce's roles as holistic health advisor, Christian theosopher, clairvoyant time traveler, and esoteric psychologist. It is proven that Edgar Cayce lived his life influenced by the people and alternative movements around him, though he never actively pursued additional knowledge from such contemporaries as Blavatsky and Eddy. Johnson also makes a strong case that Cayce's influence on the future of alternative spirituality should be studied as central to these developments.

The author is sure to mention all Cayce's successful "predictions" such as the health benefits of red wine (p. 15). He is also quick to refute all the major critics and goes to great lengths to establish this clairvoyant's credibility. For example, he states that "developments such as laser surgery, atomic energy" and more which Cayce had mentioned may have been attributed mistakenly to the Atlanteans rather than our own future (p. 85). He nevertheless admits to implausibilities or failures in all of Cayce's facets. While this book is certainly biased as a result of the author's close ties with the Cayce family and the Association for Research and Enlightenment, it is a well written, thoroughly researched, and mostly evenhanded work.

D. H. Faux, Fulbright Fellow

Against the Wind: Eberhard Arnold and the Bruderhof. By Markus Baum. Plough Publishing House, 1998. 305 pages. $14.00 paper.

Eberhard Arnold was an enthusiastic German communitarian Christian who, with his wife Emmy, founded the Bruderhof movement in 1920. The Bruderhof has gone on to become one of the most successful intentional community movements of the twentieth century, at least to the extent that longevity and size are criteria of success. Although much biographical information about Arnold has long been available through the many primary and secondary publications issued by Plough, the

Bruderhof's press, this book provides a more comprehensive treatment than anything heretofore published.

Arnold had a conversion experience at age sixteen in 1899 and became a passionate Christian activist, working with the Salvation Army and finding that his enthusiastic idealism put him at odds with his father, a stern Lutheran professor of theology. Not long after their marriage, he and Emmy began taking distressed children into their home. Their interest in intentional community increased apace, and it began to take institutional form in 1920 with the rather informal founding of the Bruderhof with about a dozen residents in a house in the German village of Sannerz. In 1926, the communitarians moved to larger quarters thirteen miles away; in the 1930s, with the rise of the Nazis, a two-decade era of pilgrimage began during which the growing community moved in stages to Liechtenstein, then England, then Paraguay for an extended stay, and finally to the United States. Arnold, however, died at age fifty-two in 1935, when the Bruderhof was operating centers in Germany and Liechtenstein and was in essence his own lengthened shadow.

This volume, published by the Bruderhof's press, reflects the Bruderhof's idealization of its founding generation. [Some who have left the movement have found the hagiography of the founders too much to bear. See, for example, Philip Hazelton, "Trailing the Founders: On Being a Second-Generation Bruder," *This Magazine Is About Schools* 4 (Spring 1970):11-41; (Summer 1970):54-78.] Arnold was undoubtedly a committed Christian and charismatic leader, but in this portrait no human weaknesses appear. For example, of his steering the Sannerz community through an early crisis we read, improbably, "[t]he fact that he showed such self-control to the outward eye, that his rocklike certainty always won the day, can only be explained by his faith" (p. 146). That kind of analytical perspective pervades the volume. One strength of the book is that as the authorized version it has enjoyed the fruits of the author's full access to the Bruderhof archives. A more critical scholar undoubtedly would not have such access, given the Bruderhof's careful cultivation of its idyllic image and zealous efforts at damage control. [In one episode that should be particularly troubling to academics and others who like open discussion of issues, the Bruderhof leadership apparently went to extraordinary lengths to suppress a book it did not like. *Harmful Religion: Studies in Religious Abuse*, which included a chapter critical of the Bruderhof, was published in London by SPCK in 1997, but few copies were distributed. KIT, the network of disaffected ex-Bruderhof members, reports that the community threatened to sue the publisher and agreed to buy the initial press run if the publisher would not reprint the work with that chapter included. My library was unable to purchase a copy of the book, and SPCK rebuffed my inquiry about the matter, lending credence to KIT's charge. The chapter in question is now posted on the internet at <http://thingy.apana.org.au/~fun/bruderhof/ruben.html>.

Thus a biography this well informed, but more fully rounded, will not likely appear in the foreseeable future. Through its years of growth and prosperity since Arnold's death, the Bruderhof has evolved from a charismatic, spontaneous community into a rather legalistic and authoritarian organization that has in recent years expelled many members under less than pleasant circumstances, breaking up families and spawning a tenacious and extensive network of hostile ex-members. Were the seeds of today's Bruderhof planted in Arnold's day, or has something entirely different replaced the vibrant original? At least one former member has concluded that the Bruderhof underwent important (and not very positive) changes as new leaders—including, importantly, his son Heini—arose after Eberhard Arnold's death. [See Robert N. Peck, "An Ex-Member's View of the Bruderhof Communities from 1948-1961," *Utopian Studies* I, ed. Gorman Beauchamp, Kenneth Roemer, and Nicholas D. Smith (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1987), 111-22.]

Baum's book provides a wealth of basic biographical and historical information; it will be of use to scholars as a primary source, but it is not the critical biography that the important Christian communitarian Eberhard Arnold merits.

Timothy Miller, University of Kansas

The (Magic) Kingdom of God: Christianity and Global Culture Industries. By Michael Budde. Westview Press, 1997. 177 pages. $18.50 paper.

Writing from an explicitly Roman Catholic perspective, with strong hints of liberation theology and Marxist theory, Michael Budde attempts to explore the relationship between the values of the Christian faith and what he terms the "global culture industries"—those multi-national corporations that, through marketing, advertising, and a variety of other strategies, radically and uniformly transform the values and identities of the citizens of any culture in which they operate.

Parts of Budde's work rely on specialized economic theory that is likely to seem rather dense to general readers and scholars in the humanities. However, after laying out the economic theory behind his analysis, Budde embarks on a scathing critique of global capitalism, focusing not on the usual targets of such attacks (ecological damage, inequities in distribution of wealth and resources, etc.), but rather on how global capitalism perverts the human spirit in ways which make it difficult to live in a capitalistic culture and retain Christian values and identity.

More specifically, Budde argues that in order to survive, capitalism needs to create high levels of consumption among consumers. In order

to insure high levels of consumption, marketing, advertising, and other strategies are used to inculcate consumption-friendly values (hedonism, short term gratification, materialism, etc.) in the populace. This process takes place wherever global capitalism goes, gradually transforming the historically and ethnically based culture into the uniform culture of capitalism.

The problem with this, as Budde sees it, is that the values of global capitalism and the values of Christianity are incompatible. Unfortunately, the culture-making strategies of global capitalism are so subtle that Christians have been seduced into no longer recognizing the profound conflict between the values of their faith and those of capitalism. Contrasting the rather short period of time the typical Catholic, during catechism, spends in conscious study of what it means to be a Christian, with the lifelong inundation of messages communicated both overtly and covertly through advertising, marketing, the media, and entertainment industries, Budde suggests that it is these secular interests that are cultivating the consciousness and identity of the modern soul, a task in which the church is no longer a competitive player.

Unfortunately, Budde does not offer any novel or promising strategies for the church to follow in countering this trend. Indeed, his pessimism seems to surface in the closing paragraph of the book, where he remarks that, just as he was finishing writing the book, the Disney Corporation had announced the appointment of a prominent Jesuit to its board of directors, not only for his moral leadership, but also for his "business acumen and managerial success." Even within the leadership of the church, the values of global capitalism have gained credence, and their conflict with Christian values is no longer recognized.

George Adams, Susquehanna University

Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader. Edited by Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland. AltaMira Press, 1997. 272 pages. $52.00 cloth, $24.95 paper.

About a decade ago, sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow suggested that contemporary American religious life is in the process of "restructuring." Wuthnow's influence on the nine younger sociologists who have contributed to this collection of cutting edge essays—all of which address processes of reconfiguration in American religious identities and organizations—is clearly apparent. Yet of equal interest to this group is another kind of restructuring, identified by editors Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland in the introduction: that of religious studies scholarship itself.

It has become apparent to a new generation of scholars in sociology, anthropology, and history that the theoretical and narrative models constructed by previous generations cannot adequately account for the enormous complexity of American religion. Examining a variety of current developments in American religion, the essays in this volume contribute to the resulting reorientation of scholarship. Their authors share a conviction that ethnographic studies of particular congregations and groups are well suited to examining the complexity of religious life. Such analyses, they believe, provide useful empirical bases for interrogating existing models of religious culture and proposing new ones.

The first four essays address issues of religious identity. Shoshanah Feher's study of Messianic Judaism, Matthew Lawson's analysis of the use of religious commitment as social strategy, Edward R. Gray and Scott L. Thumma's exploration of evangelical Christian religious expression in a gay bar, and Janet Stocks' examination of evangelical feminists suggest ways in which creative reformulations of spiritual identity challenge and stretch the analytical categories of identity conventionally employed. The Gray-Thumma essay in particular questions conventional sacred-secular dichotomies, while Stocks forces us to rethink the distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders."

The final five essays deal with religious organizations. Essays by Penny Edgell Becker and Elfriede Wedam examine the operation of moral logic and reasoning in particular congregations, revealing the limited utility of both the "culture wars" thesis and its underlying assumption of a sharp division between the categories of liberal and conservative. Timothy J. Nelson's investigation of an AME congregation in one of Charleston's poorest neighborhoods suggests that neither "supply-side" explanations of religious commitment nor models of African American religious "community" are always valid. Nancy L. Eiesland and Michael McMullen—looking respectively at an exurban megachurch and at the globally minded Bahá'í of Atlanta—reveal how problematic notions of a "local church" and local religious identities have become.

These essays also demonstrate the range of approaches—qualitative and quantitative, interview and archival—that characterize ethnographic research. The result is an anthology with all the descriptive richness and multiplicity of postmodern scholarship. But these essays successfully avoid the postmodern pitfall of neglecting theory building. With the help of the editors' useful introduction and Wuthnow's challenging conclusion, they work well together to question existing models of American religious life, suggest new ones, and further the restructuring of the field.

Bret E. Carroll, California State University, Stanislaus

The Sacred Pipe: An Archetypal Theology. By Paul B. Steinmetz, S.J. Syracuse University Press, 1998. 219 pages. $29.95 paper.

The Sacred Pipe is a theology based on the author's twenty-year experience with the Oglala Lakota and his personal journey in search of understanding the sacred pipe as an archetypal image of Christ. He hopes the reader will endeavor to reach the same destination that he has in his search for religious identity (p. 5).

Steinmetz's essentialist argument is that because "Christian images are derived from a common religious substratum expressed through primal religions," the sacred pipe must be an archetypal image of Christ (p. 4). To substantiate his argument he draws on Mircea Eliade's phenomenology, Carl Jung's depth psychology, and Karl Rahner's Christian theology to propose an evolutionary model of Indian people searching for the fulfillment of the meaning of their symbols, such as the pipe, through the Christ symbol. Only when Indian people accept the pipe as an explicit image of Christ, according to Steinmetz, will the religious ideas of Indian people reach maturity. He further suggests that the pipe must be Christianized (p. 44) and that Christianity needs the pipe as an archetypal image of Christ (p. 49). He concludes that since Christianity is the "absolute religion" (p. 49) the church must and should appropriate "whatever is good in non-Christian religions" (p. 57).

Besides the ethnocentric, solipsistic interpretation of the development of non-Christian religious symbols, this work fails to engage critically the ideas of Eliade, Jung, and Rahner. Moreover, Steinmetz ignores the last twenty years of critical studies on theories of culture and colonization.

In his chapter on ethnology, Steinmetz draws on nineteenth and early twentieth-century studies of various ceremonies in which the pipe is used. He does not problematize the studies as Western, ethnocentric interpretations by members of a colonizing society. He also dismisses the diverse contemporary Lakota experience by failing to include the views of non-Christian Lakota or Christian Lakota who do not condone the use of the pipe in Christian contexts. Furthermore, in his discussion of Christian Lakota appreciation of the archetypal essence of the pipe and the influence of Christianity on Lakota beliefs, he omits the entire history of mission schools, reservations, and military and political subordination that contributed to the internalization of imposed missionary interpretations and the devaluing of indigenous cultures. Nor does he address current scholarship on the religious imperialism that has marked much of Christian history.

The Sacred Pipe is a theology that seeks to justify the appropriation of indigenous religious symbols. It is a book that will appeal to

like-minded Christians, but offers little of value to scholars or students of American Indian cultures and histories.

Michelene E. Pesantubbee, University of Colorado, Boulder

Pipe, Bible, and Peyote among the Oglala Lakota: A Study in Religious Identity. By Paul B. Steinmetz, S.J. Syracuse University Press, 1998. 237 pages. $19.95 paper.

I am not the first to take Paul B. Steinmetz, S.J. to task for his recently revised and reissued book, *Pipe, Bible and Peyote among the Oglala Lakota: A Study in Religious Identity.* Many critics, chiefly anthropologists, have trod this ground before me. My observations, however, are cast with special attention to the book's implications for our field. To strike at the root of the problem, a serious categorical flaw undercuts the potential scholarly contribution of Steinmetz's work. The nature of this problem is one of genre. By marketing device (the jacket blurb identifies the book as pertaining to Native American Studies and Religion) and academic pretense, the book purports to be a descriptive analysis of contemporary Lakota religious identity. As the book unfolds, one gains quite a different perspective: this is a prescriptive theological treatise, and a dissembling one at that. The sources of deception are primarily two: 1) the book, in my view, is a grandiose contextualization of an apology (in the theological sense and not out of compunction) for Steinmetz's own ritual innovation of praying with the sacred pipe in the capacity of a Catholic priest; and 2) Steinmetz's "despoiling of the Egyptians" (putting to Catholic good use the symbols and cultures of other people) is not only enacted upon the Lakota but upon our field—the language and authority of the study of religion (as opposed to theology) are invoked by Steinmetz as a foil for elevating his own Pipe-as-Christ theology as the truest Lakota religious insight. Both acts are a kind of subterfuge, though each has its more innocent moments to be sure. (I take this to be a point of danger, not relief.) The first is the more potentially pernicious, as it involves people who have been subjected to a long litany of colonizing "innovations." (I am persuaded, however, that some Lakota people share in Steinmetz's general view—whether that is a lesson about "tradition," hegemony or both, I am uncertain.) The second, though having far less political impact, should be a cause of special alarm for us: it is a disingenuous and antiquated charade that simultaneously trades upon and undermines our credibility as scholars of religion.

As a field we assert, whether one is religious or not, that it is incumbent upon us to refrain from making theological claims—especially prescriptive ones—in our analytical work, particularly when non-Western

peoples are involved. Steinmetz strains to convey a sense that this is his ideal, too, as one finds in his many responses to previous criticisms along these lines. To this end he does venture a position worth taking seriously: to understand Native American religions in the present we must be willing to account for the influence of Christianity, for the fact that many if not most Indians consider themselves to be Christians in some way, and many of these are Christian in surprisingly stark terms. This point is well defended by Steinmetz, and he makes a compelling case for rethinking "acculturation" to account for a diversity of Native American Christianities. And yet, just as he engages this potentially productive territory, we see how his theological imperative configures his conception of Lakota religious identity. Traditions change, in his view, but according to a *telos*, in a certain direction. Invoking Mircea Eliade in an effort to attach academic authority to his teleology, he asserts that "Christian religious symbols were implied and dimly grasped in earlier Lakota ones" (p. 177). In particular, he is speaking to Lakota acceptance of his own ritual novelty, praying with a traditional Lakota pipe. Steinmetz gives this account of his use of the pipe:

> On November 6, 1965, I prayed with the Sacred Pipe as a priest for the first time at the funeral of Rex Long Visitor at Slim Butte. The night before the funeral I had an inspiration that seized me emotionally, an intuition of the relationship between the Pipe and Christ. A ceremony came to me that I used at that funeral and others on the Pine Ridge Reservation. I held up the pipe filled with tobacco, and taking the stem and bowl apart, I said, "Remember, man, the pipe of your life some day will be broken." I then laid the separated Pipe on the coffin. After the ritual prayers I took up the two separated pieces, and putting them together, I said: "Through the Resurrection and the Life; whoever believes in Me and dies shall live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never suffer eternal death." After the fourth direction I touched the bowl of the Pipe to the earth in silence. It was after this funeral that Lakota people went to John Iron Rope, the yuwipi man of the community, and asked him if this were proper. He gave his approval (p. 36).

Though inspired, Steinmetz has the humility to share credit for this innovation with Lakota medicine men. Toward the end of the book he states that he has "the deepest respect for the Lakota holy men who in their own way professed that the meaning of the Pipe in its maturity is Christ. How far these few have come since the first intimation of Christ which Black Elk had in the Ghost Dance Messiah vision" (p. 191).

While these claims about the Pipe *cum* Christ are interesting, perhaps most revealing are his insinuations leveled against those Lakota who do not share his theological premises and choose not to participate in or endorse his ritual innovations. He observes that AIM members have resisted and objected to his use of the Pipe, and it comes as no surprise that he should find them to be a divisive force fostering anti-Christian sentiments and suffering from insufficient acculturation (p. 165). "The

presence of AIM," says Steinmetz, "has produced conflict within the Lakota identity which must be worked out in the years to come" (p. 168). Moving on to point out liabilities of other forms of Lakota religious identity differing from his camp (which Steinmetz calls Ecumenist II), he says of certain Pentecostals that "[t]heir traditional understanding of power did make the Lakota open to new religious influences. However, we shall see that the Lakota Ecumenist II acceptance of traditional Lakota religious symbols would seem to be a much more appropriate solution, avoiding the misunderstandings of the Body of Christ's fundamentalism" (p. 176). He then goes on to discuss the religious identity of the majority of Lakota people at Pine Ridge, a group he calls Ecumenist I. Steinmetz tells us these are people who have "both Lakota and Christian identities, or a split identity. Their Lakota identity is expressed through the traditional Pipe, and their Christian one through the Bible . . ." (p. 191-92). But why a split identity? These people, we learn, hold Pipe and Bible separate, not together, as in the new theology. The result, in Steinmetz's view, can be "an unstable psychological state" (p. 193). Judgments such as these should signal to us that Steinmetz is something other than a scholar of religion. He is addressing emergent religion to be sure: his own, and he is very defensive of it.

Greg Johnson, University of Chicago

Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America. By Charles S. Prebish. University of California Press, 1999. 334 pages. $18.95 paper.

Since Buddhism is developing into a truly global form of spirituality, *Luminous Passage* aims at giving a comprehensive overview of the Buddhist landscape in the United States at the turn of the century. This work, therefore, focuses primarily on various aspects of the life of Buddhist communities and surveys developments within both the Asian-American and Euro-American sanghas. Prebish intends the book to be a corrective to his *Buddhism in America* published in 1979 and a companion volume to *The Faces of Buddhism in America*, which he co-edited with Kenneth Tanaka in 1998.

The first chapter briefly recapitulates the history of Buddhism in America from the nineteenth century onwards. Instead of providing the reader with a purely chronological account, Prebish presents a separate record of the growth of Buddhist communities according to country of birth and sectarian affiliation: the historical development of sanghas of Japanese, Chinese, Tibetan, Korean, Vietnamese, and Southeast Asian origin is thus given individual coverage. Non-denominational communities are also included. Whatever the current of Buddhism considered, Prebish takes great care to examine equally

the part played by ethnic and nonethnic sanghas in its transplantation into American soil.

The second chapter focuses on developmental issues affecting contemporary American sanghas. As these are moving away from the monastic model inherited from Asia and changing into predominantly lay-oriented communities with a more fluid organizational structure and membership base, by which criteria can one determine who is truly a Buddhist? Besides, how does one define "American Buddhism" when new waves of Asian immigrants have in the last three decades been as instrumental as nonethnic converts in the blooming of the Dharma on American soil? In addition to the problematic boundaries of identity and ethnicity, what constitutes genuine practice in the United States? Is there a middle ground between the "meditation subculture" of nonethnic sanghas and the ritual oriented worship of Asian communities? Moreover, whilst in the process of being shaped by their American environment, sanghas can no longer ignore the need for democratic authority structures, changing gender roles, greater social engagement, and ecumenism. Because of its pragmatic orientation, this chapter will be of vital interest to scholars and practitioners alike: the fundamental questions raised in it are those that anyone wishing to investigate Western Buddhism today will sooner or later need to confront.

In the third chapter, Prebish considers specific examples of communities. Taken together, these reflect the rich variety of a North American Buddhist landscape encompassing ethnic and non-ethnic communities, monastic and lay oriented ones, sanghas divesting Buddhism of its traditional trappings or intent on upholding tradition, groups which function as an interface between their followers and American society at large, and congregations which do not. Prebish successively examines the following sanghas and their infrastructure: Zen Mountain Monastery, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Soka Gakkai International-USA, Buddhist Churches of America, Hsi Lai Temple, the Insight Meditation Society, Spirit Rock Meditation Center, and Shambala International. For all of these, Prebish details aspects such as meditative training, ritual practice, retreat and study programs, social engagement, and dissemination techniques. The type of thriving North American sangha that emerges from these examples is the one which not only manages to establish a dialogue between spiritual practice and daily life, but also buttresses its practice through formal Buddhist education and technologically-advanced propagation tools.

The next two chapters are the most unconventional ones in the book. Entitled "The Silent Sangha," chapter four concentrates on Buddhism in the academy. On the basis of statistical data, Prebish profiles Buddhologists in the United States today, using criteria such as professional rank, research activity, publication record, learned societies membership, funding, university affiliation, area of specialization, etc.

Prebish notices two important trends: on the one hand, a diversification of the contents of the discipline beyond the study of Buddhist texts and towards an investigation of the cultural issues surrounding Buddhism; on the other, a growing number of scholar-practitioners in the field. Prebish deems the latter development to be of crucial importance: since in the West, Buddhism cannot rely on the presence of renunciate scholar-monks to educate the lay sangha, the scholar-practitioners of academia may very well be called upon to fill the gap and help lay followers strengthen their practice through study.

Chapter five, "The Cybersangha," centers on the role played by computer technology in the expansion of American Buddhism. On the one hand, Prebish examines the contribution of the Internet in the form of on-line scholarly resources, electronic journals, and discussion forums. In particular, he assesses three Buddhist resource sites, all very different in aims and structure: DharmaNet International, Studies WWW Virtual Libraries, and Buddhist Resource File. On the other hand, Prebish turns his attention to the most distinctively American Buddhist community of all, namely the virtual sangha without any geographical boundaries or anchorage. Exemplifying this development with the True Freedom Cyber-Temple and the White Path Temple, Prebish muses on how these on-line congregations force us to reconsider the very concept of sangha: they have in effect radically transformed the traditional fourfold community of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen into a universal "sangha of the four quarters" which transcends time and space.

In a concluding chapter, Prebish both recapitulates the particular forms adopted by the American sangha and tries to assess its future. The author first reviews the last twenty-five years of scholarship—including his own—and evaluates how accurate researchers have been in forecasting the further development of Buddhism on American soil. Prebish especially examines the accuracy of predictions regarding numerical growth, acculturation, propagation, the role played by ethnic communities, and the impact of Buddhism on the human sciences. He then moves on to address the question of which future strategies Buddhist communities need to choose to strengthen dissemination and practice of the Dharma in the United States. Besides reinforcing societal engagement, gender equality, democratic structures of governance, and their lay and practice oriented character, Asian-American and Euro-American sanghas will have to develop a more ecumenical approach towards each other and engage in more sustained dialogue. Above all, they will need to contribute new commentaries and a modernized *Vinaya* or code of ethics to enable lay practitioners to implement Buddhist precepts in contemporary American society. Last, but not least, the concluding chapter is followed by one of the most comprehensive bibliographies on American Buddhism to date .

To summarize, *Luminous Passage* is a work which challenges a number of preconceived ideas and which gives an extremely balanced survey of American Buddhism in its phase of consolidation and maturation. Because it investigates the subject both from a scholarly and pragmatic perspective, this is an essential book of reference for all Buddhologists and/or Buddhist practitioners who genuinely wish to deepen their understanding of the Dharma on American soil. By combining rigorous analysis, intellectual honesty, and liveliness of style, Prebish fully does justice to the ideal of educator of the lay sangha which he himself defined in this work as the distinctive contribution that scholar-practitioners in academia can make to the growth of Western Buddhism. One can only hope that an equivalent book on the expansion of Buddhism in Europe will one day be written.

Franca Bellarsi, Université Libre de Bruxelles

Christian Faith and the Environment: Making Vital Connections. By Brennan R. Hill. Orbis Books, 1998. 318 pages. $22.00 paper.

Over thirty years have passed since Lynn White suggested that Western degradation of the environment could be traced in part to biblical views of the relationship between humankind, nature, and God. Since then, there have been numerous attempts to rebuke White's thesis by demonstrating that the biblical worldview contains elements which advocate a positive, ecologically responsible attitude toward the Earth. Brennan Hill's *Christian Faith and the Environment* (part of the larger Orbis Books series on Ecology and Justice) belongs in this category.

Hill writes from an explicitly Roman Catholic theological position, drawing heavily, though not exclusively, on Catholic doctrine, theology, and practice. More specifically, Hill examines a wide range of elements of the Catholic faith and attempts to demonstrate how each can be interpreted in a manner that supports ecologically responsible views and actions toward the natural world. Hill begins by reviewing major themes in the Old and New Testaments—from the creation through the Passion—looking at each theme in the context of its relevance for an environmental ethic. The same focus on the environmental significance of various aspects of Christian faith is applied to sections on christology, the sacraments, church pronouncements, the role of women in the church, and Christian spirituality. Hill covers an immense territory in this sweeping survey of different elements of Christian faith, but the focus is always and exclusively on the relevance of components of faith to the development of an environmental ethic, both in theory and practice.

Christian Faith and the Environment does not appear to be intended as an analytical or critical work. Rather, Hill seems to begin with the premise

that Christian faith must be compatible with an environmental ethic, and he then proceeds to interpret Christian beliefs and practices in that context. Very little attention is paid to the arguments of the many writers in the field who continue to argue that, as White initially suggested, there are aspects of the biblical worldview that are intrinsically anti-nature. While such positions may indeed not hold up to thorough examination in the context of an accurate interpretation of biblical worldviews, Hill's work does not explore these substantial challenges to his position. Indeed, Hill seems to be so confident of the pro-environmental nature of Christian faith that he is able to find eco-friendly themes in virtually any aspect of Christianity that he looks at, a practice that sometimes results in stretching the interpretation of Christian beliefs and practices far beyond the bounds of their intended meaning. Overall, *Christian Faith and the Environment* perhaps functions better as a work of apologetics and pastoral concerns rather than scholarly analysis.

George Adams, Susquehanna University

Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream. Edited by Jonathan D. Sarna. University of Illinois Press, 1998. 377 pages. $21.95 paper.

Focusing on the period from 1860 to 1920, this collection of lucid, well-integrated, and nicely detailed essays investigates the "fundamental tension between accommodation and resistance, between absorption and retention, and between assimilation and identity that is characteristic of all groups that seek simultaneously to be part of and yet apart from the dominant culture" (p. 5). Individual essays address the complex interactions with the Protestant mainstream of Jews, Catholics, Mormons, later Protestant immigrants, and African Americans, and the other essays address several "arenas of conflict," including the Bible, education, missions, the Supreme Court, and "visions" of America.

Several contributions are particularly noteworthy. Sarna, for example, uses Benny Kraut's identification of four strategies for Jewish survival within a majority culture—geographic mobility, erection of communal infrastructures, acculturation, and defense—to construct a framework for general comparison of minority responses to the dominant Protestant mainstream. In her discussion of the Mormons, Jan Shipps draws nuanced distinctions between Mormon "otherness" and "difference" before and after the 1890 manifesto announcing the abandonment of plural marriage. David Wills skillfully evokes the deep resonance of the biblical paradigm of exodus in African American piety, and Mark Noll clearly demonstrates how the Bible itself was used both to create a common culture and to reinforce distinctive minority reactions to that culture.

Scott Appleby shows the complex interactions between missionary efforts to convert immigrants, Native Americans, and Jews and the countervailing attempts to construct secure religious "enclaves" resistant to missionary influence. The essays have an admirable tendency to complement and reinforce each other, as particular issues and individuals reappear from article to article.

This is a well conceived, thoughtful, and rewarding treatment of the dynamics of American religious life from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. It should be of interest both to students, for its accessibility and vivid vignettes, and to scholars for its substantive and careful analysis.

Eugene V. Gallagher, Connecticut College

Stalking Elijah: Adventures with Today's Jewish Mystical Masters. By Rodger Kamenetz. HarperSanFrancisco, 1997. 370 pages. $22.00 paper.

This latest book by Rodger Kamenetz is a follow-up to the successful and fascinating *The Jew in the Lotus.* Beginning in 1990, *Stalking Elijah* chronicles by way of journal-style entries his spiritual journey through Buddhist explorations back to the Judaic tradition. This trek unfolds slowly, with a couple of foundational realizations mostly offered by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. From 1990 to 1994 spiritual seeds were planted and gestated in Kamenetz only to build an incredible momentum in 1995, the year which is the primary focus of this book.

Among the teachers with whom he studies as he crisscrosses the country are Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Rabbi Shefa Gold, Rabbi Jonathan Omer-Man, Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb, Rabbi Judith Halevy, Rabbi Arthur Green, and others. The issues addressed are multifarious. For example, blindly following *halakhah* [Jewish law] based on precedent is compared to driving by looking in the rearview mirror. A major theme of the book is the historical pain of a people in connection with an individual's pain: how the personal door to pain can lead to an overriding sense of compassion and connection with one's own culture and the human race as a whole.

Another theme addressed by the book is the place of the Jewish Renewal movement in Kamenetz's search for a Jewish tradition that will exercise the same spiritual muscles flexed by Buddhism. A considerable amount of ink is spent explaining Renewal through evolving traditions, creative expression, and shifts in emphases of Jewish scripture, interpretation, and ritual. Some criticism of the Jewish Renewal movement is offered, though usually through the dialogue of someone other than the author.

Stalking Elijah includes many concepts enmeshed in the Jewish mystical tradition, such as *sefirot* (a complex kabbalistic term which generally refers to divine light or illumination) and spiritual triangulation. For those with no previous background in these concepts, it is worth glossing these sections initially and then revisiting them at a later time with a more sophisticated analysis. Spending too much time fully understanding these concepts could take away from the considerable momentum of the narrative.

This book is worth multiple readings. It speaks so frankly about the nature of inner religious life that it transcends Judaism as a religion and posits spirituality as a completely integrated way of life. Through the book's climax and conclusion the reader is shown the splendor of the Jewish path and the glory of religion. This is appropriate reading for anybody interested in Jewish Studies, religious studies, or general spirituality.

Dave Faux, University of Oregon

Redeeming Culture: American Religion in an Age of Science. By James Gilbert. University of Chicago Press, 1996. 407 Pages. $28.95 paper.

Harboring Scopes trial memories, Cold War fears, and visions of mushroom clouds, Americans imagining the world of science in the 1940s and 1950s respected its power but also conjured up images of irresponsible, irreligious, wild-haired oddballs with white lab coats pursuing esoteric theories for amoral, immoral, or subversive ends. Science, it seemed, was drifting from its moorings in religion and American democratic culture, while religion appeared increasingly irrelevant in an "age of science." In *Redeeming Culture*, James Gilbert examines Americans' problematic postwar attempt "to retrieve the soul" of a democratic culture "enthralled by science."

Adopting a frankly "episodic" approach, Gilbert discerns this effort in several facets of American cultural life. Atomic scientists reached out to religious organizations and claimed to embody republican values in order to win the support of a wary public. Supporters of John Dewey were "impotent" because their secular pragmatism jarred with the sensibilities of a religious culture and, to its critics, smacked of communism. The Moody Institute of Science reached out to large popular audiences—particularly to military trainees feared to be technologically trained but morally endangered—with films and sermons that harnessed modern science in support of evangelical religion. Evangelical scientists formed the American Scientific Affiliation in order to promote scientific professionalism and distance themselves from amateurism and such fringe movements as "flood geology."

In the name of a democratic pragmatism, Horace Kallen defended Immanuel Velikovsky's use of scientific catastrophism to explain biblical miracles. Frank Capra enhanced the popularity of the science films he made for Bell Labs by infusing them with religious sentiment. Science fiction films and UFO reports addressed the onset of space travel and lent religious sanction to the impending penetration of the heavens. The founders of the scholarly Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Religious Research Association sought to use the prestige of social science to enhance the cultural status of religion. The Institute on Religion in an Age of Science promoted an evolutionary cosmology that its academic founders hoped would recast religion in the mold of modern science. Finally, the mutual dependence of science and religion in American culture achieved striking expression in the "space gothic" architecture at the Seattle World's Fair of 1962.

Gilbert's contribution to our understanding of postwar American religion and culture is substantial. He suggests that the dialogue between science and religion constituted a "unity of discourse" that joined "producers of culture" from the ivory tower to the Hollywood studio and—as a dynamic that endures without resolution—continues to keep religion vital in the face of modern science's corrosive potential. Also valuable are the directions in which his book points. To understand fully the relationship between the science-religion dialogue and American culture—particularly American popular culture—we must move on to examine the consumers of culture. Were the soldiers present at the Moody Institute's "Sermons from Science," for example, impressed more by Rev. Irwin Moon's sermonizing or by the bolts of electricity that shot from his fingertips? Also uncertain is the impact of academic institutions on the wider culture. We will have taken the next important step when we know the thoughts and feelings of the millions who looked up at Seattle's new space needle.

Bret E. Carroll, California State University, Stanislaus

The Magical Pantheons: A Golden Dawn Journal, Book IV. Edited by Chic Cicero and Sandra Tabatha Cicero. Llewellyn Publication, 1998. 273 pages. $14.95 paper.

This volume will attract students of the ongoing history of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn—which has never really died, the present editors being identified as senior adepts in it—as well as all those intrigued by the current revival of interest in, and often practice of, polytheism in both its theoretical and practical aspects. The book contains papers by nine authorities on the deities of Greek, Celtic, and Hellenistic Paganism, the Kabbala, and the philosophical and psychological meaning of the gods, all

broadly from the perspective of the Golden Dawn-style of Hermeticism. Generally well edited and well written, *The Magical Pantheons* offers a good read to those who find such topics fascinating.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

Leaving the Fold: Testimonies of Former Fundamentalists. Edited by Edward T. Babinski. Prometheus Books, 1995. 462 pages. $35.95 paper.

Unapologetically anti-fundamentalist in tone, *Leaving the Fold* provides an anthology of personal narratives which trace their authors' experiences of disillusionment with, and eventual separation from, various Christian fundamentalist movements. Babinski divides the collection of testimonies into selections by former fundamentalists who (1) are now Christians, (2) adhere to non-Christian spiritualities, (3) are agnostics, or (4) are atheists, and includes a selection of writings by historical figures "who played major roles in liberalizing the religion of their day." Generally thoughtful and intelligently written, selections included are authored in some cases by such luminaries as Harvey Cox, but more often by authors who are not widely known.

While the collection will likely be of interest to former fundamentalists, the book's lack of a systematic interpretive framework limits its usefulness for scholars. The work's most obvious omission is the lack of any attention to research regarding disengagement. Discussion of Ebaugh's stages of role exit (doubt, seeking and comparing role alternatives, a turning point, establishing an ex-role identity), for example, seems appropriate for the work's introduction and would have provided a framework for understanding similar patterns contained in many of the narratives. Nor does the work include explanations of disengagement offered by Wright, who posits as causes of disengagement discrepancies between religious leaders' words and actions, lack of movement success, and believers' increased interaction with secular society, each of which could illuminate Babinski's selections. In short, Babinski's "testimonies of former Fundamentalists" provide little more than anecdotal explanation of disengagement.

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Introduction: Alternative Religions, the State, and the Globe

Thomas Robbins

New, esoteric, and aberrant religious movements are growing in many parts of the globe and often appear to be provoking strong opposition, stigmatization, and varying degrees of discrimination and governmental persecution. Scholars, often somewhat sympathetic to beleaguered new religious movements (NRMs), are eagerly attending to these phenomena. The present symposium therefore exhibits some convergence or overlap with three recent or forthcoming volumes that examine issues of church-state relations and religious freedom as they arise in connection with alternative religions.[1]

Phillip C. Lucas, the founding co-general editor of *Nova Religio*, and I have assembled an array of papers which probe these issues in various societies and cultures around the globe (we regret the absence of papers dealing with Latin America). We asked contributors to discuss the historical, social, and cultural factors that are influencing patterns of governmental response to NRMs in particular nations or regions. We suggested that our authors might examine various factors including the nature of "anticult" mobilization in the societies about which they are writing, the structure of government and church-state relations, the role of existing churches, the linkage of controversies over NRMs to other (e.g., ethnic, cultural) conflicts, the role of scholars and "cult experts," and the nature and behavior of controversial groups.

In this introductory essay, I identify some common elements that are evident in various contributors' essays and some factors that may possibly not have received sufficient attention. I first introduce a concept that I find to be particularly useful for framing the whole issue of NRM-state interaction in the contemporary world and for understanding the changes that are currently influencing these interactions.

GLOBALIZATION

This is not the place to present a systematic discussion or definition of globalization. Nevertheless, globalization appears to provide a basis for contextualizing the contemporary growth and spread of NRMs and the tensions that surround them.[2]

Globalization enhances the "frequency, volume, and interconnectedness of movements of ideas, materials, goods, information, pollution, money, and people across national boundaries and between regions of the world."[3] Globalization thus facilitates the transnational and transcultural diffusion of symbolic meanings and movements. In so doing, it encourages the emergence of new movements and meanings in part by facilitating syncretism and the "recombination of fragments and experiences from numerous great and small traditions." Thus, "all new religions incorporate, often indiscriminately, insights from other cultures and traditions."[4] *Globalization thus tends to increase religious diversity within societies and to implicitly deregulate religious markets.*

Movements such as Scientology or the Unification Church have been described as "religious multinationals."[5] As such they may appear *alien* from the standpoint of the cultures and nations into which they migrate. Anxiety over alien ideas and influences tends to become exacerbated "at a time when the movement of population between countries is becoming easier and more extensive."[6] The overarching globalization process thus enhances the general sensitivity of nations, regimes, and cultures (and national churches and political groups) to the protection and legitimation of their particularist cultural identities, heritage, and orientations, which globalization threatens to relativize. "One of the marks of globalization is that it puts all ideologies and belief systems under pressure to clarify their place in relation to the new circumstance. They can no longer refuse to consider their position."[7]

The clearest example of this dynamic can be found in the Russian situation as delineated by Marat Shterin in this symposium. Russian anticult media, notes Shterin, is increasingly "dominated by the motif of 'religious insecurity' supposedly inherent in the open religious market place." "Sectarianism" is alleged to undermine Russian statehood and lead to national disintegration. Partly imported from the United States, Russian anticultism nevertheless draws its strength from the support of the Russian Orthodox Church, which uses Western anticultism as the linchpin of what might be termed an implicit "re-establishmentarian" strategy entailing the denial of legitimacy to upstart alternatives to the historical national church. Putatively alien sects are thus viewed as suspect as are overt foreign religious missions. The refusal of Moscow authorities to register (and consequently the implicit action practically to suppress) the Salvation Army, recently upheld by an appellate court, is a very recent case in point.[8]

In a very different manner, France can be seen in Danièle Hervieu-Léger's essay as protecting its very distinctive approach to religion from globalizing pressures and the threatened erosion of "secular-Catholic" culture. What is vital, however, is not so much any overt Roman Catholic establishment but rather a distinctive secular-rationalist orientation, historically conditioned by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, which sees religion as a dangerous, irrational force with a destructive potential. This potential is contained by a "confessional system" of regulation that was originally set up to compartmentalize the force of the dominant Roman Catholic Church, and that presupposes the organizational model of Catholicism as "the implicit reference for acceptable forms of religious expression—which the law intends to guarantee while simultaneously controlling for excesses." Freedom of public worship is granted conditionally on the premise of the radical privatization of religious faith and the assimilation of each legitimate group to standard institutional forms. Cultural defense can be seen in the ongoing strenuous efforts of Interior ministers to encourage a reorganization of French Islam on the model of the familiar Protestant Federation of France.

In France's "implicit regime of recognized religions" only a small number of churches are considered legitimate—their destructive potential tamed by their assimilation to the confessional system. It is as if distrust of the alleged wildness of Native Americans might incline authorities in the United States to grant freedom only to familiar, well-known tribes or nations such as the Sioux, Cherokee, Navaho, etc. Smaller, more obscure, unconventional or ephemeral groups might be subject to stringent regulation to control feared excesses of scalping, etc., which had putatively been contained in the "official" tribal system.

Under conditions of globalized postmodernity the French regulatory system, relying on legitimation of a limited number of institutionally and doctrinally stereotyped churches, is imperiled. New conditions, Hervieu-Léger observes, free "floating believers to cobble together their own systems of meaning and to create new forms of association . . . [which] almost completely elude the legal status of 'worship association' that provides public accreditation for legitimate religions." The coincident "crisis of secularism" and "collapse of Catholic culture" in France creates a problem of management of diverse, sometimes strangely syncretic religions and quasi-religions which come and go and cannot be assumed to have been tamed. (Indeed occasionally a Solar Temple may operate and erupt). French public opinion senses the erosion of traditional, quite successful mechanisms for religious management and thus strongly supports authorities' "war on sects."

A very conspicuous globalization connection with our topic involves what Hexham and Poewe term the "global anti-cult network."[9] A number

of papers have depicted the anticult movement as an American import that has taken root or is trying to take root in their societies, and in the case of Russia has been used by the powerful Orthodox Church for its own purposes. There is certainly an international anticult network and an international religious freedom network. American scholars and "experts" on both sides are testifying in European hearings. American anticultists are making their services available in Africa in the aftermath of the Ugandan tragedy.

Ironically, as Scott Lowe notes, China, which has the harshest persecutory policy toward some groups and the most stringent general regulatory control of religion, does not have an independent anticult movement empowered to lobby the state and exert pressure on official policy. Communist party hegemony precludes such an independent movement. The globalization dimension of Chinese cult controversies is singular. While Falun Gong is an indigenous Chinese movement whose original growth may not have been heavily affected by globalization, China's difficulties in maintaining autonomy sufficient to suppress the disvalued "cult" entails globalist circumstances. The founder of the movement lives in exile in the United States but still exercises influence on the movement (which is spreading internationally), while American devotees (sometimes Chinese exiles) make trips to China to express protest. Global information networks make sure that persecutory measures against Falun Gong or against unregistered Protestant evangelical and (papalist) Catholic groups are well publicized in American and European media (while the Chinese government has its views on Falun Gong disseminated by American anticult groups). The Internet plays an increasing role in reinforcing the impact of globalization in weakening national boundaries and fostering an implicit deregulation of the spiritual marketplace (contrary to some past dystopian prophecies Big Brother is frequently the victim rather than the beneficiary of technological advance). As Lowe's essay indicates, the Chinese state is similar to the less authoritarian French and Russian states in fearing the consequences of a free religious market.

An additional facet of the globalization dimension of NRMs entails the current "increase in human rights discourses concerning religious freedom" that Rosalind I. J. Hackett discusses as a salient factor contributing to increasing tensions involving new African movements. French, German, and other officials have occasionally criticized the expression of concern for human rights and religious freedoms by the United States State Department as interference in their internal affairs. The Church of Scientology has sought to mobilize American opinion against the German state. However, in Africa, notes Hackett, "The globalized discourse of human rights is increasingly localized and naturalized via state and civil society structures. . . . Africans are becoming more vocal about

claiming their constitutional rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion. . . . Pentecostal and evangelical churches are [particularly] aware of American interest in religious persecution issues."

Finally, a number of reports including those dealing with Great Britain, France, Italy, Africa, Russia, and Denmark have mentioned what Eileen Barker and Massimo Introvigne both refer to as "Islamophobia." The relationship between state policies toward NRMs and policies (e.g., in Europe) toward Islam needs further investigation. In their theoretical treatise on "religious economies," *Acts of Faith*, Rodney Stark and Roger Finke argue that the growth of NRMs in Europe has sometimes been exaggerated. The real "potential wave of the future is to be found in energetic Christian and Islamic movements. . . . Indeed, it is fear of these movements that has motivated reactionary laws and policies in Eastern Europe and the nations of the former Soviet Union."[10]

AMERICA, DEVIANT RELIGIONS, AND GLOBALIZATION

Resentment of the one remaining superpower is a salient aspect of contemporary globalization. Globalization has permitted vulgar American cultural and commercial products—colas, Big Macs, slick entertainment—to invade other countries' home markets and crowd out the more exquisite cultural or culinary creations of France, Canada, etc. It is tempting to conclude that American spiritual exports such as Scientology, ISKCON, or Jehovah's Witnesses are viewed in Europe as "fast religions" analogous to degraded American "fast food" and sensationalized "fast entertainment." In any case a large proportion of contemporary alternative religions and nouveau spiritual mystiques are either American in origin or tend, whatever their ultimate origins, to be exported as American cultural products.

Sometimes anti-Americanism and a general xenophobic response to the pressures of globalization are hard to differentiate. In Japan, notes Ian Reader, "the term cult has been applied less to *Japanese* new religious movements" than to imports from abroad. The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church in particular have been stigmatized and tend to be popularly equated with much more violent groups. There appears to be a resurgence of "Japanocentric modes of discourse that are clearly anti-Western and foreign . . . with certain movements identified as 'dangerous' as much as anything because of their foreign provenance."

Anti-Americanism is referred to in several of our essays but interestingly not in Hervieu-Léger's report on France, notwithstanding known French resentments against certain exported American institutions such as McDonalds restaurants. However, anti-Americanism has various forms, levels, and intensities. In his report on Australia, James Richardson re-

ports that successful campaigns to block attempts to amend the Constitution (to add a Bill of Rights which would explicitly guarantee religious liberty) "have used the United States as a problematic example of what can happen with such formal guarantees of religious freedom." The deregulated religious market is a menacing spectre to many persons and is probably viewed as an opportunity for and an encouragement to wild cults—candidates for tomorrow's Jonestowns and Wacos.

This brings us to an interesting point. Is the United States truly the "land of the free" in the sense of being a setting for substantially greater religious liberty—or lesser regulation of the religious market—compared to democratic Western Europe? This is the view of sociologists Stark and Finke:

> Europeans often claim that their nations, too, offer religious freedom, but to those accustomed to American standards of freedom, what is called freedom in Europe would only be called *toleration* in the United States—and often not that. In the abstract most nations of Western Europe assert freedom of worship, but permit almost unlimited discretion to bureaucrats and parliaments concerning specific policies and decisions to impose sanctions on minority religions, while not providing effective legal recourse as guaranteed in the United States.[11]

Germany, the authors imply, pursues particularly oppressive policies. German "free churches," sometimes cited as proof of religious freedom in Germany, "are hindered, harassed, and closely regulated," and are, moreover, "stigmatized by the media and government" in a manner that "generates public disapproval."[12] However, Brigitte Schoen's essay on Germany argues that in some respects Germany is less discriminatory against NRMs than France or Belgium. In an email dialogue with me, Schoen has noted certain factors which cast doubt upon the received view that repression of religious minorities is substantially more severe in Western Europe than in the United States. The latter has a relatively decentralized system of control compared to Europe so that discrimination against Neopagan or New Age groups in localities in the "Bible Belt," for example, may not be highly visible. It may also be noted that while inflammatory statements by European politicians and activists against NRMs are well publicized, court cases won quietly by NRMs (e.g., a recent victory for the Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany's highest court) are not. Schoen's essay repudiates what she views as exaggerated reports in the United States concerning the persecution of Scientology in Germany.[13] Acknowledging in her essay that the German government considers Scientology a commercial rather than a religious organization (which may seriously hurt Scientology), Schoen claims that governmental action against Scientology has amounted to little more than the issuing of informational booklets containing some negative material.

I recall that in the 1970s the Attorney General of New York state issued a highly inflammatory and negative report on the Children of

God that was criticized by civil libertarians. J. Gordon Melton's report on the United States notes a proposal for the University of Maryland to issue reports and provide counseling services to protect students from the campus activities of "cults" (appellate court review of this program is pending at this time).

Melton's essay basically supports the idea that the situation is rather more favorable for NRMs in the United States than elsewhere. The American anticult movement is now little more than a "meddlesome nuisance." In my view Melton may be overly sanguine. The *Fishman* precedent that excludes testimony about brainwashing from a criminal trial on the grounds that it lacks scientific credibility may eventually prove to be a frail reed. The influence of horrendous tragedies such as the recent Uganda massacre may lead judges to alter their "scientific" views.[14] Melton does not mention the earlier 1988 California Supreme Court's *Molko* decision stipulating that there is no *constitutional* (religious freedom) barrier to brainwashing claims against a totalist religious group that practices deceptive recruitment.

On the other hand, the British setting as described by Eileen Barker seems to be practically as libertarian as the American milieu. Barker's informational network on NRMs, INFORM, receives governmental support, even though it is bitterly assailed in some quarters for being overly sympathetic to "cults."

THE MANDARIN FACTOR

Perhaps in part because they are scholars themselves, our contributors are generally concerned with the role of scholars in determining both the outcomes of cult controversies and the evolving milieux in various countries. Reader's essay is poignant concerning the "muted voices of academia" in Japan. A very small number of Japanese and American scholars had been naïve about Aum Shinrikyô and provided general legitimation for the movement and/or refused to accept claims about Aum criminality that were true.[15] A misleading "prevailing image" of widespread academic complicity with sinister, lethal cults emerged. "It is small wonder, then, that at present the ability of scholars to present an alternative to the views of the anticult movement has been severely diminished." This is in sharp contrast, notes Reader, to the intellectual milieux in the United States and the United Kingdom.

There also appears to be a strong contrast to the Canadian situation. Hexham's report is sort of a "rise and fall of Canadian anticultism." He appears to see the impact of scholars such as Saul Levine, Reginald Bibby, Susan Palmer, and himself as a key factor in turning the tide. However, this begs certain questions that are not fully answered. Why should Canadian scholars be particularly objective, tolerant, or sympathetic with

regard to NRMs; and why should scholars be particularly *influential* in Canada?

In Italy, according to Massimo Introvigne, scholars have (as in America and unlike in France and Germany) "a history of being fairly proactive and of siding with underdogs, religious and otherwise." Influential political intelligentsia in Italy tend to be libertarians—of either "new left" or "new right" persuasion—while French politics is dominated by paternalistic "old left" politicians, and German politics is dominated by "old right" politicians with close ties to churches which lead anticult campaigns. In any case state *paternalism* may be one factor that makes European governments more prone to take action against stigmatized NRMs than occurs in the United States where "Big Government" has traditionally been distrusted.[16]

Melton briefly discusses the dilemma of American scholars who are not necessarily supporters of stigmatized movements but who tend to oppose brainwashing as an explanation for recruitment and commitment to NRMs. The fragility in the public mind of the distinction between opposing anticult claims on an objective basis and being a general sympathizer or dubious collaborator with noxious groups is embodied in the derisive term "cult apologist."[17] In some European countries scholars who are not crusaders against cults are pointedly ignored and excluded from influence or participation in policy debates in these matters. As Schoen notes, the Belgian parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (but not the German Commission) intentionally excluded social science and religious studies scholars who might counter anticult views.[18] The French Commission did not include as witnesses scholars or faculty at any institution of higher learning. "When a number of scholars objected to the report, they were not only insulted as cult apologists by the tabloids but were harassed in many ways by the authorities."[19] An anticult leader was awarded the *Legion d'honneur.* When "certain groups are widely perceived as *known malefactors* or public enemies, crusaders against such groups become accepted as the . . . most objective, exclusive repositories of legitimate expertise. Investigators with conflicting perspectives are shunted aside as naïve and fatuous and even denounced as highly suspect and subversive."[20]

Although anticult agitation has been discussed by many of our contributors, there has been little focus on particular scholars, clerical intelligentsia, or "experts," such as the French psychiatrist J. M. Abgrall, who crusade against "cults."[21] Two exceptions are the extended treatment of Margaret Singer's influence by Melton, and Armin Geertz and Mikael Rothstein's discussion of Johannes Aagaard and the arguably misnamed "Dialog Centre" at the University of Aarhus in Denmark. Ironically, my own experience indicates that in the 1980s Aagaard's operation did, in terms of its former publication, *Update*, foster genuine dialogue and allow a plurality of views to be represented. But in the 1990s

there appeared to be more of a prevailing monologue featuring attacks on NRMs and discussions of the inferiority of Eastern doctrines such as *karma* to Christian doctrines.

Finally, a number of contributors have referred to the role of the *mass media* in escalating cult controversies and fueling agitation against NRMs. Solveiga Krumina-Konkova concludes that the mass media and anticult groups have been largely responsible for a growing "moral panic" over NRMs in Latvia and Lithuania in the last half decade. In Italy, according to Introvigne, there is an overrepresentation in the media of secularists, who tend toward anticultism. Nevertheless, overt anticult bias in the media may sometimes be less important than the impulse to go after, in Introvigne's words, "lurid exposés of 'dangerous cults,'" which sell newspapers and draw television audiences. Thus extremely negative and sensational coverage of the Unification Church in Australia, Richardson reports, contributed strongly to a controversy that held up a permit for the building of a worship center for two years. In Japan, the media, as Reader notes, eagerly report the misdeeds of all sorts of religious organizations.

ROLE OF THE CHURCHES

Institutionalized churches play an important role in cult controversies. Although some churches and clergy may support religious liberty and the rights of small nontraditional churches, it appears that anticult ideology, generally imported from the United States, is likely to become a vital force in a country to the extent that it receives support from an influential church. (The role of churches is not emphasized in Reader's report and may be less important in Japan.) Although some clerics such as the late Dean Kelley of the (American) National Council of Churches may crusade for religious liberty, clergy are often active in anticult mobilization.

As Shterin reports, the Russian Orthodox Church is using imported Western anticultism for its own implicitly re-establishmentarian purposes. In France, however, the Roman Catholic Church is in the ironic position of being a beneficiary of a system that was originally established to contain its influence. Although Hervieu-Léger says little about the actual attitude of the French Catholic leaders, some observers believe that an "unholy alliance" against "sectes" exists between Catholic officials and antireligious secularists. On the other hand, Hervieu-Léger notes that the leaders of the respectable Protestant Federation in France are concerned with religious freedom and willingly offer protection (admission to the federation) to otherwise vulnerable Pentecostal and Adventist churches. In Italy, the Protestant churches have offered some

support to the Jehovah's Witnesses. Their attitude is somewhat influenced, according to Introvigne, by Mussolini's persecution of Protestant denominations, some of which were officially labeled "sects" and "cults" and suffered discrimination well into the 1950s. Historical factors thus influence the attitude of many churches toward persecution or discrimination against NRMs.

In several European states and elsewhere, certain sizable and historically venerable churches are at least partly "established" in the sense that the state plays a role in their funding. If, as in a proposed Hungarian statute, the state diverts a portion of a citizen's tax payments to the church he or she designates without requiring extra payment, the designated church and its members have an advantage over excluded (generally smaller) churches whose members must pay their full taxes including (if they are willing) dues to their disfavored church. However, in some states such as Germany, the state collects church tithes through what amounts to a "church tax" paid by those taxpayers who acknowledge on their tax forms that they belong to a given (major, venerable) church. This system may be said to "backfire" in the sense that persons become motivated not to be members of a large church to avoid the "church tax." It may also be significant that state funding puts clerics somewhat in the position of state bureaucrats. They have little incentive to develop a dynamic grassroots outreach and may resent evangelizing churches. According to one eminent journalist, thousands of former German Catholics and Lutherans have left their churches and have gravitated toward newer or more dynamic competitors. "Little wonder that the [major] churches have pressed the State to drive back the interlopers, and wherever the Church is particularly powerful, such as in predominantly Catholic Bavaria, the State has been particularly accommodating."[22] A threat to the church is seen as a threat to the state and vice versa. This attitude has strong public support.

In Canada, according to Hexham, the churches have generally steered clear of anticultism. It is somewhat depressing that the Quakers appear to represent an exception, given their own vivid past history of persecution and victimization!

THE MOVEMENTS

It may behoove us to look a bit at the movements being stigmatized or discriminated against. Are they all simply innocent victims? And even if the treatment or opposition they are receiving is judged to be unwarranted, what traits distinguish those groups which tend to elicit the greatest hostility? Cross-cultural research in this area would be desirable. Why do certain groups such as the Church of Scientology or Jehovah's Witnesses consistently get into hot water?

Of course a handful of NRMs have become involved in spectacular mass violence (or lesser acts of violence). Some groups such as the Family of Love have a *totalistic* organization in which individuals are more or less encapsulated. This is problematic in at least two ways: 1. it appears to contravene cultural norms of individualism and personal autonomy, which are strong in the United States and Western Europe; 2. it potentially isolates and insulates participants from the norms and cultural standards of the general society, which are replaced by strong group norms which may facilitate deviant and criminal behavior. Globalization, which, as we have noted, creates cultural defensiveness in particular societies, no doubt exacerbates the animus against totalistic movements that to some extent isolate devotees from the indigenous culture.

In Africa, as noted by Rosalind I. J. Hackett, some movements such as the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda may sometimes pose a military-political threat to the government. A context of political disorganization in which ethnic-regional-political conflicts sometimes turn violent may encourage a "revolutionary" or "terrorist" role for close-knit religious movements, although the example of Aum Shinrikyô may indicate that an anarchic social context may not be necessary to instigate "religious terrorism." The attitude of Chinese officials, notes Lowe, is influenced by the past involvement of Chinese sects and secret societies in overt rebellions in Chinese history.

Groups such as the Church of Scientology are highly diversified in their activities—particularly commercial operations. This may be somewhat of a necessity when a small group lacks the significant membership basis essential for survival. Nevertheless, doubts understandably arise as to whether a particular movement is really a religion or primarily a commercial, corporate organization.[23] It may also be noteworthy that some NRMs and Christian sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses are less involved, compared with more conventional churches, in activities that are "charitable" in the conventional sense of the term. The result is to render governments, particularly in Europe, unwilling to extend to such groups the tax privileges granted to other churches.

Some movements have arguably been involved in fraudulent commercial activities or deceptive proselytizing. Some gurus and prophets have sexually and financially exploited their followers and have even molested children, a tragedy that has also created scandals in reputable churches. The funding exigency created by a limited membership base may render alternative religions more likely to drain financially the members they do have and to exploit devotees' unpaid labor. To survive, a minority sect may need to become a disciplined "Gideon's Army" and to exclude "free riders" or limited liability investors as well as dissidents. This may lead to authoritarianism and to the development of patterns of indoctrination and commitment building which will be stigmatized as "mind control." Finally, NRMs are probably somewhat more

likely than conventional groups to reject modern medicine or to use extreme methods in child rearing. Almost by definition alternative religions cultivate *alternatives* to accepted values, norms, and procedures.[24]

NRMs are more likely to have both apocalyptic perspectives and charismatic leaders. Charismatic leadership is viewed by some scholars as inherently precarious and volatile. Apocalypticism and charismatic leadership may be important in weaning followers away from conventional norms and received standards. They may enhance the appeal of new movements to troubled and alienated persons. Falun Gong, according to Lowe, has apocalyptic teachings.

Shterin notes that it is the perceived illegitimacy of new Russian groups per se and not their actual behavior which is the foundation of their stigma. Hervieu-Léger observes that in France intense, exorbitant religious behavior is tolerated when the movements (e.g., Pentecostal) belong to the reputable Protestant Federation or to its familiar denominations. The lethal extremism of groups such as the Solar Temple or Aum Shinrikyô may have traumatized Europeans but may also serve as a convenient pretext for a more general repression of unconventional groups.

In her paper on Great Britain, Barker makes the interesting point that "over the past quarter of a century several changes have taken place within the new religions themselves, making them more likely to wish to be recognized as 'normal' rather than insisting upon the ways in which they differ from the rest of society." Nevertheless, there will always be groups which have not made this transition, and these groups and their doings may be better publicized than the accommodations of more adaptive movements. The image of NRMs is likely to be more affected by the violence of Heaven's Gate, Aum Shinrikyô, or the Solar Temple than by the Brahma Kumaris showing up for the Archbishop's reception at Lambeth Palace.

Two additional points need to be made. James Beckford has noted that in different ways groups such as the Unification Church, Scientology, Baha'i, Transcendental Meditation, Soka Gakkai, and Jehovah's Witnesses have their own *ideological visions of global order* or conceptions of the contemporary global crisis. Such visions tend to relativize or identify as superceded all other religions, cultures, and national identities.[25] Indeed, NRMs may be more likely than Western churches to be exclusivist and thus "intolerant," although many New Age and other groups clearly are not. "Intolerant" faiths may appear disruptive and, moreover, may elicit hostility for a reason evocative of the vulnerability of early Christianity, which denied other gods and was thus viewed as perniciously atheist.

As Reader notes, some NRMs denounce competing NRMs in seemingly anticult terms as "false religions." NRMs often appear to buy into anticult mystiques about "cults" and "destructive cults" but simply exempt themselves.

Finally, it is worth noting that some scholars distinguish between schismatic *sects* situated within broader traditions and more innovative *cults*. "Cults" such as Scientology or the Unification Church often seem to elicit the most opposition. Krumina-Konkova's report on the Baltic States, however, seems to highlight groups that appear to be Christian sects such as the United Evangelical Congregation of God (which evokes hostility in part because of its hostility to other Christian groups, particularly the Roman Catholic Church), Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science. We have already quoted Stark and Finke on Christian and Muslim sects as the ultimate intended targets of repressive regulatory measures in Eastern Europe.

CONCLUSION: FREEDOM AND DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination against minority religions is rampant throughout the globe. Afghanistan, controlled by the Taliban, has a new law that establishes a death penalty for being converted or promoting conversion from Islam to another faith. More frequently discrimination is rather milder and often primarily financial. In Hungary, a system whereby citizens could have some of their tax payments diverted to support their church has just been amended to apply only to large denominations.

Usually discrimination is tied to some kind of certification, licensing, or registration of what are considered to be "bona fide" religions. There is a continuum of burdens that may impinge on noncertified groups. In China, unregistered Protestant evangelical groups may have their churches destroyed. Under 1996 legislation in Russia, unregistered groups such as the Salvation Army in Moscow may not be able to own property, employ persons, enter into contracts, or hold public worship (or serve public meals). In France, groups outside of the confessional regulatory system may be objects of the state's "war on sects." I am uncertain, however, as to the precise extent of the disadvantage experienced by groups whose application to become an "authorized" denomination under Danish law (as described by Geertz and Rothstein) is denied. Such "outside" groups cannot conduct legal marriages, but are there other disabilities that represent serious impediments to a nonauthorized group's prospects for survival?

Geertz and Rothstein report the attempt by the Danish Advisory Committee on Religious Denominations "to distinguish between freedom of religion and conscience on the one hand and authorization of denominations on the other hand, with the privileges that the latter entails." Under Danish law, freedom of religion does not require that a group be empowered to exercise public executive power (e.g., by performing marriages). This implicit distinction between effective denial of free-

dom and mere discrimination may seem valid in Denmark, where the burdens on nonauthorized groups may not be extensive. But at some point stronger discriminatory disadvantages would certainly imperil religious liberty. It is worth noting that Oliver Cromwell denied that he was interfering with Catholics' liberty of conscience when he forbade performance of the Mass. (Catholics could inwardly affirm their beliefs, they just couldn't hold formal worship services). The Chinese constitution, Lowe notes, guarantees the right to "freedom of religious belief" but not the right to practice or propagate religion.

It may be also worth noting that in modern, interdependent societies with a high degree of state regulation churches cannot operate without some support or facilitation from public authority. In the United States—the supposed mecca of religious freedom—reputable churches are continually running afoul of zoning and other regulations when they attempt to expand their physical plant, build a new or larger parking lot, operate soup kitchens for the indigent, etc. Finally, readers might want to consider whether the criteria for authorization of denominations in Denmark, as delineated by Geertz and Rothstein, are prejudicial in the sense of mandating a particular organizational form of religion and excluding "religions" that do not meet culturally particularistic criteria. Globalization is likely to exacerbate the salience of this issue.

ENDNOTES

[1] James T. Richardson, ed., "Special Issue: Justice and New Religious Movements," *Social Justice Research* 12, no. 4 (December 1999); Derek Davis, ed., *Religious Liberty in Northern Europe in the Twenty-first Century* (Waco: Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, 2000); Pauline Cote, ed., *Chercheurs de dieux l'espace public [Frontier Religions in the Public Sphere]* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000). See also Robert Towler, ed., *New Religions and the New Europe* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1995). A forthcoming (Summer 2001) issue of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* will feature three papers on the stigmatization of alleged mentally manipulative "sectes" in Western Europe.

[2] For recent provocative discussions of globalization and its relationship to the growth and spread of NRMs and the conflicts which they precipitate, see Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures* (Boulder: Westview, 1997); and James A. Beckford, "Religious Movements and Globalization," in *Global Social Movements*, eds. Robin Cohen and Shirin Rai (London: Athlone Press, 2000).

[3] Beckford, "Religious Movements and Globalization," 170.

[4] Hexham and Poewe, *New Religions As Global Cultures*, 46. This may appear to be an overstatement, unless it is understood that Hexham and Poewe have a distinctive and restrictive definition of a new religious movement. This definition excludes mere "revitalization movements" such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Hexham and Poewe see NRMs as innovative transcultural syncretic movements.

[5] Beckford, "Religious Movements and Globalization." See also James Beckford "'Cult' Controversies in Three European Countries," *Journal of Oriental Studies* 8 (1998): 174-84.

[6] Ibid., 181. Beckford is referring specifically to Europe. He considers it "significant that the German parliamentary inquiry into so-called cults and psycho-groups seems to be

especially concerned with evidence of the *international* operations of NRMs." It is also significant in this respect that "xenophobic sentiment is . . . growing in Europe . . . especially in France, Belgium, Germany, Central Europe, and Eastern Europe" (181).

[7] Beckford, "Religious Movements and Globalization," 173.

[8] Beckford notes that competition from other religious and spiritual ideas has compelled the Russian Orthodox Church to attempt "to reclaim and defend its position in the face of competition from various minorities with different religious traditions and from 'imported' religions. . . . This is why some nationalists and leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church pressed so hard for new legislation in 1996 to control religious competition and the relativization of their own previously hegemonic, albeit severely controlled [by Soviet authorities] position." "Religious Minorities and Globalization," 173-74. Through such legislation "conservative and nationalist elements in Russia are trying to forge an understanding of the country's distinctive identity in an increasingly globalized world" (Ibid).

[9] Hexham and Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures*, 18. See also 1-25.

[10] Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Examining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 257.

[11] Ibid., 232.

[12] Ibid., 233.

[13] Schoen is critical of two essays: Derek Davis, "Religious Persecution in Today's Germany: Old Habits Renewed," *Journal of Church and State* 40, no. 4 (1998): 741-56; and Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, "*Verfassungfeindlich*: Church, State, and New Religions in Germany," *Nova Religio* 2 (1999): 208-27.

[14] Thomas Robbins, "Combating 'Cults' and 'Brainwashing' in Western Europe," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (forthcoming Summer 2001).

[15] Ian Reader, "Scholarship, Aum Shinrikyô, and Academic Integrity," *Nova Religio* 3 (2000): 368-82. See also Michael Pye, "Aum Shinrikyô: Can Religious Studies Cope?" *Religion* 26 (1996): 261-70.

[16] Robbins, "Combating 'Cults' and 'Brainwashing' in Western Europe."

[17] In the United States there are currently anticult allegations about a "pro-cult" bias and lack of objectivity among professional scholars of religion. See Thomas Robbins, "Quo Vadis the Scientific Study of Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29, no. 4 (December 2000): 529-34. See also the symposium on "Academic Integrity and the Study of New Religious Movements" in *Nova Religio* 2, no. 1 (1998): 8-54.

[18] See also James T. Richardson and Massimo Introvigne, "'Brainwashing' Theories in European Parliamentary and Administrative Reports on Sects and Cults," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (forthcoming Summer 2001).

[19] Massimo Introvigne, "Blacklisting or Greenlisting? A European Perspective on the New Cult Wars," *Nova Religio* 2 (1998): 17.

[20] Thomas Robbins, "Objectivity, Advocacy, and Animosity," *Nova Religio* 2 (1998): 27-8.

[21] Dick Anthony, "Pseudoscience and Minority Religions: Evaluation of the Brainwashing Theories of Jean-Marie Abgrall, *Social Justice Research* 12, no. 4 (December 1999): 421-56.

[22] Joseph Joffe, "Germany vs. the Scientologists," *New York Review of Books*, (24 April 1997): 16-21.

[23] See Nikos Passas and Manuel Castillo, "Scientology and Its 'Clear' Business," *Behavioral Science and the Law* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 103-17.

[24] For a discussion of "cults" and their properties from conflicting perspectives, see Benjamin Zablocki and Thomas Robbins, eds., *Understanding Cults* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

[25] Beckford, "Religious Movements and Globalization," 172-76. See also Hexham and Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures*, 46-47.

Prophets, "False Prophets," and the African State: Emergent Issues of Religious Freedom and Conflict

Rosalind I. J. Hackett

INTRODUCTION[1]

Africa's great ethnic and cultural diversity (over two thousand ethnic groups in more than fifty nation-states) is matched by an equally complex religious scene. One of the most interesting features of this religious landscape is not just the many Islams, Christianities, and numerous other movements (from Jehovah's Witnesses to Heaven's Gate) that have been brought to the continent and have taken root there amidst the great variety of local forms of indigenous practice, but also the creative and innovative responses of Africans themselves in forming their own religious movements.[2] Compared to parts of Europe and Asia, there would not appear to be the same degree of repression in Africa of non-mainstream or alternative, minority religions. Religious tolerance has historically been a more defining feature of African societies. In one form or another, all African constitutions enshrine the values of religious diversity and non-establishment as articulated in international human rights documents.[3]

However, in this paper I intend to provide evidence of emerging patterns of conflict in several African states over newer religious formations. These conflicts can be conceptualized in political, social, and religious terms that I will discuss more systematically in the next section. I attribute the rise in tensions to the following factors:

1. new challenges from increasing religious pluralization and state management of this plurality;
2. a marked increase in religious revivalism and militancy, notably among Christians and Muslims;
3. the growing tendency to frame socio-political insecurities and economic failures in terms of encroaching satanic and occult forces;
4. the emergence of an increasingly mediated public sphere and new religious publics;
5. an increase in human rights discourses concerning religious freedom.

Let me elaborate briefly on some of these points by way of background, before offering a short historical overview of new religious movements (NRMs) in Africa.

In the slipstream of political liberalization and globalizing cultural and market forces in post-colonial Africa we are witnessing an attendant pluralization of religious options. This is altering the stakes of religious coexistence—creating conditions which are clearly more conducive to religious tension and conflict. The national scene becomes more competitive as religious institutions that were formerly privileged by colonial regimes now find themselves as just one of the players in the new pluralistic dispensation. The global discourse of human rights is increasingly localized and naturalized via state and civil society structures.[4] In the last few years Africans are becoming more vocal about claiming their constitutional and international rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion.[5] Some, notably Pentecostal and evangelical Christians, are aware of American interest in religious persecution issues in the form of the United States International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.[6] They may even have come across the "bestsellers" in the field, Paul Marshall's *Their Blood Cries Out* and Nina Shea's *In the Lion's Den*, with their emotive tropes of martyrdom and persecution.[7]

In short, religious issues impinge more than ever on ethnic, national, and transnational politics in many parts of Africa. For example, respected Nigerian political analyst and social commentator Father Matthew Hassan Kukah states that "the religious question . . . is now the single greatest threat to the existence of the Nigerian state."[8] African newspapers regularly report on the differing views of political and religious leaders as to the appropriate place of religion in the national setting. Faltering, debt-ridden African states must now look to the management of religious pluralism as part of their plans of national integration lest it explode into conflict as in Nigeria, and more recently, and, unexpectedly, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger. They must pay special attention to the mass media that have developed with intensity over the last decade throughout Africa. States and religious authorities are losing control over this rapidly privatizing and more participatory media sector, particularly at the level of newer, small-scale media production.[9] The new technologies of communication blur private and public spheres, opening up new possibilities for identity politics. It is particularly the younger generation of Muslims and Christians who are key players here. They are drawn to local and international prophets of religious revivalism who have proliferated in the last two decades, along with their "spiritual adjustment programs." The latter popularly refer to the efforts of the aforementioned prophets to counter the negative effects of structural adjustment programs, political misrule, and moral confusion. Many African states remain very autocratic and consistently fail to respect or protect the basic civil and economic rights of their citizens.[10]

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN AFRICA: AN OVERVIEW

The study of Africa's NRMs has generated a vast, multidisciplinary literature from both African and Africanist scholars. However, much of the scholarship has focused on particular historical periods and/or particular movements, or types of movements.[11] It has also been more historical or theological in nature. A more comparative and contextual analysis is needed within the prevailing discourses on democratization, civil society, and religious freedom, and the role of these religious formations therein.[12] It hardly needs stating that such a goal cannot be accomplished within the confines of the present essay. Rather, I hope to show, by means of selected examples, some of the emergent patterns of conflict between the newer religions and the state. The death, predominantly murder, of nearly eight hundred members of a Ugandan (post-) Catholic apocalyptic movement, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, in March 2000, may prove somewhat paradigmatic in this regard. But first, some historical background is needed.

One of Africa's earliest known religious movements, the Antonian movement, was founded in the late seventeenth century in a spirit of political resistance and religious independency in the former Kongo empire of central Africa. The founder, Dona Béatrice or Kimpa Vita, was burned at the stake in 1706 for her efforts in trying to turn the Portuguese Catholic mission into a Kongo Catholic Church.[13] She laid the foundations for a long history of political resistance in the region.[14] It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that more religious forms of protest emerged in West and South Africa in the form of the Ethiopian churches. They broke away from mission control mainly for reasons of racial disparity.[15]

Yet, for many Africans questions of cultural and spiritual relevance were more pressing. By foregrounding dreams, visions, healing, and spirit possession they were not only validating their own cultural roots but actively negotiating new indigenous forms of Christianity. Good examples of this type of movement would be the Aladura churches in Nigeria and the Zionist churches in South Africa.[16] This type of revitalization movement occurred to a lesser extent in Islam,[17] and traditional religion.[18] The main thrust of this religious independency began in the later colonial period (end of nineteenth to beginning of twentieth century). It was most marked in those areas that had been missionized by Protestantism, although some regions, such as East Africa, do have more movements which grew out of the Roman Catholic Church.[19]

The social and cultural impact of these thousands of religious movements (perhaps over 12,000 according to some estimates)[20] and their more transnational successors—churches and movements of the evan-

gelical/Pentecostal/charismatic variety—has been considerable.[21] Because of the self-determining claims of the earlier movements which came to be known as African independent churches (African-initiated, African-instituted or "new generation" churches are now also popular labels), they have been subjected to discrimination and persecution at the hands of state and non-state actors.[22] They were frequently viewed as subversive by colonial governments and deviant by the older mission-related churches.[23] Colonial proscriptions on these movements were removed by several of the new African governments in the post-independence phase.[24] However, by then, as Claasen notes in the case of the independent churches in South Africa, "[I]t is rather ironic that these churches which took pride in their spiritual independence, were being coerced into dependence by government regulations."[25] The purported political acquiescence of the Zionist churches in both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras has been the subject of much debate.[26] It has variously been attributed to fear of state reprisals, or failure to gain official recognition, poverty, lack of education, political naiveté, protest against political violence, and pietistic character. Bengt Sundkler, the pioneer of the study of South African independent churches, describes their political strategies as more counter-cultural and as a withdrawal from the then "dominating world of the whites."[27] He underscores the lack of government recognition of these African churches by pointing to the minimal number of official registrations their precursors, the Ethiopian churches, were granted over the course of several decades (eleven churches from 1925-65).[28]

The eclipsing of these older independent churches and the growing domination of the "new generation" evangelical/Pentecostal/charismatic forms of Christianity in many parts of the African continent has been well documented.[29] Their predilection for a more apolitical[30] or indirectly political,[31] "spiritual" orientation and conservative social stance—notwithstanding their modern lifestyles—has appealed to a number of Africa's political leaders.[32] Significantly, this development has arguably engendered less antagonism in terms of the religion-state relationship than in earlier periods.[33] Instead, this newer type of movement has caused an escalation in interreligious conflict. But we shall return to this below.

AREAS OF CONFLICT

Rather than try to treat current tensions between new religious movements and African governments from a regional or state-centric perspective, I propose the following framework to identify the principal areas of conflict. In the first instance, religious movements may be seen

as constituting a threat to *political authority*. Here is where the state (whether in the form of police, politicians, or presidents) takes action to protect itself from the efforts of religious movements to subvert or critique its authority. In the second category, new religious movements are viewed as constituting a threat to *public interests*. Their activities may be considered as inimical to particular types of individuals (such as women and children) or to social order more generally. In the third instance, *religious power and authority* are threatened directly or indirectly by the religious claims of these newer groups. Needless to say, where there are close links between religious and political formations, as in Uganda, then ostensibly religious altercations have political ramifications.

In order to counteract these real or perceived threats, national and local governments, as well as the media and religious organizations, resort to various courses of action—ranging from extreme to mild—which may be legal, semi-official, or informal methods.[34] I shall now discuss, with the aid of selected, relevant examples, these types of conflict and the various responses.[35] These examples will serve to demonstrate the complex, multi-perspectival nature of these issues, and the overlap in several cases.[36] For, as the Igbo of Nigeria say, you don't stand in one place to watch a masquerade. One particular case study, the neo-traditionalist Mungiki movement of Kenya, will receive more extensive analysis not just for its topicality but because its conflictual relationship with state and religious authorities and recent conversion to Islam illustrate well the complex and volatile interrelationship of religion and state issues in Africa.

Threats to Political Authority

By far the most serious clashes between states and NRMs occur when the latter challenge the ruling authorities. This is not surprising given the insecurity of many African regimes, whether democratically elected or not. Fighting "cults" may be good for reelection. Let us take the case of Kenya. Many religious groups there, with the exception of the Pentecostals, have criticized the autocratic regime of President Daniel Arap Moi.[37] The mainline churches have consistently spoken out in the name of freedom and democracy. The government has historically been unsympathetic to revivalist, traditionalist movements because of their appeal to the poor through anti-government rhetoric. Over the last decade they have harassed and banned the Tent of the Living God and arrested its pro-Kikuyu leader and members.[38] But it is the more politically-oriented Mungiki which has given the government a run for its money. This group, which is an offshoot of the former, advocates in somewhat revolutionary terms the need for fair governance and the

destruction of sites of "devil worship." Much to the ire of public officials, they have publicly declared war on the Freemasons. They also express anti-Christian sentiments. Claiming links to the earlier 1950s nationalist movement, Mau-Mau, they practice female circumcision, sing traditional songs, and wear dreadlocks. Mungiki members also sniff raw tobacco and dried and grounded roots. They have been involved in frequent confrontations with police. In September 2000 they "merged with" or converted to Islam, claiming that it would "hasten the realisation of our goal."[39] This has transposed the conflict to another level.

In defense of the group, the Council of Imams asked the government to stop harassing Mungiki followers and depriving them of their right to assemble at any place in Kenya (several had been arrested for illegal association) or to freedom of worship. "The government is courting bloodshed by continuously subjecting Mungiki followers to harassment and it should learn a lesson from what is happening in Israel now," one of the Muslim leaders stated provocatively after Mungiki was subjected to a police ban in October 2000 on unlicensed meetings.[40] Ibrahim Ndura Waruinge, the Mungiki national coordinator, accused church leaders of inciting the police against the group's members who were not affiliated with any political party. Cabinet Minister Joseph Kamotho had indeed publicly urged the churches to help counter it: "[the t]ime has come for the Church to condemn the practices of this sect which is promoting outdated cultural beliefs."[41]

In terms of religious movements that have actively sought to destabilize government authorities, the Mungiki group is actually less well known abroad than the Lord's Resistance Army, which plagued government troops in Uganda for a number of years in the late 1980s. This group has been implicated by several human rights groups in the recruitment of child soldiers.[42] Operating mainly in the North, it has some connection with Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement, an earlier Acholi resistance movement.[43] Renowned for her mystical powers, Alice Lakwena sought to counter the economic and political marginalization of her people through increasing militancy and millennialist messages of social and moral reform.[44] She creatively linked the healing of an abused natural environment with Christian ideas.[45] In addition to describing its traditionalist roots, G rard Prunier also highlights the group's semi-modern discourses that combine minority status human rights talk and possession by James Bond-type spirits or *jok*.[46]

Sometimes governments have moved to ban NRMs because they deem their mission to be antipathetic to nationalist goals. This occurred in Ghana in June 1989 when the PNDC (People's National Defense Council) Law 221 was promulgated requiring all religious bodies to register. According to Kwesi Dickson it was "ostensibly a way of controlling the activities of Christian sects that were multiplying very rapidly." However, Justice D. F. Annan, a member of the government, assured the

sects that the purpose of the law was to regulate rather than control religious activities.[47] The law also provided an instrument for the PNDC to ban any church "whose activities it deemed incompatible with normal Ghanaian life." The Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons fell into this category.[48] The mainline churches contested the ban. The matter remained unresolved until the law was repealed at the inaguration of the Fourth Republic in 1994. The Ghanaian Mormon community reestablished itself and will soon have its own temple in the capital, Accra—one of the few granted to Africans to date.

Registration/deregistration is a powerful tool used by governments not only to exert control but also to manipulate public opinion about non-mainstream movements. They may claim that groups that refuse to register are suspect and lack transparency. In return, minority religious groups may challenge the moral or legal authority of the government to regulate their activities. For example, the neo-traditionalist movement in Kenya, Mungiki, has openly rejected government and public calls for its registration: "We will never do that. We do not need to be registered by [this] Government which only abets poverty, insecurity, killings and social instability."[49] Registration mechanisms are often created or strengthened following a particularly critical incident. Sundkler notes that the violent clash between Enoch Mgijima's Israelites and government forces in 1921 in South Africa led to a set of conditions for church registration in 1925.[50]

In former Zaïre the colonial government set in motion national and provincial mechanisms in 1938 for disbanding "sectes" and "associations indigènes" that were considered to be a threat to public order.[51] In 1989, following a countrywide tour, the Minister of Justice introduced stricter measures against religious communities and sects which had not obtained official status. He ordered the immediate closing of temples and places of public worship (the ban included meetings in forests and private homes) but guaranteed the right of individuals to practice their religion alone in the privacy of their own residences.[52] He invited all religious organizations to register under the laws governing nonprofit organizations.[53] The conditions to be met in order to qualify as a founder of such an organization were very demanding (theological education, financial deposit, no previous role in another religious organization, etc.), with the additional burden of annual reports. In his analysis of these legal developments, Ludiongo observes that, despite the touting by the government of the benefits of official recognition, very few groups that were not Catholic or Protestant (Eglise du Christ au Zaïre) have been registered. He attributes this in part to ignorance or to bureaucratic delays. He also notes that the only group banned between 1965 and 1991 was the Jehovah's Witnesses, which he finds remarkable given the informal complaints that circulate about minority religious groups. He suggests that the fact that 234 religious groups can continue to func-

tion (as of 1991) despite their unregistered status (26.44 percent of the total surveyed) might indicate a degree of tolerance on the part of the government, particularly in view of the law which states that no one can publicly preach if he is member of a church or religious sect which does not have civil status.[54]

A more subtle but quite effective method of limiting the activities of less favored religious groups (and this may be for ethnic or political rather than or as well as directly religious reasons) is to create bureaucratic obstacles for their legal recognition. Losing files, inventing problems, and demanding extra payments are common practices. However, we should not assume that registration is necessarily problematic for newer religious movements in Africa. In the late 1980s, when the Ghanaian government decreed that all religious groups should obtain official registration, it was the mainline churches who furiously protested the order and refused to comply, protesting freedom of religion. In contrast, it was the smaller, independent churches who rushed to register and enjoy the new legitimation and status!

Closely connected to questions of registration is land allocation. This constitutes a strategic form of government control of minority religious groups. In Kenya, President Moi is renowned for maintaining strict control over this sector. In the north of Nigeria, where many states have recently imposed *shari'a* (Islamic) law, Christian groups complain of the discriminatory treatment they receive in trying to obtain land for church or school expansion. In some cases local authorities try to destroy or displace pre-existing buildings if they are deemed to be in Muslim-dominated areas. Under such restrictive conditions it is not uncommon for religious groups to utilize creatively school and university buildings, private homes, hotels, and cinemas. Sometimes the police may seek to appropriate land from a religious movement in order to curtail its operations. Approximately five years ago in Nigeria, the governor of the state tried to acquire the property of Guru Maharaj Ji's Divine Light Mission, an Eastern-oriented communtarian group with a prominently situated ashram along the Lagos-Ibadan expressway. The movement went to court and was able to prove legal ownership of the land.[55]

As a less stringent measure, the common tactic is to control the freedom of association of unpopular or targeted religious groups. In this way the authorities can not only operate a process of selective control but also surveillance. If done with obvious bias, there can be violent public backlash. This occurred in the northern Nigerian city of Kano in 1991 when authorities banned a visit from the controversial South African Muslim preacher, Ahmed Deedat, but allowed Reinhard Bonnke, the equally controversial German Pentecostal evangelist, to come and lead one of the mass crusades for which he is famous.[56] He never actually made it on to the stage as Muslim youths launched a violent attack on Christians, and in the ensuing riot several hundreds were killed. When

Bonnke visited southern Nigeria in November 2000 to lead the Great Millennium Crusade—purportedly attended by six million people—he was told publicly, and in no uncertain terms, by the Council of Ulamas to stay away from the predominantly Muslim north of the country.[57]

Charges of illegal activities, such as drug smuggling, can create the leeway for the authorities to harass particular groups. This was the case with the highly publicized Synagogue Church of All Nations, run by Prophet T. B. Joshua in Lagos, Nigeria. Joshua was arrested but not prosecuted in 1996 on orders from the National Drug Enforcement Agency. While the charges have not been cleared, the prophet appears to have been exonerated by a recent confession of one of the agency members.[58] Moreover, his reputation as a healer is now so celebrated that he draws supplicants from all over the world that include pro football players or heads of state.[59]

In some cases, it is the real or imagined overseas connections of a movement that may provoke government fears or suspicions, and resultant clampdowns. The fact that the Brazilian leaders of the controversial Universal Church of the Kingdom of God have not mastered English or the local African languages counts against them in public opinion in several African countries. Frequently it is the smaller independent Pentecostal movements who may be targeted for having foreign, rather than nationalist, loyalties. In 1977, Uganda's head of state, Idi Amin, proscribed these churches.[60] Their conservative ideology and American connections had made them appear inimical to the liberation struggles of southern Africa.[61] But that was then, and the Pentecostal/charismatic churches and para-church movements such as the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International have effectively penetrated the leadership of several African countries. Their upwardly mobile image, promises of blessings and miracles, and popular gospel music production are nothing short of seductive.[62] At least four African heads of state, Kérékou of the Republic of Benin, Chiluba of Zambia, Obasanjo of Nigeria, and Moi of Kenya, have openly declared their "born-again" status. Others have sympathies with this type of religious orientation through their spouses, family members, and aides (Museveni of Uganda being a case in point).

Public Interests

When Africans express their misgivings concerning the "proliferation of sects" in their countries they are generally alluding to the risks of financial and social exploitation by the founders and leaders of such groups. The unchecked "mushrooming" of religious groups is linked in many people's minds with loss of tradition, lack of authority, and selfish opportunism.[63] It is not uncommon to read in the popular media of

women impregnated by independent church leaders, children kidnapped, sick people deprived of expert medical attention, and men duped by fake prophets.[64] A classic example of this would be Wilson Bushara, leader of the World Message Last Warning Church in Uganda, who had offered space in heaven after death in return for cash; men were supposed to surrender their wives, and the wives then declared themselves unmarried.[65] Journalists are also fond of pointing to disparities between the comfortable, if not flamboyant, lifestyles of the leaders and their desperate and impoverished followers.[66] More recently, the issue of noise pollution by exuberant Pentecostal and charismatic churches and evangelists has become contentious in places such as Ghana and Nigeria. Many of these newer churches operate out of private dwellings to begin with and believe that their music and their message should be delivered to people in their homes at any time of the day or night, whether they request it or not!

Burundi journalist Agnes Nindorera links the efflorescence of (mainly Protestant-related) religious groups in her country to the breakdown of political and religious (Roman Catholic) authority over the last decade, and the sheer quest for survival.[67] However, she claims that the enthusiasm for these newer movements was somewhat tempered by troubling information which came to public light in February 2000 concerning the anti-social activities of several movements. This was quickly followed in March by the news of the unfolding tragedy concerning one of Uganda's new religious movements.

On 17 March 2000, over three hundred followers of a Roman Catholic-oriented, apocalyptic movement known as the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God died in Kanungu (Rukungiri district, Uganda), 217 miles southwest of the capital, Kampala.[68] The majority perished in an explosion and fire in the church; mass graves were later discovered of people who had died violent deaths. Some suicides have also been reported. The final count was close to 800. Needless to say various theories and rumors abound as to the reasons for the tragedy. Information on the leaders is available, but it is unclear whether they escaped or died in the conflagration. The movement came into being in 1989 following apparitions of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. Such experiences were common in this part of Uganda and neighboring Rwanda. Not all were endorsed by the Roman Catholic Church. The key figures of the movement were Paul Kashaku, who died before the events of March, his daughter, Credonia Mwerinde, a barmaid with a reputation for sexual promiscuity, Joseph Kibwetere, a former politician and locally prominent Catholic layman, and Dominic Kataribabo, a former Catholic priest and college-educated theologian. They produced some literature of their own, including a book, *A Timely Message from Heaven.* They had access to Marian literature from other parts of the world. It remains unclear whether the final events were precipitated

by apocalyptic fears or demands from members for the return of their funds. The group was in contact with the local authorities over registration issues, etc. In fact they had even paid their taxes not long before March 2000. There are reports, nonetheless, of police ignoring appeals to investigate charges of child abuse and kidnapping in the group. Further details should become available from a report being prepared by the Department of Religious Studies at Uganda's Makerere University.[69]

It took no time at all before the Ugandan movement was being compared to Jonestown and Waco by the local and world press. The repercussions were manifold. The Ugandan government started clamping down on many minority religious groups, including several Pentecostal churches. The latter tried to turn the tables by casting aspersions on the normally unassailable Roman Catholic Church. The arrest in July 2000 of Wilson Bushara, leader of the World Message Last Warning Church, who had been on the run in Uganda for ten months and accused of embezzlement, unlawful assemblies, and sexual and child abuse, was much heralded by the media.[70] In July 2000, Kenyan human rights groups expressed fears about the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God being reincarnated in Kenya in the guise of another movement known as Choma. They appealed to the authorities to "move in and save the people of western Kenya from mass suicide that may be occasioned by the cult."[71] Several African governments, such as those of Botswana, Namibia, Kenya, and Rwanda made it known to their populations that they were stepping up vigilance and/or control of "sects and cults." The media seemed readier than ever to cover and comment on the questionable activities of such groups, such as when Heaven's Gate members purportedly entered Kenya recently to make contacts and distribute literature.[72] American self-styled anticult experts offered their services to the Ugandan government but reportedly did not get further than Nairobi as the government was not prepared to pay the asking price.[73]

The neo-traditionalist Mungiki movement in Kenya has continued to aggravate its opponents by allegedly leading a mob which attacked and stripped six women for wearing trousers in late 2000.[74] In response, the police raided the estate in Kayole where the attack took place and seized arms, electronic goods, and thousands of litres of traditional brew. They went ahead as public clamor grew for the arrest of the alleged culprits. Film of the assault was screened on Nation TV, and the attackers were clearly shown. In one sequence they waved the women's trousers in triumph. Yet officials of the group distanced themselves from the attack. The coordinator, Ibrahim Ndura Waruinge, said the incident was "unfortunate and inhumane" and added that the movement did not support violence against women. He said allegations of harassment of the women by members of the sect were propaganda by the government and the press and could be attributed to an extremist Kikuyu group.

He emphasized that women members of Mungiki wear trousers just like the women who were stripped and said they respected the rights of other people to wear what they wanted. In response to condemnations from women's groups, such as the Federation of Women Lawyers (Fida), Waruinge asked them to "leave us alone," complaining that they supported prostitution and male and female homosexuality.

The public complaints against Mungiki persisted several weeks after the stripping incident. A local Muslim leader condemned their actions and stated that Mungiki should not be associated with Islam. He urged the government to take stern action against Mungiki before they caused tremendous damage to the country and its citizens. Cabinet Minister Joseph Kamotho renewed calls for the church to help counter Mungiki and to discourage young people from joining the sect because of its promotion of "outdated cultural beliefs." Sporting long or short trousers and chanting anti-Mungiki slogans, members of the Coalition on Violence Against Women demonstrated in the center of Nairobi in early November. They brandished placards reading, "I will wear whatever I want."[75] It was not long before there was a presidential directive to crack down on Mungiki and several arrests were made.[76]

In Nigeria, it was "Jesus of Oyingbo" who was the bane of the authorities for many years. The founder of the Universal College of Regeneration (UCR), Olufunmilayo Odumosu ran a commune at his Lagos residence where women members became "wives" or "sisters." Incest was reported, and procreation was a goal of the group.[77] The UCR disbanded following the death of the founder some years ago. More widely known is the case of the Divine Light Mission, a communitarian group predicated on Eastern spirituality and run by Guru Maharaj Ji (also known as Guru, he claims no connections with the group of the same name even though he did spend time in Great Britain). There have been a number of attacks on the mission's ashrams, mainly spearheaded by former members. For example, in 1989, Maharaj Ji was arrested when a former devotee claimed that the leader had killed and buried two hundred people in the Ibadan ashram. After extensive digging by the police, no evidence was found to support these claims. In late July 2000, the leader was acquitted of murder charges following the beating death of a Ghanaian devotee at the Lagos/Iju ashram. The judge reprimanded the police for their high-handedness and poor investigations.[78]

The Brazilian Pentecostal church, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, has generated controversy in at least three African countries to date. In Kenya, the church was criticized for attracting people via the media on the basis of unrealizable expectations. In South Africa, the Human Rights Commission receives more complaints concerning this religious organization than any other in the country.[79] In Zambia, the movement was proscribed in 1998 on the grounds that it had not

operated "within the laws of the land."[80] Former church members also publicly alleged that ritual murderers operated from within the church and that members were purportedly required to donate blood for satanic rituals.

Religious Power and Authority

In the competitive public spheres of Africa's cities clashes between mainstream and minority religious groups occur quite frequently. The accusations can be theological ("satanic") or social (dangerous, antisocial, corrupt) in nature, but the interests center on boundary maintenance. Loss of members to another organization entails loss of revenue and loss of prestige. Increasingly, these confrontations may be played out in the media, which often serves to heighten the disagreements.[81] They may not involve the government unless the latter is invoked in matters of registration, illegal operations, etc. Not infrequently it is the newer Christian movements who take the high moral ground in condemning the nefarious or unbiblical practices of others. For instance, a Zambian bishop of the Church of God suggested that the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia be allowed to scrutinize applications of new churches for registration since government regulations were "very weak."[82]

To combat the "sheep-stealing" activities of the Mungiki group in Kenya a seminar was organized in September 2000 by the National Council of Churches of Kenya to investigate the activities of the "sect" and offer guidance on how to confront it.[83] Earlier strategies involved emphasizing through the media the group's unregistered status. The confrontation between Mungiki and church leaders escalated in October 2000 as Mungiki leaders issued a seven-day ultimatum to the Anglican Church of Kenya to apologize over the assertion of retired Archbishop Mannasses Kuria that it was satanic. Annoyed group members called on the Anglican Church to disassociate itself from the prelate's remarks or "we (Mungiki) in liaison with our Muslim brothers issue a fatwa (decree) on them." In a show of defiance, the head of the Anglican Church in Kenya, Bishop David Gitari, dismissed the Mungiki threat, saying his church would not want to engage in petty politics with a violent and unregistered group. "The church could only respond to the threats of fatwa by the Mungiki sect upon receipt of a written decree duly signed by sect leaders and their Muslim brothers," the *East African Standard* (Nairobi) quoted Gitari as saying some days later.[84]

It should be noted that these attacks and counterattacks have been occurring within a general context of socio-political insecurity and economic downturn in Kenya. Fears of "devil worship" involving the rich and powerful abound. This more modernized, global type of witchcraft, with its conspiratorial interpretations, is believed to account for the child

kidnapping and killings that have rocked Nairobi and Mombasa in recent times. It is also linked to serious corruption and illegal land transactions.[85] Any organization that is remotely secretive can fall prey to these accusations. The Freemasons constitute one such example, despite (or in some minds because of) their support from the Roman Catholic Church. The Kenyan government even went so far as to establish a Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Devil Worship in 1994 in response to public concern, mainly voiced by Christian clergy. Its report was presented to parliament in August 1999.[86]

According to the United States State Department's 2000 Annual Report for International Religious Freedom, the Kenyan report alleged that "Satanists" had infiltrated nonindigenous religious groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Christian Scientists, as well as the Freemasons and the Theosophical Society. The State Department report notes significantly that most members of the commission were "senior members of mainline Christian churches."[87] A local journalist wryly commented that "[t]he commissioners overlooked the fact that Kenya is a secular state and went on to prescribe standards that only Moses the Lawmaker could think of recommending to the Jews."[88] In a trenchant and humorous piece, *The Nation* (Nairobi) journalist G. K. Waruhiu wrote, "[i]t is also highly defamatory, scandalous, and poorly presented, full of cliches and empty statements which were not properly researched, and which in the final analysis amount to a new-fangled Kenyan Spanish Inquisition, or simple witch-hunting."[89] He called on the government to apologize for wasting taxpayers' time and money and putting minority religions at risk. For many Christians the non-release of the government report has spurred them to take their own action. The Christian Churches Education Association (CCEA) of Kenya, for example, is setting up its own commission to probe "devil worship" in learning institutions countrywide.[90] It will begin work in January 2001.

Not much is said or known publicly about New Age, Rosicrucian, and Asian-derived movements in Africa. But there is a growing pattern of critical opposition to, if not outright harassment of, these movements by evangelical and conservative Christian groups in particular. Summit Lighthouse members reported to me in Calabar in August 1997 that they had been physically harassed and publicly abused by militant Christians, and eventually forced to cancel their planned public rally at the central sports stadium. As indicated earlier, media channels may be employed to identify the enemy or answer critics. Eckankar's local president in Liberia sought to dispel rumors in October 2000 about its "dubious and secret activities" in the country by publicly explaining its key tenets.[91] Likewise, Nigeria's Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Chief Bola Ige, took advantage of a major AMORC (Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis) convention to chide critics for their dismissal of the order as a "secret cult" when, according to him, that is how Chris-

tianity began its life.[92] The New Age, Rosicrucian, and Asian-derived movements seem to enjoy greater tolerance in Ghana and South Africa because of their associations with the ruling classes. For example, Summit Lighthouse was closely associated with the Acheampong regime in Ghana in the 1970s. In South Africa, the New Age movement is growing—mainly among the white middle class—primarily as a quest for alternative healing strategies. On the whole these New Age, Rosicrucian, and Asian-derived movements have a limited appeal for most Africans. Ironically, while the secrecy cultivated by some of these groups is a source of stigma, it may eventually be what protects them. Some are dismissed as being "Eastern" or "Oriental" religions. Their public lectures are frequently held on university campuses. Economic demands on members, whether for initiation purposes or the purchase of inspirational/instructional materials, may also preclude or reduce access.

Sometimes the government can decide to intervene on matters of religious conflict. For instance, the Nigerian government banned religious broadcasting in the late 1980s in an effort to stem the tide of interreligious conflict. In Uganda, at least a decade ago, the government became alarmed by the intolerance between churches, in particular the anti-Catholic preachings of the Pentecostals.[93] One of the measures they took was to place a ban in 1990 on television and radio programs by the Pentecostal churches. The infighting between the newer "born-again" churches has been exacerbated by the growing influence of demonic and satanic beliefs (this is also strong in Ghana and South Africa)[94] and the tendencies of these churches to authoritarianism and totalitarianism.[95]

In Nigeria, it is precisely these newer groups that are tipping the balance of religious power relations despite the fact that they still have fewer adherents than mainline churches. This development has been a major factor in the ongoing religious conflicts that Nigeria has experienced over the last twenty years. Since late 1999 the violence between Muslims and Christians involving loss of life and property damage has been aggravated by the decision of several northern states to implement *shari'a* as the predominant legal system. It is more often than not the newer generation churches who are the most vocal in contesting these developments because of their militant and millennialist tendencies.[96] As I have argued elsewhere, they have readily appropriated the large and small media in their efforts to proselytize.[97] Their congregations are younger and hence less bound to tradition and centralized authorities, whether local or international. Yet their influence reaches a wide cross section of the population through their inspirational literature, gospel music, popular videos, and televangelism. While the larger movements carve out an image of apolitical, upright, and successful lifestyles replete with blessings and miracles, there is a dangerous undercurrent of conspiratorial and adversarial images of the Islamic other.

Moreover, it is often the evangelical, Pentecostal, and charismatic movements that are the most vocal in claiming their constitutional and international rights to religious freedom. This is due to the fact that their leaders may be more educated (many of these movements are born on university and college campuses) and their membership more middle-class than in the independent or "spiritual" churches. It stems also from their links with similar United States-based organizations and the fact that a defining characteristic of their enterprise is proselytization. We should not underestimate the role played by proselytization in antagonizing relationships between religion and the state, and between different religious groups in Africa.[98] More often than not this has served to polarize religious groups and generate conflict as each group seeks to claim its own space and protect its own practices, rather than recognize the need to negotiate contested issues and terrain. A good example of this would be the recent "To Drum or Not to Drum" controversy in Ghana, which was much covered—some would say exacerbated—by the press.[99] In 1998 and 1999 some Pentecostalists refused to accept an annual ban on drumming imposed by the Gan people in the capital, Accra, during an important traditional festival period. Some serious clashes resulted. A series of ecumenical moves prevented further outbreaks of violence in 2000.

CONCLUSION

As stated at the beginning of this essay, Africa has not seen the systematic suppressions of NRMs and minority religious groups of, say, China and Russia. One reason may be that the growth of the new religions in Africa has occurred over several decades and as a result of various configurations of local and international agency, rather than as a result of a sudden influx of exogenous proselytization as in Eastern Europe, for example. It is also linked to the fertile growth of Africa's movements. Movements that some decades ago were sidelined politically and culturally may now be larger and more influential than their mainline counterparts. The Zion Christian Church in South Africa is a case in point. As the largest of the independent churches in southern Africa with between three to six million members it has exceeded the membership of the Anglican and Dutch Reformed Churches. These facts notwithstanding, there is clear evidence of a new phase of interreligious and religion-state tensions taking shape across Africa. As adumbrated above, these local conflicts are fueled by the globalizing discourses of human rights and religious freedom, and the rapid expansion of the mass media.

Moreover, African states and their citizens debate openly these days whether unbridled religious freedom is healthy. Yet the growing number

of calls for more state regulation of religious groups can sometimes be countered with negative political and popular backlash. As is the pattern in Africa and elsewhere, it is the non-mainstream groups who come off worst, with the constitutional protection of religious freedom in many African states providing "cold comfort to religious groups disapproved of by the political authorities."[100] In the opinion of Kenyan legal scholar, Makau Mutua, it is traditional African religions that have suffered the most at the hands of the state.[101]

So alongside the many voices condemning the proliferation of religious movements in their respective countries, there are those who would defend the constitutional right to freedom of religion, even if that means allowing undesirable competitors to coexist in the public sphere. As a Kenyan journalist observed sagaciously not long after the Uganda crisis,

> Our government lacks the means through which to regulate these bodies without compromising the constitutional guarantee to freedom of worship. Society also deems it improper to probe the groups. The only workable preventive strategy then is for the followers to be alert and not let anyone sway them into wayward, unorthodox practices.[102]

As evidence of a more proactive strategy, a nongovernmental organization known as VOA ("la voix des abusés et des opprimés") was established in October 2000 in the Democratic Republic of Congo to educate members of religious groups to view their patrimony as collective rather than being owned by the leader alone.[103] This seems like a practical step in the face of empty government rhetoric at festival time about the need for religious tolerance. The role of academics and missionary organizations in fostering dialogue and promoting education is also noteworthy in this respect.[104] But we should not overlook the ways in which they are more than capable of shaping public discourses on minority religions in negative fashion.[105]

Much more research remains to be done on these emergent issues of religious freedom and conflict in Africa—not least to comprehend better the prevailing interconnections and tensions between religion, ethnicity, nationhood, and globalization. The experiences and trajectories of individual movements, and types of movements, in their interactions with the state need to be documented and analyzed. As suggested earlier in this essay, hard and fast categories and generalizations can run afoul of the evidence—the burgeoning Pentecostal groups being the primary case in point. In addition, the varying influences of colonialist and political leaders on current interpretations of freedom of religion and belief in the respective African contexts merit further investigation. We need to look to the way different models of religious freedom (whether European, American, Muslim, Christian, traditional African) are informing public debates and policy-making—particularly

given the current or proposed legal restrictions on "sects" and "cults" in several European countries that were former colonial powers. The role of the local and international media in shaping popular fears or understanding of the activities of NRMs is sorely in need of critical examination. United States-produced anticult and countercult literature has been on the bookshelves of Africa's Christian bookstores for some years now, but the activities of anticult organizations in Africa (whether local or foreign) would appear to be an under-researched and challenging new area for scholars of religion to engage.[106]

Africa's NRMs and minority religious groups may not trump the centrality of Christian-Muslim relations in shaping religion-state relationships. But with the trend by government, media, and churches to treat them as a generalized category they will likely grow in influence. Treatment of and attitudes toward these groups serve as important pointers to the differential power relations within each nation-state and reflect popular cultural attitudes of religious tolerance and intolerance. The cases of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Uganda and Mungiki in Kenya, as well as many others, clearly illustrate how the mishandling or misreading of a minor religious group may have dire national and international repercussions.

ENDNOTES

[1] I would like to acknowledge the help of Natalie Schwehr, Zachary Lomo, Sheila Braka, Robert Papini, Sunday Dare, Stephen Flanigan, and Samuel Amadi in preparing this essay. I also benefited from the helpful and probing comments and questions of colleagues when a version of this paper was presented at the Harvard Africa Seminar, 30 November 2000 and at the Boston University African Studies Center (Walter Rodney Seminar) on 5 February 2001. Portions of this paper were delivered at and benefited from an American Academy of Religion panel (cosponsored by the Millennialism Studies and New Religious Movements Groups) on the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, Nashville, 20 November 2000.

[2] See Terence O. Ranger, "Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa," *African Studies Review* 29, no. 2 (1986): 1-69; Rosalind I. J. Hackett, ed., *New Religious Movements in Nigeria* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987). As suggested here, I am operating with a fairly broad understanding of what constitutes a "new religious movement" in the African context. This is essential given the fluidity and flux of African forms of religious expression, and their greater leaning toward this-worldly pragmatism. I am including both exogenous and indigenous movements that distinguish themselves from mainstream religious traditions (whether local, Christian, or Islamic) in terms of practice, belief, and values. In many cases the reformulation of religious identity has involved institutional rupture and structural innovation through the agency of prophetic figures. Such movements for the most part are perceived as minority religious groups for reasons of size, ideology, and social practice. However, by dint of popularity and growth, they may become major players politically, socially, and religiously. This would be the case of the newer independent churches of Pentecostal and charismatic orientation. The terms "sect" and

"cult" do get used quite widely and generally pejoratively (that notwithstanding the anthropological uses of "cult" in the traditional context). In Nigeria the use of the term "cult" has come to refer almost solely to the "secret cults" which have been the scourge of university campuses for more than two decades. These are fraternity-type organizations that engage in terrorist and extortionist activities to bolster their group solidarity and perceived nefarious powers. They are not explicitly religious but may employ religious symbols as part of their repertoire and discourse of secrecy. These organizations have been banned on many campuses and in some states. See, e.g., Mike Osunde and Ifedayo Sayo, "Edo Passes Law against Cultism in School, Service," *Guardian Online*, 7 December 2000.

[3] See J. D. Van der Vyver, "Religious Freedom in African Constitutions," in *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, ed. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 109-43.

[4] See Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im and Francis M. Deng, eds., *Human Rights in Africa: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1990). Louise Pirouet, "The Churches and Human Rights in Kenya and Uganda since Independence," in *Religion and Politics in East Africa: The Period Since Independence*, eds. Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1995), 158.

[5] See J. Kilian, ed., *Religious Freedom in South Africa*, vol. 44 (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1993); J. M. Waliggo, "The Role of Christian Churches in the Democratisation Process in Uganda 1980-1993," in *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa*, ed. Paul Gifford (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 217-18; and Malory Nye, *Multiculturalism and Minority Religions in Britain: Krishna Consciousness, Religious Freedom, and the Politics of Location* (London: Curzon, 2001).

[6] See Rosalind I. J. Hackett, Mark Silk, and Dennis Hoover, eds., *Religious Persecution as a U.S. Policy Issue* (Hartford, CT: Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life, 2000).

[7] Paul Marshall, *Their Blood Cries Out* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997); and Nina Shea, *In the Lion's Den* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997). I have seen copies of these books circulating in Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa. See also his more recent report, Paul Marshall, ed., *Religious Freedom in the World: A Global Report on Persecution and Freedom* (New York: Broadman and Holman, 2000). As I was writing this article, the new book, *Today's Martyrs*, by religious statistician David B. Barrett, was being announced.

[8] Taken from a lecture, "Religion, Ethnicity and the Politics of Constitutionalism in Africa," delivered at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, 13 November 2000 and reported in *Post Express* (Lagos), 13 November 2000.

[9] Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, eds., *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[10] Cf. Richard Joseph, ed., *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner, 1999); Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, "Competing Claims to Religious Freedom and Communal Self-Determination in Africa," in *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, ed. An-Na'im, 9.

[11] Harold W. Turner sought to collate these works through his Centre for the Study of New Religious Movements, first at the University of Aberdeen, then at Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, United Kingdom. See, for his example, his now dated bibliography on African movements, *Bibliography of New Religious Movements in Primal Societies*, vol. 1, *Black Africa* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1977). Adrian Hastings bemoans the lack of a satisfactory overall study of NRMs in Africa. His own bibliography is very helpful, despite his general antipathy toward (and hence non-inclusion of) social science accounts, and the fact that he does not go beyond 1950. See Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 669-76.

[12] Such is intended by the new German journal, *Religion-Staat-Gesellschaft*. See also the very valuable special issue of *Social Justice Research* on "Justice and New Religious Movements" 12, no. 4 (1999) edited by James T. Richardson on Europe, Canada, and Australia. How-

ever, it should be noted that there is as yet very little case law in the African context in this area. But media, archival, and ethnographic sources can offset this lack. There is a need to complement or even contest the predominant outside interest (of the media, Christian missionary organizations, foreign governments, notably the United States) in Christian-Muslim relations. Véronique Faure makes the same observation about the southern African religious scene. See Véronique Faure, *Dynamiques Religieuses en Afrique Australe* (Paris: Karthala, 2000), 12. See Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998) for an excellent example of the type of scholarship needed on religion in Africa. Max Assimeng's *Saints and Social Structures* (Legon, Ghana: Ghana Publishing Company, 1986) is an earlier sociological analysis of NRMs in West and Central Africa that is both comparative and well researched.

[13] Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, 104-108; J. K. Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatrix Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[14] Wyatt MacGaffey, *Modern Kongo Prophets: Religion in a Plural Society* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983).

[15] Jim Kiernan, "The African Independent Churches," in *Living Faiths in South Africa*, eds. Martin Prozesky and John de Gruchy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 118f. See also the extensive literature on the Watchtower and Kitawala movements. G. Shepperson and T. Price, *Independent African: John Chilembwe and the Origins, Setting and Significance of the Nyasaland Native Rising of 1915* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1958), and Karen E. Fields, *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[16] See, for example, J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London: International African Institute, 1968); Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa*, 493-539; G. C. Oosthuizen and Irving Hexham, eds., *Afro-Christian Religion at the Grassroots in South Africa* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991); Jim Kiernan, "The African Independent Churches," in *Living Faiths in South Africa*, eds. Martin Prozesky and John De Gruchy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 116-28.

[17] Sanneh Lamin, *The Crown and the Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997); Sulayman S. Nyang, "Islamic Revivalism in West Africa: Historical Perspectives and Recent Developments," in *Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti*, eds. Jacob K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1993), 231-72; David Westerlund and Eva Evers Rosander, eds., *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters Between Sufis and Islamists* (London: Hurst, 1997).

[18] Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Revitalization in African Traditional Religion," in *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, ed. J. K. Olupona (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 135-48.

[19] See Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire and Spirit: History, Faith, and Gender in Rojo Religion in Western Kenya* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[20] In South Africa alone 4,500 names of African independent churches were discovered in the 1996 census. See Marjorie Froise, *South African Christian Handbook* (Welkom, South Africa: Christian Info, 2000), 64-65.

[21] Cf. Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Cassell, 1996), 243-62. For a more extensive discussion of links, differences, and labels regarding Christian-related NRMs in Africa, see Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriations of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26, no. 4 (1998):1-19, 259-60, and Paul Gifford, *African Christianity*, 334. To gain some idea of the complexity of the evangelical/Pentecostal/charismatic sector, see Gifford, *African Christianity*.

[22] Cf. Hannah W. Kinoti, "Religious Fragmentation in Kenya," in *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, ed. An-Na'im, 268-90; D. R. Boschman, "Religious Freedom in Botswana: The Cases of the Zion Christian Church and the Nazareth Church of

Botswana," in *African Independent Churches Today: Kaleidoscope of Afro-Christianity*, ed. M. C. Kitshoff (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 37-50.

[23] Some even owed their very being to such a political goal. Witness the case of the neo-traditional movement, Godianism, founded by Chief K. O. K. Onyioha in Nigeria, as the religious wing of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons.

[24] J. N. K. Mugambi, "African Churches in Social Transformation," *Journal of International Affairs* 50, no. 1 (1996): 194-220, 205.

[25] Johan W. Claasen, "Independents Made Dependents: African Independent Churches and Government Recognition," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 91 (June 1995): 15-34.

[26] Matthew Schoffeleers, "Healing and Political Acquiescence in African Independent Churches," in *Religion and Politics in Southern Africa*, eds. Carl F. Hallencreutz and Mai Palmberg (Uppsala: Scandanavian Institute of African Studies, 1991), 89-108; cf. Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1985).

[27] Bengt Sundkler, "African Independent Churches and their Political Roles," in *Religion and Politics in Southern Africa*, eds. Hallencreutz and Palmberg, 87.

[28] Ibid., 86.

[29] In the new edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* edited by David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions, AD 3–AD 2200* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), David Barrett claims that those believing in and practicing such spiritual gifts as healing and speaking in tongues continue to be the fastest growing segment of Christianity. Africa numbers 126 million who consider themselves to be Pentecostal or charismatic. See <http://www.religiontoday.com > (viewed 14 August 2000). Marthinus Daneel contests the conflation and inflation of these figures on Pentecostalism in South Africa. See Marthinus L. Daneel, *African Initiated Churches in Southern Africa: Protest Movements or Mission Churches?* Vol. 33 (Boston: African Humanities Program, African Studies Center, 2000), 7. Gifford rightly indicates that perhaps South Africa, because of its later political liberation, is the only place in Africa where the older-style independent churches still flourish. See Gifford, *African Christianity*, 325. That notwithstanding, they are still marginalized. For example, at the conference of Christian World Communions held in Johannesburg in October 2000 they were not invited but met with separately. See "Christian World Communions Begin Conference," Panafrican News Agency, 23 October 2000. However, the South African Council of Churches is reconsidering its membership procedures because of new trends in application for membership, notably from the African Independent Churches. Also it is not uncommon now for the South African president to go on official visits to the larger independent churches. Information from Robert Papini, 17 November 2000.

[30] Paul Gifford, *African Christianity*, 334.

[31] Ruth Marshall, "Power in the Name of Jesus," *Review of African Political Economy* 52 (1991): 21-37.

[32] In fact, Gifford, *African Christianity*, 245, 334, argues that the label of "sect" is inappropriate for these groups as they are not breaking away from power but seeking to become part of the establishment in many cases.

[33] As stated unambiguously by the founder of the Abundant Life church in Uganda, "[A]ny President with any sense would welcome born-again churches. We pray for them," Gifford, *African Christianity*, 174. There are naturally exceptions. Dr. Mensa Otabil, founder and senior pastor of the International Central Gospel Church in Accra, Ghana, has established himself as a thoughtful critic of Ghana's post-independence phase. See ibid., 80-84, 237-42, and the church's new website, <http://www.centralgospel.com>. See also Joseph Eastwood Anaba, *God's Endtime Militia: Winning the War Within and Without* (Oxford: n.p., 1993). A top example from Nigeria would be Tunde Bakare, founder of the Latter Rain Assembly in Lagos, who has drawn criticism for his outspoken prophecies. See Temitope Ogunjinmi, "Profile: A Fiery Priest," *The News* (Lagos), 14 June 1999.

[34] Cf. Marat Shterin, "Legislating on Religion in the Face of Uncertainty," in *Law and Informal Practices in Russia*, eds. J. Callaghan and M. Kurkchian (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

[35] North Africa is not covered in the present essay.

[36] A relevant example here would be the radical Islamic movement in northern Nigeria, known as Maitatsine, which clashed with political and religious authorities in the late 1970s. Property was damaged and hundreds of lives were lost. There is also the recent case of the alleged killing of the popular Prophet Eddy Nawgu (Edwin Okeke) in Onitsha, Nigeria, in late 2000. See Geoffrey Ekenna, "Death of a Miracle Man," *Newswatch* (Lagos), 11 December 2000, 23, 32. Although popular with many for his divinatory skills and community building activities, Prophet Eddy was reportedly involved in clashes with the Roman Catholic Church, the police, and local vigilantes over his criminal exploits. He was even the subject of a 1993 book, *Truth and the Oracle at Nawgu* (Nigeria: Hanoby Books, 1993), by a university lecturer, Anene Obianyido, who claimed that Okeke was guilty of numerous human rights abuses.

[37] David Throup, "'Render Unto Caesar the Things That are Caesar's': The Politics of Church-State Conflict in Kenya 1978-1990," in *Religion and Politics in East Africa*, eds. Hansen and Twaddle, 143-76; Louise Pirouet, "The Churches and Human Rights in Kenya and Uganda since Independence," ibid., 247-59.

[38] Formed in 1965 by Ngonya wa Gakonya, the Tent of the Living God changed its name in 1988 from the Church of the Living God. It was deregistered by the Kenyan government in February 1990 as a source of disunity and anti-government sentiments (*The Weekly Review* [Nairobi] 16 February 1990). For details of continued harassment, see Edward Miller, "Kenya Wary as Traditional Religions Are Revived," *Washington Times*, 24 August 2000. See also Grace Nyatugah Wamue, "Mungiki Movement: Religion or Cult?" Paper presented at the African Association for the Study of Religions regional conference, Nairobi, July 1999.

[39] Murthui Mwai, "What makes Mungiki tick?" *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 23 October 2000.

[40] "Abong'o outlaws Mungiki meetings," *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 26 October 2000.

[41] "Exposed: Terror Gang of Kayole," *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 25 October 2000.

[42] See Human Rights Watch, *The Scars of Death: Children Abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1997). These accusations continue up to the present time. See Allan Thompson, "Hope for Child Soldiers: Canada Brokers Deal with Sudan," *Toronto Star*, 18 September 2000.

[43] Gérard Prunier, "Le Mouvement d'Alice Lakwena, un Prophétisme Politique en Ouganda," in *L'Invention Religieuse en Afrique: Histoire et Religion en Afrique Noire*, ed. Jean-Pierre Chrétien (Paris: ACCT–Karthala, 1993), 409-30; Heike Behrend, "The Holy Spirit Movement and the Forces of Nature in the North of Uganda 1985-1987," in *Religion and Politics in East Africa*, eds. Hansen and Twaddle, 59-71; idem, "War in Northern Uganda: The Holy Spirit Movements of Alice Lakwena, Severino Lukoya and Joseph Kony (1986-97)," in *African Guerillas*, ed. Christopher Clapham (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 107-18. Alice fled to Kenya where it is believed that she has remained since 1987.

[44] Zachary Lomo, a student in Kampala at the time, argues that Lakwena's movement was a direct response to the political polarization introduced by Museveni when he came into power in 1986. Personal communication, 8 November 2000.

[45] Heike Behrend, "The Holy Spirit Movement and the Forces of Nature in the North of Uganda 1985-1987," in *Religion and Politics in East Africa*, eds. Hansen and Twaddle, 69.

[46] Gérard Prunier, "Le Mouvement d'Alice Lakwena, un Prophétisme Politique en Ouganda," in *L'Invention Religieuse en Afrique*, ed. Chrétien, 428.

[47] Kwesi A. Dickson, "The Church and the Quest for Democracy in Ghana," in *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa*, ed. Paul Gifford (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 265-66.

[48] "Jehovah's Witnesses: Are They Really Banned?" *Uhuru* 2, 1990.

[49] Murthui Mwai, "What Makes Mungiki Tick?" *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 23 October 2000.

[50] Bengt Sundkler, "African Independent Churches and their Political Roles," in *Religion and Politics in Southern Africa*, eds. Hallencreutz and Palmberg, 86.

[51] See Ndombasi Ludiongo, "Rapport Sectes et Pouvoirs Politiques: Aspects Juridiques des Sectes," in *Sectes, Cultures et Sociétés: Les Enjeux Spirituels du Temps Présent* (Quatrième Colloque Internationale du Centre d'Etudes des Religions Africaines, Kinshasa, 14-21 November 1992) (Kinshasa: Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa, 1994), 355-74. Also published as *Cahiers des Religions Africaines* 27-28, nos. 53-56 (1993-1994).

[52] Ibid., 367.

[53] Decree of 18 September 1965; Law no. 71-02, 31 December 1971.

[54] Article 1 of Law no. 71-0012, 31 December 1971. See Ludiongo, "Rapport Sectes et Pouvoirs Politiques," 373-74.

[55] Information from Dr. Matthews A. Ojo, 6 November 2000.

[56] See Klaus Hock, *Der Islam-Komplex* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1996).

[57] "Great Millennium Crusade Kicks Off Today," *Post Express* (Lagos), 8 November 2000.

[58] Joseph Aimienmwon, "Faithfuls Seek Clean Bill Over Joshua's Detention," *Post Express* (Lagos), 11 September 2000.

[59] Anthony Okoro, "Nothing Can Disintegrate Nigeria-Prophet Joshua," *P.M. News* (Lagos), 19 June 2000. Nicholas Ibewuike, "Zambian President to Become Prophet Chiluba," Panafrican News Agency, 13 November 2000.

[60] Kevin Ward, "The Church of Uganda Amidst Conflict: The Interplay between Church and Politics in Uganda since 1962," in *Religion and Politics in East Africa*, eds. Hansen and Twaddle, 82.

[61] See, for example, Paul Gifford, *The New Crusaders: Christianity and the New Right in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto, 1991).

[62] That notwithstanding, a Kenyan government minister ordered the Nigerian-based Winners' Chapel out of his district for its purported involvement in child abductions and anti-government activities. See "Nigerian Church Ordered Out of Kenyan District," Panafrican News Agency, 28 October 2000.

[63] Figures illustrating this type of growth come from Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. See "2,177 églises et sectes recencées à Kinshasa," Panafrican News Agency, 27 October 2000. The report elicited much public criticism and concern.

[64] For a classic story of a man being duped by a fake prophet, see Anthony Okoro, "Prey to Fake Prayers," *P.M. News* (Lagos), 13 November 2000.

[65] "Uganda Doomsday Cult Arrested," Associated Press, 19 July 2000.

[66] See Stefan Lovgren, "Cults, Some Deadly, Flourish in Africa. Some Governments Fear Groups Will Challenge Their Authority," <http://www.msnbc.com/news/>, 30 March 2000.

[67] Personal communication, 11 November 2000.

[68] I am primarily indebted to two sources for the sketch of this movement: Massigmo Introvigne, "Tragedy in Uganda: The Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, a Post-Catholic Movement," <http://www.cesnur.org> (last accessed on 14 November 2000), and Jean-François Mayer, "The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God: Between Facts and Fiction," report on a research trip to Uganda (unpublished and privately circulated), 13-23 August 2000. In addition to the numerous press reports, local and international, on the movement, of varying reliability, see also, Irving Hexham, "What Really Happened in Uganda?" *Religion in the News* 3, no. 2 (2000): 7-9.

[69] As this article was going to press information became available in the form of a journalistic analysis ("'Mary's Flames': The Long Road to Horror in Kanungu," *The East African* (Nairobi), 8 February 2001) of the Makerere report authored by Gerard Banura, Chris Tuhirirwe, and Joseph Begumanya (published by Marianum Press of Kisibi, 2001). The authors of the report provide more information on the "chaotic situation" that developed

in the camp when the earlier predictions regarding the end of the world on 31 December 1999 did not come to pass and the date was extended to 17 March 2000. The leaders started selling the followers' property and possessions, and persistent complainants were made to disappear. The report also states that Mwerinde and Kibwetere met (in 1988?) at an apparition site developed in the 1980s by Gauda Kamusha at Nyabugoto caves. They launched their own movement in 1990 and then moved in 1993 to Kanungu, registering in the same year as a religious NGO. They named the site, Ishayuuriro rya Maria, meaning "where Mary comes to the rescue of the spiritually stranded." The report claims that the movement attracted people (predominantly women and children) from various religions, classes, and professions, and was not limited to the illiterate as had been generally thought.

[70] Jossy Muhangia, "Fugitive Cult Boss Arrested," *The New Vision* (Kampala), 19 July 2000.

[71] "Ugandan Doomsday Cult Surfaces in Kenya," Panafrican News Agency, 31 July 2000.

[72] "American Suicide Cult Invades Kenya," Panafrican News Agency, 27 October 2000. The report goes on to list all known recent "cults" around the world that have led to loss of life. It also mentions that the Kenyan government warned people in March 2000 that a British group, the Children of God, "known for sexually molesting children," had established a base in the country.

[73] It was most likely the group known as Cult Solutions. Information from Massimo Introvigne, 18 November 2000. See Massimo Introvigne, "The Secular Anti-Cult and the Religious Counter-Cult Movement: Strange Bedfellows or Future Enemies?" in *New Religions and the New Europe*, ed. Robert Towler (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1995), 32-54, for the distinctions between the secular anticult and religious countercult movements.

[74] "Exposed, Terror Gang of Kayole," *The Nation* (Nairobi), 25 October 2000. An additional incident occurred on 12 November 2000. See "Kenya's Outlawed Sect Members Arrested After Battling Police," Panafrican News Agency, 13 November 2000.

[75] Hannah Gakuo, "Women in Demo over Dress Code," *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 5 November 2000.

[76] "Kenya's Outlawed Sect Members Arrested After Battling Police," Panafrican News Agency, 13 November 2000.

[77] *Newswatch* (Lagos), 22 February 1988.

[78] Information from Matthews A. Ojo, 6 November 2000.

[79] Barney Pityana, Chair, South African Human Rights Commission, personal communication, 6 August 2000.

[80] Namasiku Ilukena, "Zambia Church Banned for 'Satanism,'" *Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg), 9 September 1998. They were banned under section 17 of the Societies Act. The church was founded in 1975 and came to Zambia in 1995.

[81] Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Managing or Manipulating Religious Conflict in the Nigerian Media," in *Studies in Media, Religion and Culture*, eds. Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, forthcoming).

[82] Namasiku Ilukena, "Zambia Church Banned for 'Satanism,'" *Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg), 9 September 1998.

[83] "Kenyan Churches Alarmed By Spread of 'Mungiki' Sect," Panafrican News Agency, 3 September 2000.

[84] Tervil Okoko, "Religious Bodies Trade Accusations Over Devil-Worship," <http://www.allafrica.com>, 3 October 2000.

[85] For a litany of social and economic problems in Nyanza province attributed to "devil worship"(by the Provincial Commissioner himself), see Churchill Otieno, "PC in Devil Worship Claim," *The Nation* (Nairobi), 11 October 1999.

[86] It was originally scheduled to remain under government wraps for four years but the report was leaked by the *Daily Nation* (Nairobi) newspaper.

[87] <http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/irf_index.html> (site visited on 29 November 2000).

[88] Otsieno Namwaya, "Dark Forces, Bloody Rituals under Probe," *The East African* (Nairobi), 17 August 1999.

[89] "Devil Worship Report the Height of Naivete," *The Nation* (Nairobi), 13 August 1999.

[90] "Religious Association Launches Cult Probe," Panafrican News Agency, 10 December 2000.

[91] "'We're Not in Dubious Activities': Eckankar Followers Dispel Rumours," *The News* (Monrovia), 23 October 2000.

[92] Yakubu Musa, "Christianity Started As a Cult, Says Ige," *This Day-Lagos*, 19 November 2000.

[93] Gifford, *African Christianity*, 175-76.

[94] See, in particular, Birgit Meyer, "'Delivered from the Powers of Darkness': Confessions about Satanic Riches in Christian Ghana," *Africa* 65, no. 2 (1995): 236-55; and idem, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). Véronique Faure, "L'occulte et le politique en Afrique du Sud," in *Dynamiques religieuses en Afrique australe*, idem, 175-205. See also the attribution of recent ethnic clashes in Nigeria to "Satan" by a London-based Nigerian evangelist and writer, Matthew Ashimolowo, *P.M. News* (Lagos), 30 October 2000. He was speaking at a one-week Christian conference that he organized in Nigeria to address "the satanic forces bent on stifling the country's development." He urged Nigerians to turn to Christ to combat the government's demonstration of "demon-cracy."

[95] See the call by Gospel Outreach Fellowship junior pastor, Alex Phiri, to the Zambian government to "come up with criteria to screen and scrutinise churches and their doctrines" and "to help churches acquire land to build more churches." Chisenga Kabuswe, "Church Leaders' Conduct Worries Rev. Chintala," *Post of Zambia* (Lusaka), 27 October 2000.

[96] Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Radical Christian Revivalism in Nigeria and Ghana: Recent Patterns of Conflict and Intolerance," in *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, ed. An-Na'im, 246-67.

[97] Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26, no. 4 (1998): 1-19.

[98] The Kenyan government has made it clear that campaigns of competitive conversion are considered to be divisive and contrary to President Moi's *Nyayo* philosophy of "peace, love and unity." Donal B. Cruise O'Brien, "Coping with the Christians: The Muslim Predicament in Kenya," in *Religion and Politics in East Africa*, eds. Hansen and Twaddle, 209.

[99] This is how the dispute got characterized in the local press.

[100] J. D. Van der Vyver, "Religious Freedom in African Constitutions," in *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, ed. An-Na'im, 140.

[101] Makau Mutua "'Returning to My Roots: African 'Religions' and the State," in *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, ed. An-Na'im, 169-90. See also Hannah W. Kinoti, "Religious Fragmentation in Kenya," in ibid., 269.

[102] Benson Kimathi, "Cults and their Followers," *The Nation* (Nairobi), 22 April 2000.

[103] See "2,177 églises et sectes recencées à Kinshasa," Panafrican News Agency, 27 October 2000.

[104] The Mennonites, for example, have long been active in providing theological education for the leaders of independent churches. The South African professor of religion, G.C. Oosthuizen, has for several decades, through his research unit at the University of Zululand and now from his home in Durban, championed research and publication on South Africa's independent churches, and organized annual conferences in which many independent church leaders participated.

[105] In former Zaïre, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, numerous conferences have been held and research projects conducted on the country's proliferation of NRMs. The scholarship tends to reflect, however, the fact that the universities have official ecclesiastical connections (predominantly Roman Catholic). In the midst of very useful research

data it is not uncommon to read statements about the cancerous growth, social problems, and threats to public order and the status quo constituted by such religious groups. See, for example, Centre d'Etudes des Religions Africaines, *Sectes, Cultures et Sociétés: Les Enjeux Spirituels du Temps Présent (*Kinshasa: Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa, 1994).

[106] Cf. Marat Shterin and James T. Richardson, "Effects of the Western Anti-Cult Movement on Development of Laws Concerning Religion in Post-Communist Russia," *Journal of Church and State* 42, no. 2 (2000): 247-71. See also Anson Shupe and David Bromley, *Anti-Cult Movements in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Garland, 1994); James Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to the New Religious Movements* (New York: Tavistock, 1985). Interestingly, Bamesa Tshungu notes in his study of satanic groups ("sectes luciférienes") in Zaïre that several members reported that they were *attracted* to these movements through the anticult literature of popular authors such as Rebecca Brown.

China and New Religious Movements

Scott Lowe

INTRODUCTION

The government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has managed to stay in the international spotlight for many months with its ongoing suppression of the *qigong*-based spiritual group Falun Gong (also called Falun Dafa). In its attempts to justify its behavior to an outraged West, China has relied primarily on finger pointing, claiming that many other nations, including the United States, regularly engage in similar practices of repression and control. In both official and quasi-official PRC web sites, sources associated with the American anticult movement are cited with approval and used to demonstrate that Falun Gong is a "cult." These sites further imply that "cults" are evil and regularly prosecuted in the United States.[1]

When facing censure over trade practices or international copyright violations, the Chinese have not been shy to claim exemption from the values and practices of western societies on the basis of their long-standing distinctive cultural traditions. Yet, curiously, when it comes to the control and suppression of religious groups, the Chinese have made very little propaganda use of their venerable two-thousand-year-old tradition of monitoring and regulating major religions and harshly repressing *xie jiao* (lit. "wicked teachings") and *hui* ("sworn brotherhoods" and "secret societies"), a broad group of "heterodox" teachings and clandestine organizations that resemble in a generic way what Western scholars call new religious movements (NRMs).[2]

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

As C. K. Yang has convincingly demonstrated, from the time of the earliest written records till the modern day, the dominant "Confucian" strand of Chinese thought has placed a premium on society-wide ideological conformity.[3] The emperors of successive dynasties engaged in a demanding schedule of time-hallowed rituals that were viewed by traditionalists as a kind of religio-political governance process through which the ruler was brought into harmony with Heaven, local deities, and the

ancestors, thereby securing the peace, prosperity, and order of the realm. A less elaborate ritual calendar dictated the corresponding performances of officers on the provincial and district levels. Government officials at all levels, from the imperial court down to the county magistrates, regularly functioned in multiple capacities, serving in turn as investigators, public works managers, arbitrators, judges, and religious specialists. Traditional rituals, and to a lesser extent the beliefs that accompanied them, were an essential part of the governance process and a fundamental source of social harmony and cohesion.

Deviant beliefs were not simply eccentric, a matter of personal concern or choice, for if propagated widely, they would inevitably threaten the stability of the entire society. Not surprisingly, unorthodox beliefs and practices were seen more as treason than heresy. The modern western ideal of the separation of church and state not only would have made no sense in traditional China, it would have been perceived as threatening by most members of society, a seditious idea that any humane ruler ought to suppress. The Chinese *knew* beyond questioning that in a balanced, harmonious empire there is no difference between the religious and the political. In the last few decades, we have seen similar positions endorsed by Christian, Muslim, and even Buddhist neotraditionalists around the globe.

With the arrival of Buddhist missionaries in the first century C.E., the Chinese had their first known encounter with a spiritual tradition that was separate from—and sometimes in conflict with—the shared beliefs and practices of the surrounding community. Buddhism not only expanded the spiritual horizons of the Chinese, it also brought the startlingly novel concept of conversion. While all Chinese were familiar with the seasonal celebrations of their communities and the ancient patterns of domestic ritual—traditions that they had inherited without choice, like their local languages and cultures—Buddhism offered something new: a comprehensive way of life that could be studied, evaluated, formally accepted, and adopted. The conservatives were outraged.[4]

Once the idea of voluntary religious affiliation had entered China, it spread rapidly. In 184 C.E. the "Yellow Turbans," a NRM based on Taoist teachings, rose in revolt against the declining Han dynasty.[5] Five years later, a second group, the "Five Pecks of Rice" religion, a similar Taoist offshoot, rebelled, establishing a theocratic state in the Southwest of China. Both these politically ambitious NRMs shared the prevailing orthodox view that religion and governance are inseparable; a new ideology both necessitates and legitimates the creation of a new political order. The potential for rebellion by the followers of millenarian or messianic leaders—often unrealized but ever present—is a recurring theme in subsequent Chinese history and explains much of the alarm with which the ruling elite has always viewed religious movements operating outside of the government's tight system of control.

Governmental regulation of organized religion has been the norm in China for nearly two thousand years. The foreign "Great Traditions" practiced in China (Buddhism, Islam, and more recently Christianity) and indigenous Taoist organizations have always been regulated and overseen by the bureaucracies of successive dynasties, both native and "barbarian," though the effectiveness of this oversight has not been consistent. Governments have reserved the right to limit ordination and determine the qualifications of Buddhist and Taoist clergy, periodically "cleaning house" and expelling monks and nuns who fail to measure up to the moral and academic standards set by the state.

Alarmed by the concentration of land and capital under the control of the great Buddhist monasteries, the rulers of the Tang dynasty (618–906 C.E.) attacked Buddhism on several occasions, confiscating enormous wealth and forcibly returning hundreds of thousands of monks and nuns to lay life. So severe was this assault that many scholars believe that Chinese Buddhist monasticism never fully recovered from the "Great Persecution" of 845. From that time until the early twentieth century, academic Buddhist study and rigorous monastic practice were largely confined to a handful of major government supported monasteries.

During the centuries that Buddhism has been a force in China, Buddhist leaders have often enjoyed close, mutually advantageous (but unequal) relationships with civil authorities. Though the Buddhist establishment was sometimes wealthy and powerful, the state consistently held the upper hand. The suffocating regulation of monastic Buddhism since the founding of the PRC in 1949 might plausibly be viewed as a simple continuation of earlier patterns of state control, though it must be acknowledged that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has proven far more efficient than any of its predecessors.

Imperial support and patronage of minority religious traditions was also employed as a conscious mechanism of political control, especially in the cases of Islam in western China and Vajrayana Buddhism in Mongolia and the neighboring country of Tibet. Manipulation and interference in the internecine disputes of Tibetan high lamas and their monasteries, most notably by the Mongol Yuan (1271–1368) and the Manchu Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, forms the main basis of the Chinese claim to sovereignty over the vast Tibetan plateau.[6]

Of course, China has long been home to a wide range of local gods and distinctive ritual traditions. As long as these were the expressions of traditional regional cultures and posed no overt threat to the political order, they were generally tolerated. In fact, the imperial authorities consciously attempted to co-opt local deities by incorporating them into the official pantheon.[7] This was a clever, pragmatic response to the regional diversity found in an almost ungovernably large realm, and since local traditions tended to be politically conservative and strongly supportive of the status quo, there was usually little danger in the practice.

Nonetheless, the ruling elite was always on the lookout for nascent subversive tendencies.

By far the greatest regulation and persecution was reserved for the thousands of indigenous sectarian religious groups and secret societies that first flourished during the Yuan dynasty and have continued to the present day throughout the Chinese cultural sphere. The danger these NRMs posed for the established political order became painfully obvious during the Qing dynasty, when scarcely a decade passed without significant armed insurrections.

Study of the Qing legal code suggests that the ruling elite had a powerful fear of clandestine brotherhoods and sectarian religious groups, lumping them together into broad categories for prosecution and sentencing, and punishing their members with a ferocity that seems astonishing to modern observers.[8] Founders and leaders of any sort of proscribed group[9] were usually executed if the group was considered potentially troublesome and banished (after heavy caning) if innocuous.[10] Ordinary members received sentences ranging from execution through banishment to simple caning, depending on their degree of involvement. Strangely enough, these draconian punishments do not seem to have prevented the widespread proliferation of NRMs throughout the Qing and Republican (1911–1949) periods, suggesting that millions of Chinese must have felt a strong need for the spiritual and economic support these groups offered.

In the coached, formulaic "confessions" of NRM leaders preserved in official documents we can discern the motives that government inquisitors projected upon these groups. Under torture, leaders usually "confessed" to being frauds who had tricked their followers into seditious behavior in order to gain power and wealth. Many also confessed to outrageous acts of sexual license and flagrantly immoral behavior. It is significant that the charges brought against the leaders of Chinese NRMs hundreds of years ago are virtually indistinguishable from the accusations made today against modern "cult" leaders in the mass media, East and West. And, of course, these same formulaic charges of financial and sexual exploitation are currently being brought by the government of the PRC against the leaders of a wide range of NRMs.

The most popular NRMs of the Qing and Republican periods derive from rather disparate sources. While it falls outside the scope of this essay to treat them in detail, a brief overview of two important strands, the "White Lotus" and "Triad" traditions, may prove illustrative, especially since both these traditions continue to be influential in modern China. It should be kept in mind that as these groups proliferated, their theologies, oral histories, and rituals evolved with great speed and creativity, so any general account will only approximately suggest the beliefs and practices of specific groups.

The so-called "White Lotus" groups usually share a creation myth centered around the "Unborn Ancient Progenitoress" (*Wusheng Laomu*) and seek salvation through initiation into secret teachings and practices. According to the "Gnostic" myth shared by "White Lotus" groups, humans are the children of an ancient mother goddess who sent her offspring down to earth to play. Over time, the children became entangled in the world of matter and desire, forgetting their origins in pure spirit. Trapped in the realm of sensory pleasures, the children became coarse and vulgar, weighed down by progressively heavier burdens of evil karma. The Ancient Progenitoress, still grieving for her lost offspring, has sent down a series of saviors to awaken her slumbering children, to little avail. Soon a great period of purifying disasters will come. (Inspired leaders usually insert their chosen date here.) The *kalpa* is about to turn, bringing with it a "black wind" that will annihilate all unbelievers.[11] The faithful few will then live happily ever after in a radically transformed, depopulated, and purified world. Since time is running out, it is urgent that all spiritually salvageable individuals heed the message of a new savior (often a child identified by the NRM's leaders as Maitreya Buddha, though sometimes a sect leader will claim this role). With a charismatic leader, suitable conditions, and this powerful message, White Lotus groups were, and perhaps still are, capable of explosive growth.

Leaders of White Lotus groups usually emphasize the importance of vegetarianism and celibacy and often teach mantra recitation as an essential practice. Martial arts practices are featured prominently in some groups. Determining the exact moment of the *kalpa*'s turn is a crucial concern, and in the past rebellions often began when a sect leader exhorted his followers to revolt in order to hasten the onset of destruction.[12]

Triad-related "secret society" groups, on the other hand, tend to emphasize mutual support and invest most of their energy in overtly economic activities. However, most also engage in elaborate initiation ceremonies and express clear messianic expectations in their founding myths. Many of these groups trace their origins to a legendary clandestine band of Shaolin martial artist/monks who were dedicated to the nativist agenda of expelling the Manchu Qing dynasty and restoring the indigenous Ming.

The Triads and similar groups have often recruited most heavily from the ranks of unemployed and underemployed single men, providing them with economic opportunities and surrogate family ties. The loyalty and trust secret society members owe one another are rarely extended to the outer community, so it has been relatively easy for groups to move into predatory criminal activities without consciously repudiating their professed noble ideals.

When Sun Yat Sen and his fellow conspirators plotted against the tottering Qing dynasty, the Triads were quickly brought in as foot sol-

diers for the revolution. Though their actual effectiveness has been questioned, in the popular imagination of China the Triads and other secret societies were crucial to the ultimate success of the Republican Revolution of 1911. During the later struggle between the Kuomintang and the CCP, secret societies were courted by both sides. After the final Communist victory, Mao lost little time eliminating every organization potentially capable of resisting his rule, especially targeting those with experience in clandestine operations, since they posed a very real threat to his desired totalitarian control.

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Though ostensibly a "communist" opposed to reactionary "Confucian" thought, Chairman Mao (1893–1976) was very much a product of his culture and in many ways perpetuated the views of earlier Chinese rulers. Like his imperial predecessors, he believed in the almost magical power of society-wide conformity and felt personally threatened by all ideological dissent. Since religions were sources of competing ideologies, providing alternate centers of power and allegiance, they ultimately had to be eliminated. As an exponent of a totalistic political system, Mao was incapable of allowing religion to exist in a separate realm independent of politics.

Although for the first few years after the communist victory Mao appeared willing to allow religion to die out gradually (in accord with Marxist theory), by the early 1950s Mao had become impatient, concluding that the apparently vigorous survival of a wide range of religious practices was a clear sign of obstinate reactionary subversion. From this point on, all public believers in any religion were subjected to reeducation; those who continued to profess their faith faced imprisonment, torture, and even death.

In the 1950s, the PRC established governing bodies for all the major religions in China, thereby placing believers directly under the control of party cadres. For Taoism this was a relatively easy task, since the faith had few adherents outside of China who could publicly criticize the government's actions. It was much more problematic, however, for religions with international followings.

The "Patriotic Catholic Association" was created in order to free Chinese Catholics from Vatican control. The government soon realized that very few Catholics desired such liberation, and it proved difficult to find priests willing to serve in what was generally perceived as a renegade church. The few who were willing to break with the pope usually did so under duress and have tended, over time, to backslide into orthodoxy. Meanwhile, large numbers of Chinese Catholics maintained their allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church and continued to practice

their religion as best they could, waiting for a time in the future when they could again celebrate the Mass in public.

The Chinese Buddhist Association (CBA) had similar difficulties in maintaining credibility with believers, since Buddhists monks who practiced their religion under the terms of the CCP were usually either ignorant of the teachings of their professed faith or deeply compromised by their collusion with the ruling power. As a consequence, the "official" monks of the CBA were for many years simply caretakers of the show monasteries kept open by the government for propaganda purposes. Nearly all dignitaries visiting China from predominately Buddhist countries were taken on tours of the same few sites. In recent years, the quality and enthusiasm of official monks seems to have improved.

Evangelical Protestants went underground during the early years of communist rule, convincing some observers that their movement had been crushed. The powerful reemergence of vital evangelical congregations in the 1980s has shown the remarkable resilience of decentralized faith-based Christianity in China.

The many practices of Chinese "popular religion" were stridently attacked as anti-scientific superstition and effectively suppressed. According to Maoist ideology, the beliefs and practices of popular religion do not merit even the minimal respect accorded to the major world faiths. As simpleminded products of ignorance and scientific illiteracy, folk beliefs should not receive the limited constitutional protections accorded to "real religions." Most outside observers assumed that these "feudal" traditions would gradually fade from memory as the older generations died and were replaced by citizens raised in the "New China," under the enlightened tutelage of the CCP.

There is some irony in the fact that an atheist who criticized religion's stranglehold on the minds of the masses himself created (in the name of liberation!) one of the tightest systems of ideological control ever witnessed on earth. Mao's ambitious experiments in "group think" during the "Great Leap Forward" and the later "Cultural Revolution" brought a degree of ideological conformity to China that previous despots would certainly have envied. While the goals of Mao's wild utopian experiments were thoroughly materialistic, the fervor, devotion, and fanaticism expressed by hundreds of millions of Chinese during the peak of the Cultural Revolution were more reminiscent of a massive religious revival than a secular political movement.[13]

The legal system of the PRC plays an essential role in the government's efforts to restrict religious expression. Article 36 of the Constitution of the PRC states that "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy the freedom of religious belief." However, the Constitution rather pointedly does not recognize the right to engage in religious practices or propagate religious teachings. Since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, several laws have been employed to restrict severely the

outward expression of a wide range of religious practices found in Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Christian, and sectarian traditions. Meanwhile the government has steadfastly maintained that the constitutional right to freedom of religious *belief* has always been observed in the PRC.

Starting in the early 1980s, the PRC began lifting its suppression of religious activities, in part because of the growing recognition that the Maoist ideals of self-sacrifice and public service have lost credibility in the increasingly cutthroat atmosphere arising from current policies of economic liberalization. When nearly every religious tradition found in the "Old China" reappeared, seemingly overnight—including the popular "superstitions" assumed to be long forgotten—Western observers were nearly as surprised as the leaders of the CCP.

Simultaneously atheists and moral conservatives, the current leaders of China must feel ambivalent about the resurgence of religion, since many would presumably rather have citizens adhere to "superstitious" religious ethics than operate in a complete moral vacuum. Besides, as former bureaucrats scramble to get rich, it is simply too much work to keep track of everyone else's private business. However, one can easily overestimate the degree to which the police state is in decline; the forces of control are still strong and have recently demonstrated the power and length of their reach.

As disparities in income and opportunity continue to multiply across the PRC, economic uncertainty is certain to increase. It has been estimated that at any one time more than one hundred million workers are migrating across China seeking work. The elderly, most of whom spent their entire working lives "building socialism" at very low wages, are now often in desperate economic straits, since the social support system they were helping to construct has largely collapsed. These circumstances are ideal for the resurgence of "secret societies" and, of course, must be terrifying to those responsible for monitoring and controlling the behavior of 1.3 billion Chinese.

Complicating the matter is the fact that for several decades the PRC has attempted to rehabilitate traditional preventative medical and hygienic practices by severing them from their roots in Chinese religion. From 1982 till 1999 traditional *qigong* practices were widely promoted for their health benefits, and reputable scientists attempted to document the practical value of these exercises, thereby proving that they were not "religious" (i.e., "superstitious").[14] These studies encouraged millions of Chinese, especially the elderly, who often have limited access to quality medical care, to take up *qigong*. Though many people started their practice without explicit spiritual intentions or interest, over time the exercises themselves seem to have awakened latent religious impulses, contributing to a growing spiritual revival in China.

Though all officially sanctioned *qigong* groups are ostensibly registered with the government and under the control of the China Qigong

Research Society, Falun Gong, Zhong Gong, and other, less well-known groups have developed elaborate metaphysical teachings that conflict dramatically with the "scientific" positions promoted by the state. This esoteric knowledge plays a major role in deepening the commitment of followers initially drawn by promises of better health. Even worse, from the perspective of the authorities, are the apocalyptic tendencies discernible through close study of the teachings of Falun Gong. The belief that the world is irredeemably corrupt and slated for imminent destruction runs directly counter to the fundamental evolutionary premises of "Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought" and for that reason alone constitutes an intolerable ideological heresy. The political implications of apocalyptic expectations are, of course, deeply alarming to anyone with even a passing knowledge of the history of Chinese insurrections

As of September 1999, the government's prohibition of Falun Gong has been extended to all organized *qigong* groups, regardless of their beliefs or leadership. This presumably means that the members of clubs and informal groups that once met every morning in parks across China can now be prosecuted at the whims of local officials or as part of a governmental crackdown.[15] Since both the government and the members of these groups have long insisted that *qigong* is not religious, practitioners are in a peculiar position to ask for international support as victims of religious persecution. Western supporters face equal difficulties in attempting to shame the PRC into better behavior, since the government maintains that it is not attacking legitimate "religion" but merely protecting the public from evil "cults."

CONCLUSIONS

Because of its history and current form of government, the PRC presents a very different public face than most nations of the West. Since the government still attempts to control all aspects of civic life, there is no independent "anticult" movement, nor is there a media view of "cults" or NRMs at variance with official policy. As an officially atheist nation, there is no established church, unless one considers the CCP to be the national orthodoxy.

In the next few years, we should expect to see the PRC continue to struggle with the conflict between the people's growing expectations for personal liberties—including, of course, the free practice of religion—and the ruling elite's desire for control. As many sociologists of religion have noted, material possessions and physical comfort may initially satisfy people long deprived of them, but eventually a significant percentage of the population is likely to desire deeper spiritual meaning than mere comfort and security can provide. Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that many of the beneficiaries of China's sustained economic

growth are already seeking the higher values promised by religion. Meanwhile the hundreds of millions of Chinese abandoned by the new economy and dependent on a failing social "safety net" for bare survival may be motivated to seek support and security in resurgent "secret societies" and mutual aid societies.

It seems likely that the PRC will experience further growth in a wide range of religious practices, both indigenous and imported. Taoism, once thought to have been extirpated, appears to have held true to the teachings of Lao Tzu, its reputed founder, and simply kept a very low profile. Both evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic Christianity are flourishing and show great potential for expansion. Perhaps most threatening to the rulers in Beijing is the resurgence of "fundamentalist" Islam among the non-Han populations in the west of China. The Turkic Muslims in the remote western provinces have fewer reasons for loyalty to the communist state than almost any other major ethnic/religious group in the PRC; the strengthening of their identity as Muslims, first and foremost, is an alarming prospect for the ruling elite.

Chinese popular religion will likely continue to flourish, often under the cover of traditional medicine and exercise. As preliminary studies of Falun Gong suggest, these movements can spread very rapidly within existing networks of friends and family, since their teachings are easily transmitted and absorbed, and their practices do not require ritual specialists, hierarchical leadership networks, or religious infrastructure. Despite thousands of arrests and the deaths in custody of nearly one hundred practitioners, as of January 2001, the followers of Falun Gong are still mounting frequent nonviolent protests in Beijing and other major cities. The demonstrators' persistence and apparent equanimity in the face of threats, physical injury, and psychological abuse must baffle and frustrate their persecutors.

The "official" churches established in the 1950s are now almost totally irrelevant to the faith lives of believers, so although the state can still control the religious venues it has authorized, almost no one is listening. In many ways, the persecutions of the last fifty years have served to empower new, decentralized religious networks that will be very hard to infiltrate and monitor, much less suppress.

Though most westerners naturally assume that the practitioners of "religion" in China are the "good guys" and the forces of repression are inherently evil, it is essential to reflect on the leading role taken by NRMs in violent rebellions during the last two thousand years of Chinese history if we wish to comprehend the fears motivating the leaders of the PRC. In China's self-understanding, NRM leaders have usually been villains.[16] This differs greatly from the post-Reformation Protestant sympathy for religious rebels that, in some instances, makes them out to be culture heroes (e.g., Wycliffe, Hus, Luther, Calvin, and Knox).[17] Most Chinese do not view religious innovators so favorably. Rather than see-

ing the charismatic founders of NRMs as role models, many Chinese tend to see them as malicious purveyors of destruction and mass suffering.[18] Given their history, it is not unreasonable for China's ruling elite to be alarmed by the quiet but explosive growth of movements they cannot understand or readily control. Further conflict seems inevitable.

ENDNOTES

[1] As of September 2000, the English language translations of these sites were blocked, though the Chinese versions are still up. The reasons for denying access to the English language sites are unknown to me. The best of the old sites was <http://www.ppflg.china.com.cn/baodao/indexE.html>.

[2] Falun Gong is classified by the PRC as a *xie jiao*, since the authorities see it as primarily "religious" in focus. The Triads (Heaven and Earth Society) are an example of a *hui*. Both *xie jiao* and *hui* tend to be intensely focused upon ultimate concerns and meet many scholars' definitions of religious groups, though *hui* tend to have a more this-worldly political, or even criminal, orientation. Chinese NRMs possess several distinctive features that are not found in their Western counterparts, making all cross-cultural comparisons suspect and inaccurate. However, if (for purposes of illustration only!) these imprecise categories were applied to groups in the United States, NRMs as diverse as Heaven's Gate, the Transcendental Meditation movement, and the Church Universal and Triumphant would probably be classified as *xie jiao*, while the Freemasons and the Montana Freemen would likely be lumped together as *hui*.

[3] C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 104-218.

[4] Even during the twentieth century some Chinese traditionalists still attacked Buddhism as an evil "foreign superstition."

[5] There are problems, of course, in calling groups that arose nearly two thousand years ago "New Religious Movements"; however, these groups share many features in common with their modern descendants and were certainly new at the time of their inception.

[6] While these claims seem spurious to many Western observers and could easily be reversed to show that China has long been a part of the Tibetan motherland, it is undeniable that "Chinese" rulers (neither the Mongols nor the Manchus were ethnically Chinese) have long attempted to meddle in Tibetan religious affairs, and of course these "religious" affairs are also political.

[7] For example, Mazu, a local deity worshipped primarily by fisher folk in Fujian, was given national rank and titles by the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. The title *Tian hou* ("Queen of Heaven"), given by the Ming, is still in common use.

[8] In the 1500s, Europe experienced its own series of millennial rebellions, such as the Anabaptist takeover of Münster. Little mercy was shown to the defenders of Münster when the forces of church and state finally made their move. If such rebellions had continued into the twentieth century in the West, our societies would certainly have less tolerance for religious dissent today. (The Taiping rebellion, led by an inspired millennial visionary, raged across China in the 1850s and 1860s, leading to at least 20 million deaths. If, say, the United States Civil War had been instigated by a NRM, would we even pay lip service today to the hallowed American right to free choice in matters of religion?) Of course, students of NRMs know that religious freedom and tolerance in the United States has always been more an ideal than a reality.

[9] This category included mutual aid societies, scripture recitation societies, vegetarian groups, sworn brotherhoods of all sorts, etc. As mentioned previously, many of these groups seemed quite harmless and, in practice, were often ignored by local authorities. However,

in times of unrest even the most innocuous groups could come under governmental attack.

[10] See the following for examples: Robert J. Antony, "Brotherhoods, Secret Societies, and the Law in Qing-Dynasty China," in *"Secret Societies" Reconsidered: Perspectives on the Social History of Early Modern South China and Southeast Asia*, eds. David Ownby and Mary Somers Heidhues (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), 190-211; Daniel Overmyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976); Susan Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); and idem, *Shantung Rebellion: The Wang Lun Uprising of 1774* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

[11] *Kalpa* is a Sanskrit word meaning eon. In Buddhist teachings, *kalpas* are enormously long expanses of time. Chinese NRMs dramatically shortened the duration of these periods.

[12] One is reminded of the obsession with determining the exact date of the Second Coming that is found in so many Western millennial groups.

[13] This has led some scholars to label Maoism a "quasi-religion." Clearly this is a matter of definition. If religion is defined as "ultimate concern," Maoism at its peak was definitely a full-blown "religion." Using this definition, groups like the Montana Freeman and the Chinese Triads are also religions, at least for their most sincere adherents. For a marvelous description of the religious ecstasy experienced during Mao's rare public appearances see Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro, *Son of the Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1983), 121-25.

[14] The government's identification of religion with superstition has been so effective that even Chinese spiritual leaders assume that this highly questionable association is valid and universally recognized. The China-wide acceptance of this implicit definition of religion as superstitious nonsense leads people like Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falun Gong, to declare emphatically that his teachings are not "religious," even though their goal of enlightenment/salvation would make them appear so to most Western observers.

[15] As of the summer of 2000, this was not generally taking place, at least in the big cities.

[16] Except in certain strands of Marxist scholarship where they are seen as proto-revolutionaries.

[17] And even here, one person's inspired leader is another's charlatan.

[18] A fascinating email survey asking highly educated overseas Chinese their views of Falun Gong is summarized on the web at <http://www.voicesofchinese.org/falun/surveyrpt.html>. Since the respondents are individuals who are living outside the PRC, one may safely assume that they are not under pressure to adhere to the current party line. Many of the respondents also appear critical of *both* Chinese and Western media coverage of Falun Gong. Nonetheless, the respondents view Falun Gong and its leader Li Hongzhi with considerable skepticism. For example, 47 percent of respondents agree that Falun Gong is "harmful to Chinese society." 64 percent agree that it is "anti-scientific," while 59 percent believe that "Li Hongzhi is an imposter." Most importantly, 39 percent agree that Falun Gong "should be banned in China."

Consensus Shattered: Japanese Paradigm Shift and Moral Panic in the Post-Aum Era

Ian Reader

INTRODUCTION

Any discussion of the factors shaping attitudes to, and patterns of conflict over, new religious movements (NRMs) in Japan today has to be conducted in the light of the activities of Aum Shinrikyô. For Japanese society, the "Aum affair" raised the spectre of a legally registered religious organization enjoying freedom of worship, legal protection, and religious tax exemptions and yet abusing these privileges to finance the manufacture of chemical weapons and commit heinous crimes.

Inevitably, the question of Aum's position and continued existence under Japanese law became a matter of public and political debate. On the wider level, too, the Aum affair raised basic questions about the relationship between religion, society, and state in a modern, liberal society and about the extent to which such societies should offer protection to, and tolerate the existence of, religious movements that are inimical to normative social values. The affair also raised questions about the tax benefits given to religious movements and about the ways in which religious movements acquire their wealth. Such issues gave a powerful boost to the development of an anticult movement in Japan and gave added impetus to an aggressive mass media keen to expose "deviant" religious groups. The Aum affair also damaged the ability of academics in the field to offer balanced judgments on new movements and virtually silenced academic researchers in the debates that arose during the post-Aum moral panic that gripped Japan.

PARADIGM SHIFTS AND CHANGING ERAS: THE POSTWAR CONSENSUS AND ITS ORIGINS

The Aum affair is a watershed moment in modern Japanese religious history, with scholars now referring to this as the post-Aum era (*posuto Oumu jidai*). This new era has seen a paradigm shift in public perceptions about the relationship between religion, state, and society, with the consensus that existed from the end of World War II until 1995 being replaced by one that is far less favorably disposed to the religious sphere. To understand this change one needs to look briefly first at the factors that shaped the pre-Aum consensus.

The prevailing liberal democratic ethos upon which post-war Japanese society and the Japanese constitution of 1946 were based viewed religious movements as needing guaranteed protection from the possibilities of state intrusion and oppression. This view—and the resulting constitutional and legal safeguards—were a direct response to the repressive policies of pre-1945 Japan. These policies had transformed Shintô into a state religion centered on the Emperor as a unifying symbol of the nation and used this state religion to justify Japan's colonial and war-mongering policies. As Japan descended in the 1930s into its "black valley" (*kurodani*) of fascism and militarism, those who raised dissenting voices were invariably suppressed.

One movement so suppressed was the highly successful millenarian new religion, Ômotokyô, whose leader Deguchi Ônisaburô[1] portrayed himself as a world savior while symbolically challenging the sacred status of the Emperor. Twice, in 1921 and most severely in 1935, Ômotokyô was subjected to police raids, the incarceration of its leaders, and the razing of its religious centers. By responding to Deguchi's challenges and crushing Ômotokyô, the state displayed its readiness to use force against any religion that opposed its ideology or threatened its power. Hereafter most religious movements in Japan—cowed either by fear of repression or motivated by a culturally and religiously ordained ideology of nationalism—fell into line with government dictates and with Japan's ideologically driven military expansion.[2] The few that did not were suppressed and their leaders imprisoned.

After Japan's defeat in 1945 the American-dominated Occupation government promulgated a new, liberal constitution. Recognizing that religious repression had been crucial to the rise of fascism, the government implemented laws and constitutional articles formally separating religion and state, affording the right of freedom of religion to all, and granting religious organizations protection from state interference. These notions of individual religious freedom and the rights of religious groups became basic foundations for the modern, secular, liberal democratic state that emerged after the war.

Such constitutionally guaranteed religious freedoms did not necessarily transform Japan into a haven of religious tolerance. While free from the fear of state repression, religious movements found themselves subject to scrutiny (and frequent hostile attack) from the free press that emerged after the war. Indeed, it could be argued that the mass media in general took upon itself the role of public policeman of religious movements, publishing numerous exposés of religious organizations for financial irregularities and other scandals. While the media delighted in reporting misdeeds across the religious spectrum, from the financial misdeeds of Buddhist temples to the closet right-wing nationalist political associations of certain Shintô shrines, it was the new religions that bore the brunt of such criticism. They were frequently portrayed as dubious organizations intent on manipulating and cheating the gullible masses of their money.

Nevertheless, until 1995, religious movements were largely free from external intrusion. The civil authorities, fearful that any such action would be seen as an attempt to turn the clock back, rarely looked into the affairs of groups that were registered under the Japanese Religious Corporations Law, even when evidence of malpractice existed. This attitude helped Aum; although widely suspected of numerous crimes prior to the subway attack, it was not properly investigated, largely because the police feared being accused of breaching constitutional safeguards against religious persecution.

CONSENSUS SHATTERED

This consensus was effectively shattered in March 1995 when public opinion and political necessity demanded a decisive police response to Aum's atrocities. That response—including mass raids on Aum centers and prominent displays of weapons, shields, and other military equipment—aroused for some observers disturbing parallels to the prewar militaristic assaults on Ômotokyô. The general public, however, fully supported the raids, turning a blind eye to any possible breaches of the civil liberties of Aum members and widely agreeing with the arrests, trials, and sentences (including several death sentences) passed on Aum leaders.

It was not just the immediate trauma of the Aum affair that affected public opinion and convinced the political authorities that they had to react. It was also the revelations that Aum had gathered a large amount of materials and weapons for the purpose of committing further violence against the populace.[3] This trend in public opinion has been a major factor in shaping attitudes to new religions in the post-Aum era. It has also encouraged the media to give saturation coverage to the Aum

affair, endlessly reporting rumors, allegations, and facts, bringing in numerous "experts" (mostly critics who denounce Aum as a nefarious "cult") to discuss the affair and its possible meanings for Japan, and engaging in new exposés of Aum and other movements that might—in the media's perspective—turn out to be "dangerous."

Aum provided Japan with an example of what *might* happen if religious movements were left unchecked. In the popular view the affair appeared to indicate that certain types of movements, especially ones that, like Aum, preached a message of rejection of normative social mores and values and that aspired to the formation of a new spiritual order, might prove dangerous to society. The new consensus that has emerged as a result is one which places less weight on the idea of protecting religious movements from the state, and which is more concerned with protecting state, society, and the general public *from* the potential dangers of religious groups.

POLITICAL AND PUBLIC RESPONSES TO AUM

It was hardly surprising that the government felt impelled to amend the laws relating to religious movements. Some rather anodyne changes were made to the Religious Corporations Laws, while the question of whether to ban Aum—an action that raised major questions about individual religious freedoms—was given serious consideration. A commission was established to determine whether Aum could be proscribed under the Anti-Subversives Law (a repressive law implemented in 1952 as an anti-Communist measure, but never before applied to any movement), but it decided that Aum no longer posed a threat to public safety and hence should not be banned. This decision was greeted with relief by liberals who feared that using this act against Aum would set a dangerous precedent for future religious repression, but was resented by many who saw it as an act of excessive tolerance toward an undeserving movement. This was the view of the Japanese Public Security Intelligence Agency, which would have overseen the use of the Anti-Subversives Law against Aum, and which has since sought to persuade the authorities to reconsider this decision.[4] Its concerns, and those of the wider public, were recognized by the government in 1999 when it passed a new law (described by some as "draconian") aimed specifically at Aum. The law required the movement to keep authorities closely informed of all its affairs and membership records.

Although Aum's new leaders have tried to distance themselves from their imprisoned guru Asahara Shôkô and his entourage and have declared that Aum is now a peaceful movement, it remains suspect to the Japanese public. Such is the continuing fear of Aum that wherever Aum

members have tried to establish homes or centers they have faced protests from local citizens' groups, landlords have sought to evict Aum followers from their homes, and local authorities have refused to allow the children of Aum devotees to enter schools.

Many of these actions have been illegal—and have been declared so by court rulings—but public opinion and media sympathies are very much on the side of protesters against Aum. As a Japanese friend living in Tokyo told me, he wanted—whatever the cost to civil rights—Aum to be disbanded and its followers made to renounce their beliefs. He and his family regularly used the subway and, although he was not personally injured in the attack, it had left a strong enough impression for him to fear that Aum still posed a threat to the well-being of his family. The freedom to follow one's own religion was secondary to the rights of others to go about their business safely, a point that is readily understandable given the circumstances of the Aum affair.

Such perceptions have conditioned attitudes not just toward Aum but to NRMs in general. Aum's continuing existence provides a constant reminder to the Japanese public concerning the potential dangers that *might* come from certain kinds of religious movements. This viewpoint has been widely articulated in the mass media which, never a shrinking violet where new religions and hints of scandal are concerned, have been emboldened to mount further high profile investigations of potentially "deviant" movements. Equally, the police, whose earlier reluctance to get involved with Aum was quite conspicuous, have been keen not to repeat the error, and have exhibited a greater readiness to investigate scandals surrounding registered religious groups. When, for example, allegations were made by disaffected former members against Hônohana Sanpôgyô, a new religion which promotes costly divination practices, and the movement became subject to an intensive media exposé, the police began investigations which led to Hônohana leader Fukunaga Hôgen's arrest on fraud charges. One suspects that, prior to the Aum affair, the former members would have been less vocal in airing their grievances—or in demanding recompense from the movement—and the police far less likely to have intervened.

"DANGEROUS CULTS" AND THE RISE OF THE ANTICULT MOVEMENT

This climate of public hostility towards NRMs has been exacerbated by the emergence of an "anticult" movement that has all but drowned out alternative voices and perspectives. This movement, which barely existed prior to the Aum affair, grew rapidly in its aftermath, spurred by the activities of anticult activists from the United States such as Steve

Hassan. Hassan visited Japan shortly after the subway attack to speak about the practice of "brainwashing" in "cults" such as Aum.[5] Such views, which provided an easily grasped populist explanation of Aum, were congruent with those of Aum's critics who, prior to the subway attack, had argued that Asahara and his lieutenants had exerted some form of "mind control" over their followers.[6] The subway attack appeared to confirm, in public perception, the accuracy of such accusations, and those who had spoken against Aum were consequently transformed into "experts" not just on Aum but on "cults" in general. These critics became articulate proponents of an anticult movement that was quickly able to establish itself as an authoritative pressure group.

The workings of the anticult movement in Japan—especially its rhetoric—will not be unfamiliar to outside observers. The term "cult" (Japanese: *karuto*) has entered the Japanese language with very similar meanings and connotations to the English media use of the term. Thus, *karuto* in Japanese connotes a dangerous movement run by a manipulative and fraudulent figure who poses as a religious teacher (but whose real interests are power, money, and sex) and who "brainwashes" his devotees into following his every beck and call.

While the term *karuto* was used in Japan prior to the Aum affair, it has subsequently become dominant in public discourse. In this process, the quasi-distinction made in many Western media discussions of new movements between "religions" (genuine, upstanding movements) and "cults" (evil, fraudulent, and dishonest) has become commonplace. Many Japanese religious organizations have contributed to this perception by affirming their respectability and commitment to normative values—while simultaneously condemning Aum—by giving their support to anticult campaigns, and by sending out warnings about "dangerous" and "false" (rival) religious movements.[7]

These perceptions about the dangers of cults have given rise to various alarmist books and articles that seek to identify the "next Aum" (i.e. the next group that might become dangerous and cause social disruption). One of the groups so targeted has been Sôka Gakkai. The movement was persecuted for its opposition to the wartime government's militarism but it is now the largest religious organization in Japan. Sôka Gakkai, more than almost any other movement prior to Aum, had provoked public opprobrium because of its aggressive recruitment policies and its strongly developed political base. These developments had caused concern that Sôka Gakkai might threaten the post-war constitutional separation of religion and state. Thus, it was not surprising that the group was one of the movements labeled as potentially "another Aum."[8]

Space does not permit further discussion of all the movements or types of movement that have been tarred as "cults." It is, however, my suspicion that beneath the surface there may be a further disturbing pattern of intolerance emerging in Japan. Based on various surveys that

I have done of anticult literature in Japanese bookshops, the term "cult" has been applied less to *Japanese* NRMs that have embraced the common assumptions shared within the Japanese religious world, than it has to imports from abroad. Implicit in the term "cult," in other words, are not just ideas of being deviant but also connotations of "foreign" and "not Japanese." Here one should note that many of Aum's characteristics were drawn from external traditions (notably Tibet and India) and that it adopted a self-consciously "different" (and inherently nonnormative Japanese) style.

The two movements most frequently portrayed in such terms are the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Movement, both of which have been active in Japan in recent decades and both of which have acquired reputations for being socially disruptive and divisive. Both had been involved in scandals and conflicts before the Aum affair, examples including the Unification Movement's alleged role in extorting large sums of money from unsuspecting clients through aggressive spiritual purification sales schemes, and the Jehovah's Witnesses' unusual teachings concerning surgery and blood transfusions. Both, too, are seen as "foreign" movements that infringe on Japanese social sensibilities by demanding their followers' full adherence. The groups are accused of withdrawing from the normative round of rituals that are part of the Japanese religious and social calendar and aligning instead with identity groupings that are in conflict with normative Japanese social values.

The apparent identification in popular discourse of these two movements (and of "cults" in general) as highly deviant and dangerous was illustrated for me during a recent visit to one of Japan's largest bookshops, Kiinokuniya in Shinjuku, Tokyo. There I found that books about Aum were shelved not under "Religion" but in the section on criminal organizations, alongside works on the *yakuza* (Japanese gangsters) and the Mafia, and next to books on crime, serial killers, and mass murderers. Perhaps, given that Aum had killed at least twenty-five people, I should not have been too surprised at this—or indeed, given their respective death tolls, the presence there of books in Japanese on Peoples Temple and the Order of the Solar Temple. What took me aback, however, was that books denouncing the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Movement were placed alongside these. It was as if the bookshop's shelving policies had been determined by the agenda of the anticult movement. It certainly reflected a disturbing pattern of thinking in Japan, in which deviance from norms in the religious context is equated with the sinister and the murderous. I would also suggest—if my (admittedly rather fleeting) observations are correct—that the prevalence, in modern Japan, of Japanocentric modes of identity discourse that are clearly anti-Western and anti-foreign[9] has, if anything, become intensified after the Aum affair, with certain movements identified as "dangerous" largely because of their foreign provenance. These sub-

liminal associations of danger, deviance, and foreign appear, in other words, to be becoming alarmingly overt in populist discourse.

THE MUTED VOICES OF ACADEMIA

The emergence of the anticult movement as a force claiming authority in the sphere of new religions clearly suggests parallels with many Western countries. However, what is striking about the situation in Japan is that the voices of scholars who could provide informed perspectives have become muted almost to the point of nonexistence. In part this is because of the vociferous success of anticult activists who seized the post-Aum high moral ground. It was aided by the misinterpretations of a small number of scholars in Japan and elsewhere who appeared to give support to Aum when it was first accused of criminal behavior. While the American scholars who visited Japan after the subway attack to examine possible human rights violations against Aum were motivated by a concern for human rights, their actions reflected a tacit assumption prevalent among many scholars that NRMs accused of atrocities are normally innocent. On this score, it was fascinating to note how different interest groups involved in the sphere of "cult wars" in the United States acted out similar and contrasting agendas in Japan over Aum. Hassan and his fellow anticultists leapt to unsubstantiated conclusions about brainwashing, and supporters of AWARE assumed that Aum must have been a victim. This particular visit, coming on top of misjudgments by two Japanese academics, backfired because of Aum's swiftly proven guilt. It also seemed to confirm the arguments made by prominent anticult activists in Japan that academics are apologists for dangerous and deviant groups.[10]

Only a very few scholars so erred, and most Western and Japanese NRM scholars made no attempt to defend Aum or to do anything other than interpret its criminal actions. Still, the prevailing image has been of academic compliance with cults, with scholars who discuss movements such as Aum in any terms other than those of cultic deviance and evil seen as little more than apologists. It is small wonder, then, that at present the opportunity for Japanese scholars to present an alternative to the views of the anticult movement has been severely curtailed. Scholars in many Western countries are certainly not unfamiliar with such scenarios and are well aware that presenting other than condemnatory views on NRMs can bring similar accusations. However, it is clear that the voices of academics are to some extent now heard by civil authorities and law enforcement agencies in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. In Japan, on the other hand, there appear to be no counterbalancing arguments in the debates over dangerous cults. This, in turn, has intensified the hostile environment for NRMs in the post-Aum era.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The above brief overview indicates that Japan has entered into a new era in which certain types of movements (which, it should be emphasized, have never had a good press) have come to be viewed as increasingly dangerous and suspect. The primary catalyst for producing this climate has been the Aum affair, which has redrawn the picture of the post-war religious world and reshaped the relationship between society and religion. At present, the predominant trends—with a rampant press, an aggressive anticult movement, a population ready to accede to draconian laws against suspect groups, law enforcement agencies prepared to investigate religious movements, and few alternative voices capable of being heard—presage an inauspicious immediate future for emergent religious groups.

Yet I should append a caveat to this gloomy picture. It is important to note that the Japanese experiment with freedom of religion is still in its infancy and dates only from 1946. Such freedom—which includes both the freedom of citizens to follow the religious paths they wish, and the freedom of religious organizations to function without state interference—comes at a price and is dependent on an implicit contract of trust. It demands that state and society should respect the freedom of religious worship, allow religious organizations to follow their own beliefs and practices, and refrain from interference in such groups. It also demands that religious movements show tolerance and respect for the safety, freedoms, and views of others and for the laws of society.

The first major challenge to this fledgling democratic understanding of religious freedoms came not from the state, the mass media, or from anticult campaigners, but from a religious movement that was incapable of accepting criticism, enduring opposition or, indeed, tolerating internal dissent. After Aum, the authorities could have taken more drastic steps or enacted even harsher laws against religious movements and still gained public approval. Yet, even in a period of moral panic and hysteria, this has not been done. The only repressive new law is directed solely at Aum. Even so Aum has retained its right to exist, and the courts have upheld the basic democratic rights of its members. These developments indicate that, despite the current public mood, the Japanese authorities remain committed to the tenets of religious freedom, albeit in a more qualified manner than prior to Aum. While the previous consensus is now dead and while Japanese NRMs can no longer enjoy the privilege of being virtually above the law, there are at least some indications that whatever new consensus might eventually emerge will not cause their existing rights to be wholly swept aside.

ENDNOTES

[1] All proper names in this paper are given according to Japanese style, with the family name first and the given name second.

[2] One should note that many movements, including Buddhist sects and new religions, embraced the rampant nationalism of the era: see, for example, Robert Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," *History of Religions* 33, no. 1 (1993): 1-43.

[3] For a fuller discussion of this and other aspects of the Aum affair see Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyô* (Richmond, U.K., and Honolulu, Hawaii: Curzon Press and University of Hawaii Press, 2000).

[4] Officials of the agency were widely quoted in articles in the Japanese and foreign media—especially during 1997 and 1998—that have raised fears about a resurgent Aum. However, the agency sources have invariably cited grossly exaggerated membership figures for Aum, raising suspicions that its "information" has been deliberately modified for political reasons.

[5] For a discussion of the emergence of the anticult movement in Japan 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.

[6] See, for example, Egawa Shôko, *Kyûseishu no yabô* (Tokyo: Kyôikushiryô Shuppankai, 1991).

[7] Kôfuku no Kagaku, for example, which had already attacked various rivals as "false religions" (*jakyô*) prior to 1995, stepped up its attacks further after the Aum affair, while its leader Ôkawa Ryûhô gave a number of sermons in 1995 about the "dangers" of such "false religions." See Okawa Ryûhô, *Jinsei seikô no hissaku* (Tokyo: Kôfuku no Kagaku Shuppan, 1995) especially 163ff.

[8] Noda Mineo, *Ikeda Daisaku zenmyaku no kenkyû* (Tokyo: Miyai Shobô, 1997).

[9] There is plentiful material on this widespread discourse (known in Japan as *Nihonjinron* or "discussions about Japaneseness") on Japanese modes of identity. For a general overview in religious contexts see Winston Davis, *Japanese Religion and Society: Paradigms of Social Change* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

[10] See Ian Reader, "Scholarship, Aum Shinrikyô, and Integrity," *Nova Religio* 3, no.2 (Spring 2000): 368-82.

General Overview of the "Cult Scene" in Great Britain

Eileen Barker

Since 1559, the Church of England has been "by law established." There is also an established (Presbyterian) Church in Scotland; the Church of Ireland was disestablished in 1869; and the Church in Wales was disestablished in 1920. The sovereign of Britain is called "Defender of the Faith" and must promise on his or her accession to uphold the Church of England. Although Catholics and nonconformist Protestants have existed within a general tradition of dissent throughout the centuries, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that full civil and political rights were extended to all religions—in 1871 Parliament passed the Universities Test Act that opened Oxford and Cambridge to members of all religions, and in 1890 all government posts became open to members of the Jewish faith. Around the turn of the century a number of alternative religions, such as Theosophy, Spiritualism, Deism, Comtean positivism, and the Salvation Army began to make their presence known. During the first half of the twentieth century, other new religions, most notably those of Eastern origin such as SUBUD, Vedanta, and the followers of Krishnamurti gained popularity among a small but significant group of middle-class intellectuals.

In the late 1960s, protests against the Vietnam War, and bourgeois imperialism in general, broke out among the student population. This merged into the hippie period with "flower power" and the embracing of all manner of new kinds of religiosity and spirituality. Internationally operating movements came to Britain from the East and the West. The Church of Scientology had been one of the earliest movements on the scene, but it was soon followed by Krishna devotees chanting and dancing in the streets and the increased visibility of other new religions such as the Unification Church, the Rajneesh movement, the Children of God (later The Family), and the Divine Light Mission (later *Elan Vital).* Erhard Seminars Training *(est)* and other examples of the human potential movement joined indigenous new religions, such as the Emin, Exegesis, the Aetherius Society, the School of Economic Science, and the Findhorn community in the north of Scotland. In addition, a num-

ber of small congregations within mainstream churches were labeled "cults" as they exhibited some of the more enthusiastic characteristics of new religions and their leaders. The 9 O'Clock Service, a Church of England congregation in Sheffield, was one of the more extreme examples.[1] Another source of new (to Britain) religions was immigration, with several hundreds of Black and Asian religions springing up around those areas (mainly large city conurbations) where the immigrant populations settled. These, unlike the "cults," have given rise to relatively little controversy—apart from the emergence of a certain degree of Islamophobia, largely fanned by the *fatwa* placed by Ayatollah Khomeini on Salman Rushdie after the publication of his book, *The Satanic Verses.*

In 1975, the first of the contemporary anticult organizations appeared on the scene.[2] Known as FAIR, the initials originally stood for Family Action Information and Rescue, but this was changed in 1994 to Family Action Information and Resource when it was decided that the erstwhile practice of forcible deprogramming carried out by some of its members was no longer acceptable. FAIR, which was founded by Paul Rose, MP, consisted mainly, but by no means only, of distressed parents, who were later joined by some disillusioned ex-members. Two countercult movements also appeared (the Deo Gloria Trust and the Reachout Trust). Later, other anticult groups, such as the Cult Information Centre (run by a man who had spent a few days with a group that had cured him of smoking), Catalyst, and some groups specifically designed to warn the public of the dangers of particular movements, also joined the scene.[3]

Although there have been some excellent reports by journalists who have written books about British alternative religions, such as William Shaw's *Spying in Guru Land,*[4] as elsewhere around the world, the British media have predominantly enjoyed the more sensational stories about "the cults." Some of these have resulted in court cases, such as the libel case that the Unification Church lost against the *Daily Mail* for accusing it of brainwashing and breaking up families.[5] The jury, as a result of its deliberations, not only declared the *Daily Mail* to be vindicated in its accusations, but also requested that the Attorney-General remove the church's charitable status. However, after a lengthy investigation, it was decided that there were no legal grounds for doing this. Another case was a successful libel suit against the *Daily Telegraph* for quoting an anticultist's remarks that a barrister and his wife constituted a cult. In the longest ever trial to take place in the Family Court, a grandmother lost her plea to have custody of her daughter's child while her daughter was a member of The Family. This was, however, only after the daughter and The Family had renounced some of the teachings of their leader, David Berg.[6]

So far as the law is concerned, both Conservative and Labour governments have made it clear that, although they do not like many of the

new religions, they have no intention of introducing any special laws to deal with them. So long as the NRMs act within the law, they are as free as anyone else to believe and do what they wish. This does not mean that there has been no discrimination against the movements, however. In 1968, restrictions were imposed on foreigners entering the United Kingdom to study or work for Scientology. Following the Foster Report, these restrictions were lifted in 1980. In 1995, Mr. Justice Sedley ruled that the then Home Secretary, Michael Howard, had used unlawful means to prevent Sun Myung Moon from entering the country "by reason of procedural unfairness." And there have been various other cases where members of new or minority religions have been discriminated against in the courts.[7] In one instance, a teacher was dismissed because of her unconventional (Unification) beliefs (even though it was agreed that she had not attempted to pass these on to her pupils); in another instance, a case involving the use of Bhaktivedanta Manor was taken through the British Courts system before ISKCON devotees were finally allowed to use the manor for religious festivities.[8]

Towards the end of the 1980s, amid cries from anticultists and others that "something needed to be done," the Home Office and mainstream churches decided to support the founding of an independent charity which would supply enquirers with information about NRMs that was as objective and up-to-date as possible. INFORM (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements), which is based at the London School of Economics and employs staff trained in the methods of the social sciences, now deals with over one thousand inquiries each year, produces literature about the movements, and provides twice-yearly seminars and talks for various organizations. It is the only "cult-watching group" that has received official support from the British churches, the government, and the police.

Although in the 1970s, discrimination on the grounds of race or sex was outlawed, Northern Ireland has been the only part of the United Kingdom in which discrimination on grounds of religion is not permitted. On 1 October 2000, however, a new Human Rights Bill incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights into United Kingdom law was made legally binding. Although there has been a considerable amount of speculation as to what difference this will make, it is still too early to judge its effects.

While the government does not discriminate between religions, apart from the established church, the Charity Commissioners do so, and whether or not they decide to accord charitable status to a group will have considerable financial consequences so far as tax exemption is concerned. Generally speaking, there are three grounds on which a group can be defined as a charity: 1. because it is a religion; 2. because it is an educational institution; or 3. because it promotes the public good. Charity law is not clear on exactly what these criteria entail, and recent

efforts to clarify the position have not been entirely satisfactory for any of the people concerned. The Church of Scientology has not yet succeeded in persuading the commissioners that it is a religion. The Pagan Federation has objected to the fact that one of its caring facilities has not been accepted—although it is allowed to have a chaplain visiting its members who are in prison.

Although it is probable that most people, if asked, would "know" that "cults are a bad thing," it is also true that most people in Britain do not give the matter much thought. There may be a few demonstrators outside the Albert Hall when Mataji or Maharaji are giving a talk to their respective actual and potential followers, but such events will, on the whole, pass unnoticed. There, are, of course, individual members of Parliament and of the traditional churches who share the views of the anticult movement that NRMs should be subject to special restrictions and control. But although they clearly do not agree with the beliefs of other religions, the established Church, the Free Church Council, and the Roman Catholic Church have exhibited a generally tolerant attitude towards them. Both the present and the previous Archbishops of Canterbury have strongly supported the approach taken by the government and INFORM, rather than that of the anticultists. That is, that it is necessary to provide accurate and balanced knowledge of the movements to public and official bodies, but that the movements and their members should not be treated in law any differently from the rest of the population.

It should be recognized that over the past quarter of a century several changes have taken place within the better-known new religions themselves, making them more likely to wish to be accepted as "normal" rather than insisting upon the ways in which they differ from the rest of society.[9] This and other factors, such as more easily accessible knowledge concerning the movements' beliefs and practices, have defused somewhat at least some of the antagonisms that previously existed between the movements and the general British population. Indeed, several of the NRMs have become accepted as significant contributors to some of the more influential sections of British culture. Thus, one might find members of the Brahma Kumaris at a reception at Lambeth Palace (the official residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury); a representative of the Baha'i at a Foreign and Commonwealth Office function; a member of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order at a BBC gathering; and an ISKCON devotee representing the Hindu community in a religious broadcast on the BBC World Service.

It is impossible to estimate accurately the number of NRMs to be found in Britain today (one problem is the definition of a NRM—whether, for example, one includes self-development groups and/or the small congregations within mainstream religions), but the number could be anywhere from 800 to 2000. This, however, does not mean that

the number of core members of NRMs is anything but a very small proportion of the general population—largely because of the high turnover in most of the movements. Of those movements that were best known in the 1970s and 1980s for active proselytizing, most have assumed a lower profile and are likely to rely on second-generation membership as much if not more than persuading new converts to join their ranks. Most of the movements have no more than a few hundred members—many have but a score or so. It is also the case that those movements which claim large numbers often include people who once took one of their courses, or were given a mantra, but have since had no connection with them.[10] Other movements, such as Sai Baba or ISKCON, have large congregations of British Asians who may attend several temples and would not consider themselves to be involved in anything that differed from their traditional beliefs and practices. Another problem with trying to estimate the statistical significance of NRMs is the common interest in Eastern and New Age concepts which are used as an almost absent-minded resource by a growing number of people without their belonging to any particular movement.[11] Such people are likely to draw on these and other, possibly contradictory, ideas as and when they seem appropriate without having any well-thought-out or systematic theology. According to some polls, for example, nearly a quarter of the British population will say that they believe in reincarnation,[12] although a more recent survey, presenting a slightly different choice, gives only seven percent choosing reincarnation as opposed to other beliefs about life after death.[13] Be that as it may, a general shift away from institutionalized religion to less institutionalized spirituality would seem to be a general trend in contemporary Britain.

To conclude, the situation with regard to new religions in Britain is not clear-cut. Although it is clear to some Britons that some groups and some sets of beliefs are clearly a danger to the individual and society, exactly what comprises a "cult" or new religion is by no means clear in all cases. While they may not be welcomed with open arms by many apart from their own members, compared with the situation in other parts of Europe, the new religions are, on the whole, an accepted part of the complicated religious pluralism that typifies contemporary Britain.

ENDNOTES

[1] Roland Howard, *The Rise and Fall of the Nine O'Clock Service: A Cult within the Church?* (London: Mowbray, 1996).

[2] James Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to the New Religious Movements* (London: Tavistock, 1985), 225.

[3] George D. Chyssides, "Britain's Anti-cult Movement," in *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*, eds. Bryan Wilson and Jamie Cresswell (London: Routledge, 1999), 257-73.

[4] William Shaw, *Spying in Guru Land: Inside Britain's Cults* (London: Fourth Estate, 1994).

[5] Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1993), 121ff.

[6] James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Sex, Slander, and Salvation: Investigating the Family/Children of God* (Stanford, Calif.: Center for Academic Publishing,1994).

[7] Eileen Barker, "The British Right to Discriminate," in *Church-State Relations: Tensions and Transitions,* eds. Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1987), 269-80; "Tolerant Discrimination: New Religious Movements in Relation to Church, State and Society," in *Religion, State and Society in Modern Britain,* ed. Paul Badham (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 185-208.

[8] Malory Nye, "ISKCON and Hindus in Britain," in *ISKCON Communications Journal* 5, no. 2 (December 1997): 5-14.

[9] Eileen Barker and Jean-François Mayer, eds., *Twenty Years On: Changes in New Religious Movements* (London: Sage, 1995), especially 165-80.

[10] Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction* (London: HMSO, 1989), 145-55.

[11] Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

[12] David Barker, Loek Halman, and Astrid Vloet, *The European Values Study 1981-1990: Summary Report* (Tilburg, Netherlands: European Values Group,1993).

[13] This is data I have collected as part of the Religious and Moral Pluralism project which has yet to be published.

The Fate of NRMs and their Detractors in Twenty-first Century America

J. Gordon Melton

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the United States has emerged as the most religiously pluralistic society that has ever existed. Over two thousand different primary religious groups (denominations) exist in the United States across the spectrum of the world's religions. During the nineteenth century, the diversification of religion was primarily within the Christian community; the sixteen Christian churches that existed at the nation's founding generated more than three hundred new denominations a hundred years later. By the end of the nineteenth century, the major religions of the world had established their initial centers, although they were relatively miniscule. From 1880 to the present, there is a steady decade-by-decade increase in the number of new religions present in American society, including both new Christian denominations and the wide spectrum of Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and even Jewish groups. The growth of new religions has continued unabated during times of social unrest and relative calm, war and peace, good economic times and bad.

This very pluralistic culture was founded upon the legal tradition of religious freedom embedded in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution (the phraseology of which would later be incorporated into the constitutions of the various states) wedded to other powerful constitutional guarantees such as freedom of speech and assembly.[1] America also possesses a strong emphasis upon individualism with an accompanying attitude of "live and let live" that has promoted an ever-growing tolerance of lifestyle differences. Yet however tolerant, the American public has always had its limits, and the testing of the boundaries of accepted behavior has been a constant source of tension in the culture. The twentieth century saw major turmoil over the acceptance of the working woman, the move of African Americans into the middle class, and the presence of a visible gay community.

The dynamic changes of American society did not leave the mainstream religious community unscathed. American Christianity was deeply split in the first decades of the twentieth century by the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. That controversy was imposed across all denomi-

nations with theological differences often coinciding with deeply held convictions about acceptance or rejection of the changes in American society and the importance of social ethics versus personal morality. In the last half of the twentieth century, this split manifested as a choice between an emphasis on ecumenism or evangelism. Americans exported this division worldwide through the realignment of groups either with the World Council of Churches or the World Evangelical Fellowship.

Several factors have correlated with the growth of American pluralism over time. One factor has been immigration. As in other countries, the majority of the new religions in the United States have been imported by immigrants from around the world. Although some of these religions remain confined to an ethnic community, the majority have reached out for acceptance in middle America, especially as the ethnic community Americanized. While overall growth has not been affected, the passing of different immigration laws has very much changed the development of particular religions. Second, population growth has created an ever-increasing pool of potential recruits for new groups. This population growth has been accompanied by the increasing urbanization of the American public. The anonymity of city life provides private space where new and very different groups can survive without constant public scrutiny.

The dynamic of American religion, manifest in the continual production of new religious groups, has also created the problem of distinguishing new religious movements (NRMs) from other kinds. The term "new religious movements," of course, was imported from Japan where it was used to distinguish the spectrum of new religions that emerged following the imposition of an American-style religious freedom on the country in 1945. Over the next twenty years, a variety of formerly suppressed groups and a host of newly founded groups emerged to claim significant portions of the population. The term was imported to the United States to describe: 1. the new Asian groups that came into the country following a 1965 change in the immigration laws, and 2. the new Christian groups that arose to evangelize the baby boom generation just coming of age at the end of the 1960s. For the purposes of this essay, "new religious movements" denote first generation religious movements in American society that primarily target young adults as recruits.

The ferment surrounding the baby boomers (communalism, drug use, life on the streets) attracted social scientists, while the visible pool of religiously unattached youth attracted a variety of evangelists and missionaries. Japan had weathered its transition to an extreme pluralism in a relatively peaceful manner, but the peculiar situation of the early 1970s in America gave birth to the modern cult awareness movement. Among the problems facing the baby boomers was unemployment; the American economy proved unable to accommodate to the sudden increase of new people entering the job market. This gave young

street people an added incentive to respond to high-demand religious groups whose life included, along with commitment to the group, a job, friends, and a place to live. Such high-demand groups provided a new context for the resolving of adolescent dilemmas concerning career, sexuality, and religious commitments. The use of religious groups as springboards to personal autonomy seemed destined to place them in conflict with parents who saw them as competitors for the hearts of their offspring.

Out of the hundreds of NRMs that emerged at this time, a few high demand groups (the Unification Church, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, the Divine Light Mission, The Way International, for example), which sought to grow by building a cadre of full-time employees to spearhead an intense evangelistic effort, attracted the ire of parents. They rejected the notion of their sons and daughters dropping promising careers in business or the professions to live and work with a new, questionable, low-status religion.

The 1970s might be seen as the first phase of a new cult awareness movement, the term "cult" being adopted from Evangelical Christians as the appropriate label for the despised new religions. Through the 1970s, numerous parents' groups sprang up across the United States, and members sought an effective means to get their children out of the groups and reoriented toward a more acceptable career and lifestyle. From the 1970s to the present, the history of the conflict of new religions and American culture has been written in the efforts (largely unsuccessful) of anticultists to entice the government to support their crusade and in their varied activities to advance their agenda in light of the government's refusal to become involved. Initially, the parents' groups focused upon legal redress in the courts through conservatorship laws, which enabled relatives to remove an adult convert from a group (but which quickly proved a dead end), and upon deprogramming, an extralegal tactic that involved the kidnapping of a group member and his/her subjection to intense psychological pressure to renounce the group. Parents soon learned that they needed the assistance of a wide variety of professionals to assist them in the development of a secular understanding of their dilemma. Courts and law enforcement agencies were quite unresponsive to parental upset over adult children joining fringe religions.

Everything changed in November 1978 with the deaths at Jonestown. Though the Peoples Temple was a congregation in a mainline denomination, it was quickly transformed into the epitome of a dangerous cult. The parents' groups, however, discovered that they were unable to react effectively to the Jonestown deaths. They lacked a national organization. Over the next few years, they created two organizations—the Citizens Freedom Foundation, an activist group that promoted deprogramming and a variety of initiatives to attract popular support,

and the American Family Foundation (AFF), which would specialize in research and education on the cult issue. Within a few years, CFF evolved into the Cult Awareness Network (CAN).

With the CFF in place and public revulsion over Jonestown cresting, the number of deprogrammings rose dramatically, along with the development of rehabilitation centers at which people who had been successfully deprogrammed could receive therapy aimed at consolidating their decision to leave the group and reenter mainstream society. Anticultists undertook a variety of initiatives at the state level, and sympathetic legislators attempted to find a means of bringing the government into the controversy as allies of the parents. These initiatives were uniformly defeated by a coalition of civil libertarians and leaders from older religious groups who saw the new legislation as a threat to their own existence.

As the legislative thrust moved to its conclusion, several professionals who had adopted the cult awareness perspective came forward with psychological rationales to justify action against a select number of religious groups. These professionals were not motivated by theological concerns, but rather by what they perceived as the unjustified manipulation of recruits by NRMs and the resulting psychological harm this caused. While a spectrum of positions emerged, the most popular proved to be the "coercive persuasion" theories articulated by psychologist Margaret Singer, popularly known as "brainwashing." Singer and her colleagues began to suggest that the particular recruitment procedures and the spiritual practices of the groups (the use of meditation, chanting, mantras, etc.) overrode the freewill of the members and caused them to stay in cults against their better judgment. It was argued by many that prolonged membership in the groups could do irreparable mental and even physical harm.

If cults altered individual personalities and actually harmed their members, then deprogramming was justified. Brainwashing theories provided the intellectual support for the practice. Such support was necessary as attention shifted from the legislative halls to the courts, where people who had been successfully deprogrammed launched civil suits against the groups they had formerly joined. Juries, responding to brainwashing arguments, handed down multi-million dollar judgments. Those opposed to NRMs were unable to gain a knockout ruling, however, as judgments tended to be reversed or sharply reduced on appeal. But it seemed only a matter of time.

Some of Singer's professional allies attempted to establish a task force within the American Psychological Association (APA) to prepare a lengthy presentation of the "coercive persuasion" argument, which would be reviewed by the APA in its usual manner. The acceptance of such a report by the APA would not establish her theory, but would grant it status as a more than acceptable hypothesis. This plan, however, back-

fired. When the report was submitted and reviewed in 1987, it was unanimously rejected. As summarized in a brief memo to the task force members, the reviewers denounced the Task Force's approach as methodologically flawed and lacking in scientific rigor. That ruling would eventually spell the end of the use of brainwashing theory, deprogramming, and the Cult Awareness Network.

The prominent role given to the brainwashing hypothesis in the 1980s placed a number of scholars who studied new religions in the middle. While not particularly supportive of the groups that they studied, they had seen no evidence among the groups that something like brainwashing was occurring, and from a theoretical point of view, that such a phenomenon even existed. They came to believe that brainwashing was an unscientific hypothesis and, as the number of court cases multiplied, became ever more vocal. Following the APA action, both the American Sociological Association and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion issued supportive statements.

As the court cases proceeded, the search began for an appropriate case to present the psychological and sociological consensus concerning the popular brainwashing hypothesis. That case came in 1989 in *U.S.* v. *Fishman*, a criminal case in a federal court, in which the defendant Fishman attempted to plead that his crimes were committed due to the debilitating influence of his membership in a cult. Two extensive reports refuting the brainwashing hypothesis, based in part upon the APA evaluation, led the court to deny testimony on the subject. In an opinion published in 1990, the court gave legal support to the position that brainwashing theory as applied to new religions had no scientific standing. That ruling would be sustained by similar rulings in several other cases. It essentially brought to an end the typical civil cases of the 1980s in which groups were sued primarily because of alleged brainwashing (though the idea is still brought into other cases in an attempt to increase the amount of punitive judgments).

CAN had already seen the problems associated with deprogramming, and though quietly continuing to support it, publicly began to nurture the rise of what was termed exit counseling. Exit counselors used many of the arguments used by deprogrammers (both psychological and logical) to break the allegiance of members of NRMs, but rejected the use of physical force. Following the *Fishman* ruling, most activists saw the handwriting on the wall and withdrew from further deprogramming activity. Over time, exit counseling matured into a new profession, thought reform counseling (using a term made popular by psychiatrist Robert J. Lifton).

At this point, one of the more prominent new religions, the Church of Scientology, experienced a breakthrough in its ongoing legal battles. The Internal Revenue Service finally ended its lengthy review of the church's tax status and many corporate entities and, unable to find any

substantial reason for continuing to question its religious or charitable nature, granted it full tax-exempt status. The ruling freed a significant amount of funds and personnel within the church, which now targeted the Cult Awareness Network as the major cause of its problems. Through a host of corporate affiliates, individual Scientologists filed lawsuits. Although none of these lawsuits ever came to trial, all allowed depositions to be taken. During 1993-94, several dozen officials and employees of CAN were interviewed, and a detailed understanding of the organization developed.

The information from the Scientology depositions (and the primary lawyer working with the Church, Rick Moxon) were made available to one Jason Scott, a member of a Pentecostal church in Seattle, Washington, who had been deprogrammed by Rick Ross. Ross had been brought into the case by referral from CAN's Washington State representative. Scott sued Ross for damages and received a large negative judgment. During the trial, Ross was unable to enter any testimony on brainwashing to justify his actions. More importantly, using the information from the Scientology depositions, Moxon was able to make the case that CAN was involved. CAN was given a million dollar judgment that forced it into bankruptcy the next year. The ruling was sustained on appeal, and, adding insult to injury, a coalition of groups that had been publicly designated as cults by CAN pooled resources and purchased CAN's name, logo, and 800-telephone line. The coalition now operates a new CAN through a Scientology-controlled corporation in Los Angeles.

The rulings in the *Fishman* and *Scott* cases ended the practice of deprogramming in the United States. Though the problems faced by new religions are by no means settled, minority and otherwise unpopular religions no longer feel that simply by following their normal program of recruitment and worship, they will be called into court and accused of brainwashing their members. They still have to face a somewhat hostile press, however, a remnant of the unfavorable coverage generated by CAN in the 1980s.

While decimated by the *Fishman* and *Scott* decisions, some anticult activists filled the vacuum left by the fall of CAN and organized the Leo J. Ryan Foundation (named for the congressman killed at Jonestown). Together with sympathetic people in the AFF, these activists have attempted to develop new programs to continue their crusade. One element in this program is the further secularization of the concept of cult. During the 1980s, CAN theorists argued that cults were pseudo-religions distinguished from real religions by their use of brainwashing. They had also argued that a few other kinds of groups could manifest cult-like characteristics. In the 1990s, these theorists began to argue that cults were not primarily religious, but rather a peculiar type of social group. While some cults happen to be religious, cults also took the form of political and psychotherapy groups and could manifest anywhere. They

now claimed that their program was not aimed at destructive religious groups, but at any group that manifested a set of cult characteristics. This was a further attempt to get around the problems of the First Amendment that continually blocked any attempt to gain government backing of their cause.

In 1999, using this slightly revised perspective, the Ryan Foundation capitalized on several controversial incidents by religious groups at the University of Maryland to ask the State of Maryland to mandate the establishment of cult counseling and information resources throughout Maryland's university system. The implication was that cult specialists would be hired to train counselors and write anticult material. This new effort was brought to light after a commission was appointed by the Governor of Maryland, and when William Stuart, an anthropologist at the University of Maryland, alerted his scholarly colleagues concerning the importance of what was occurring. During the summer of 1999, the commission listened as various speakers rehashed the cult/brainwashing controversy of the 1980s. The commission report, though somewhat ambiguous, was mildly favorable to demands that the university administrations act. However, the legislature never considered the report, and to date no further action has grown out of it.[2]

Having received favorable mention in the commission's final report, members of the Ryan Foundation generally lauded the effort of their education director Ron Loomis and others who had led the Maryland effort. It was their general assessment that the commission hearings had been a valuable learning experience. The commission initiative also clearly indicated a direction in which they could now move. State legislatures are now being monitored for any possible repeats of the Maryland hearings.

The new millennium, however, finds the cult awareness movement in the United States in some disarray. Among its long-term problems is its inability to generate a base of empirical research supporting the existence of either 1. thought control in NRMs as something above and beyond the normal working of social influence noticeable in any group, or of 2. any measurable harm done to members of such groups. Moreover, in contrast to the 1980s and the theoretical unity found in Margaret Singer's presentation of thought control, today no single theory of how thought control might work has gained more than modest support. A few have attempted to reclaim brainwashing as a reality, while others search for a perspective built around undue social influence. This theoretical disunity (as well as the defensive battle CAN was fighting for its own existence) made it impossible for the movement to capitalize on the several incidents of violence (Heaven's Gate, Aum Shinrikyô, Solar Temple) that so energized the cult awareness movement worldwide.

At the same time, although one could cite a few individual exceptions, the increase in numbers and membership in NRMs that began in

the 1880s has proceeded through the 1980s and 1990s as if the cult awareness movement had never existed. In the 1980s, some groups were quite fearful of CAN, but that fear disappeared during the 1990s. Currently, the cult awareness movement is seen as little more than a meddlesome nuisance.[3] Multinational groups are convinced that any "cult" problem they may now have exists in Europe.

ENDNOTES

[1] Over two thousand laws have been passed by the state and federal governments that spell out in some detail the nature of church-state separation in the United States. Most of these laws speak to areas in which the government may not meddle and a few to areas in which cooperation is allowed (such as chaplains for the armed forces or church-run government programs).

[2] A large selection of materials relevant to the Maryland hearings can now be found on the Internet at the New Religions Website established by Jeffrey Hadden at the University of Virginia: http://www.cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/cultsect/mdtaskforce.htm.

[3] Like mainline groups, all new religions are aware that they may face problems from the illegal and immoral actions of individual leaders and members (from child abuse to financial fraud) and that if they are brought into court for criminal or civil proceedings they may also have to respond to allegations of brainwashing or thought control.

France's Obsession with the "Sectarian Threat"

Danièle Hervieu-Léger

THE SECTARIAN ISSUE IN FRANCE: A PROBLEM OF A "PATHOLOGY OF BELIEF"

On 8 February 2000, the entire French press commented on the report submitted to Prime Minister Lionel Jospin the previous day by the *Mission Interministérielle de Lutte contre les Sectes* (MILS—Interministerial Mission on Combating Sects). On the whole, the commentaries applauded the idea that was being explored of soon banning two groups considered particularly dangerous (the Church of Scientology and the Order of the Solar Temple). Whatever their political bent, left or right, the newspapers hailed the determination of the mission, created in 1998 to help the government effectively combat threats to individual liberties and public safety posed by sects in France. In fact, this concern considerably predates the creation of the mission and has garnered broad public support. Since the early 1980s, a series of official reports have been published, and a parliamentary commission was created in 1995 to assess the scope of the "sectarian threat." In 1996, a report compiled by this commission (presided over by deputies Gest and Guyard) defined a set of "danger criteria" that enabled them to identify a number of "groups at risk" displaying at least one of these criteria. Thus was compiled a list of 173 groups requiring particular watchfulness on behalf of society and the public authorities. The work of the MILS, which is charged with the constant surveillance of the sectarian landscape, continues this previous activity in protecting citizens from the danger of "sect-like groupings."

A few months after the MILS report was published, the National Assembly voted unanimously in favor of a bill aiming to reinforce the legal means to conduct this battle. The bill was introduced on 22 June 2000 by the socialist deputies, but it essentially restated a text already presented before the Senate by a senator from the right designed to facilitate the banning of dangerous groups. As a focal point of the proposed legislation, parliament members placed the notion of "psychological manipulation" as a recognized crime which they wanted to see incorpo-

rated into the Penal Code. While acknowledging the potential value of this notion "so as to allow victims to be heard in court," Justice Minister Elisabeth Guigou immediately emphasized the looming difficulties of legally defining such a crime and the risks that such a notion might jeopardize "basic liberties such as the freedom of association or liberty of conscience." This appeal for caution was not heeded by the deputies. They even sought to outdo each other during the debate by introducing amendments designed to elaborate still more rigorous protective devices. This arsenal of repressive measures has not yet been examined by the Senate, and it does not yet have a definitive legislative status. It is highly likely—given the criticisms the text has given rise to among legal experts, human rights associations, and churches—that it will not be passed in its present form and that the notion of psychological manipulation will disappear from the final text.[1]

But beyond the discussion of the text itself and its main lines, we must first point out the remarkable unanimity with which parliament members from the entire political spectrum hastened to establish anti-sect legislation, despite the fact that the MILS itself had discarded the idea, and the government had underscored the extreme difficulty of enforcing such a measure. Every voice was heard when the text was put to vote in the Assembly. The same was true in the Senate during debate on the About amendment, which suggested reactivating a law dating from 1936 regarding the dissolution of seditious political movements in order to apply it to sects. In the context of French political discussion, the "sectarian question" is one of the very rare "social topics" (perhaps the only one!) that enables the various ideological families to set aside their differences. It is hard to tell if this unanimity arises from an exceptional agreement of the people's representatives on the issue or if, more prosaically, it results from identical pressures put on members of parliament by their constituents. But this does not alter the main fact: in France there is a broad consensus (vigorously sustained by the media) that the fight against sects should be a necessary aspect of the protection of individual liberties and that this fight should prevail, in the final analysis, over the defense of the right of each individual to freedom of religion.

Seen from abroad, the concern over sects that unites French public opinion and political authorities seems surprising, all the more so since it occurs in a nation in which controversial NRMs have appeared in smaller numbers than in other countries.[2] To explain this particular situation, we must first point out that public opinion's aversion to religious manifestations considered excessive and dangerous to individuals does not apply in the same way to all groups displaying intense spiritual and religious preoccupations and offering their members what Max Weber called a "unitarian sense of life." Religious organizations that are directly and officially affiliated with the main religious families whose long history roots them incontestably in the national cultural soil (the

two variants of Christianity, Roman Catholicism and Lutheran-Reformed Protestantism, as well as Judaism) are spared this repugnance. More recently established religious groupings in France, whose qualifications as "major religions" do not appear debatable, receive intermediate treatment. Buddhism, especially the Tibetan version, is looked on favorably as a vehicle of tolerance and open-mindedness embodied in the revered figure of the Dalai Lama.[3] Islam—whatever the fears about the barely controllable proliferation of its associations and the doubts expressed with regard to its intrinsic capacity to adapt to French institutions, customs and political culture—now constitutes an incontrovertible reality in the French religious landscape. French society will have to adapt to this reality in one way or another over the long term. What is basically at stake in the collective anxiety manifested toward sects is the emergence and proliferation of poorly identified beliefs that at any time might dictate deviant behavior and engender social formations that threaten public order and conventional social ties. It is as if religious sentiment, when it escapes the major "organized religions," *by its very nature* can only degenerate into a "pathology of belief" that is basically contrary to freedom of thought and individual autonomy. In this perspective, all "sects" (if we apply this term out of convenience to all groups that display this "unframed" religious sentiment) are supposed to have an enormous potential for deviance from which society must protect itself. To combat this pathology—which is termed "sectarism" in the MILS report—the state has assigned itself the mission of placing all sects under strict surveillance, since it is unable to eradicate the untamed—and therefore threatening—religious sentiment that they embody.

Seeing sects in terms of a "pathology of belief" establishes a difference in the way groups considered authentically religious—because they are affiliated with "major organized religions"—and groups that lack such an affiliation—and supposedly usurp the "religious" status they claim—are treated. A "sect" in the most widely shared French perspective (including from the standpoint of government authorities) is a group that *abusively* asserts its quality as a religious entity. From this perspective, combating the supposedly evil influence of sects does not constitute a problem of religious freedom. The problem is actually one of public hygiene and suppression of fraud. The main questions posed by this approach to battling sects are obviously ones of definition and the limits the state and public opinion assign by mutual agreement to the very notion of religious pluralism. Before discussing principles this fact must be grasped as a historical given, the significance of which becomes clear only when it is examined in the light of the entire array of relations between the state and religion in the French context.

MANAGING RELIGION WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE REPUBLIC: THE CONFESSIONAL MODEL OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

The situation is in fact incomprehensible unless it is examined within the context of the ambivalent relationship that French-style secularism *(la laïcité à la française)* has maintained and continues to maintain with religion. Throughout its entire history, the *laïque* perspective seems to have been torn between the democratic objective of guaranteeing religious freedom—as long as worship remains limited to the private sphere—and a desire to "tear minds from the influence of beliefs deemed to be in stark contradiction to reason and autonomy,"[4] a desire that harbors an ingrained wariness toward religious belief as such. In establishing the hard-reached compromise that in 1905 led to legally instituting the separation of church and state, the elaboration of the confessional framework to manage "religion within the limits of the Republic" was subordinated to achieving a primary aim: to normalize religious belief as private belief, its "normal" collective manifestation being ensured by the worship assembly placed under the guarantee and protection of the state. Outside this confessional framework confining religious belief to the privacy of the individual conscience and limiting its collective expression to approved forms of worship, religion does not have a socially identifiable place. Even more, when it emerges in a primitive and uncontrolled form, it is still thought to threaten individual consciences with political alienation, psychological dependence, and intellectual obscurantism.

This "presumption of risk" associated with outward manifestations of religions that do not benefit from a denominational *(confessionnelle)* authorization clearly shows that *laïcité* creates an "implicit regime of recognized religions," which can be viewed as a product of the long and indelible history of France's Christian and Roman Catholic past.[5] To base the state on this indifference to religion—which is the foundation of the French rationale of separation—it had to create a legal and practical apparatus to clearly demarcate the space within which religious freedom—an integral part of civil liberties in any democratic country—can be legitimately exercised. Outside of this framework, however, the question of religion as a social and collective fact cannot be posed calmly. More precisely, it simply cannot be posed. The state, radically separated from accredited confessions in whose activities it does not get involved, absolutely denies itself the right to judge the contents of belief or even to define religion. It takes cognizance of the existence of belief as an irreducibly private reality, but it cannot formally recognize the social existence of these beliefs if they are not integrated into the confessional framework which indicates they accept the rules of the republican game that delimits this space for them.

It is essential here to remember that the confessional system, which has become the framework for the legitimate expression of religious pluralism in France, was set up both to prevent any interference of the Roman Catholic Church in the public sphere and to limit its hold on the public conscience, particularly its influence on young minds. The institutional apparatus set up by the law of Separation, created mainly to contain the Roman Catholic Church within the limits of a specialized religious sphere, at the same time made the organizational model of Roman Catholicism the implicit reference for acceptable forms of religious expression—which the law intends to guarantee while simultaneously controlling possible excesses. The Roman Catholic model—in which the cultural practice of the religion and the gathering of its specialized professionals and its community in buildings devoted to worship have a major importance—irresistibly dominates society's representation and the *laïque* definition of "normal religion." The massive presence of the dominant religion in the nation's history and culture has strongly reinforced this specifically French equivalence between "religion" and "Roman Catholicism." Third Republic members of parliament debated the role of religion in society, but it was the Roman Catholic Church they had in mind.[6] Minority religions—the recognition of which is an integral part of the battle against the symbolic monopoly and the political encroachment of the Roman Catholic Church—in order to be accredited, had to conform to this model and adjust their organization to the confessional apparatus that legally and administratively demarcates the territory of legitimate religion in France. The major Lutheran and Reformed Protestant churches obviously had no problem fitting into this mold. The Jewish Consistory instituted by Napoleon in 1808 transmuted the "Jewish nation" into an "Israelite confession" that publicly expressed in its places of worship a religious identity supposedly reduced to the private beliefs of its members—members whom the emancipation proclamation of 1791 had made full-fledged citizens. When the Interior ministers of today deploy all their efforts to bring about an organization of Islam ("on the model," suggested Jean-Pierre Chevènement, "of the Protestant Federation of France") and invite Muslims in France to create their own representative bodies, they are pursuing the same aims, all of them adamantly denying that they are "acting like Napoleon!" The issue is still one of stabilizing a French-style Islam that is acculturated to the rules of the republican game, and whose public expression could legitimately (and as much as possible exclusively) develop within the confines of the well-identified space of its places of worship. As for the state, it recommends that townships provide financial support to build mosques so that the Republic can insure the "free exercise of worship" for all in acceptable and dignified conditions.[7]

Thus French recognition of religious pluralism stops exactly at the borders of religions whose confessional organization assures adhesion

to the values of the Republic. This definition—which may appear surprisingly restrictive—did not pose a problem as long as the Roman Catholic monopoly on the religious sphere was challenged only by "historical" religious minorities (Protestants and Jews), which, in the eyes of the Republic, were hallowed with a particular "resistance legitimacy" due to the persecutions they endured at the instigation of the dominant religion under the Ancient Regime. One of the first concerns of the 1789 revolutionaries was, moreover, to grant full citizenship to the faithful of these religious minorities, which was done in 1789 for the Protestants and in 1791 for the Jews. This recognition at the same time required preventing the Roman Catholic Church from being recognized as the official state religion. The political-religious conflict that inflamed the nation for over a century and a half was partly rooted in the Constituent Assembly's refusal (three times over) to grant the Roman Catholic Church recognition of privileged status.

But this system topples when the mesh of the confessional net is strained by the multiplication of groups and movements claiming religious status and demanding the benefits of a freedom taken for granted in democratic societies. In reaction to the anarchic proliferation of self-proclaimed and extradenominational religious groups, *laïcité*'s deep-rooted suspicion that religious alienation poses a constant threat to freedom of conscience is tending to resurface. But it should be understood that the problem does not spring from the intensity experienced within little groups of spiritual virtuosos. As proof we have seen that groups with similar features which are protected by the institutional wing of organized religions (such as charismatic Roman Catholic groups) remain theoretically exempt from state investigations.[8] Beyond the manifest desire to prevent excessive or misdirected religious sentiment, it is mainly the institutional deregulation of the religious sphere inherent in the weakening of the confessional model that is at the heart of the issue of combating sects in France.

To function properly, this model presumes that religious institutions themselves will handle regulation of the religious sphere. For the state to maintain both the absolute neutrality it claims and its punctilious refusal to interfere in the religious sphere, religious institutions have to do their own policing. *Laïcité* precludes any encroachment outside of the specialized sphere in which the state is entitled to intervene. But it also requires that religious institutions be capable of organizing and controlling their own sphere of intervention. According to the French Separation law, in order for state regulation of the religious sphere to be exercised exclusively *ad extra*, the *ad intra* religious regulation must be clearly entrusted to uncontested institutional authorities. It is precisely this regulatory capacity of religious institutions that is currently in difficulty. In a society of individuals who have won their autonomy in all areas, religious devotees themselves tend more and more to think of

themselves as autonomous "believing subjects," personally in charge of identifying the truths in which they believe and determining the obligations that they will associate with these beliefs. This movement of believers' individual emancipation destabilizes the means of validating and harmonizing the collective belief sustained by institutions. It frees floating believers to cobble together their own systems of meaning and to create new forms of association for spiritual purposes. These new forms almost completely elude the legal status of "worship association" *(association cultuelle)* that provides public accreditation for legitimate religions.

THE CRISIS OF SECULARISM AND THE COLLAPSE OF ROMAN CATHOLIC CULTURE: TWO INSEPARABLE PHENOMENA

The current proliferation of self-regulated spiritual associations is directly related to the increasing powerlessness of France's major religious institutions to steer religious belief as they had in the past. But the question of religious regulation arises not only because fewer and fewer members of major churches make up the bulk of those who declare themselves "believers." In a country like France, which for a long time was, to use J. P. Willaime's excellent phrase, "a secular country with a Catholic culture,"[9] the regulatory structure of Roman Catholicism functioned well beyond the restricted group of regular or periodic churchgoers. Many French who never set foot in church have long kept the references, beliefs, and memories that (often remotely) structure the elaboration of significations by which they give meaning to their lives (and especially their deaths). Those who rejected this Roman Catholic religious environment did so deliberately, referring to values, moral precepts, and beliefs (in science, progress, etc.) that conflicted directly with the metaphysical and ethical conceptions of Roman Catholicism.

This implicit dual "secular-Catholic" regulation of belief long hindered the dissemination of religious beliefs. According to the amusing expression coined by British sociologist David Martin, the republican model in fact contributed to the spread in France of a sort of "Catholicism without Christianity." Today the dike against limitless dimensions of belief built from this Christian and Roman Catholic cultural repertoire has probably given way. In any case it no longer constitutes an obstacle to the flow of individual beliefs, which is accelerated by the collapse of ascribed religious and ideological traditions. The challenge of secularism is no longer to ensure citizens their liberty of conscience by containing the influence of Roman Catholicism on the public conscience. Rather, it is to manage the proliferation of voluntary groupings of believers that this individualistic turn in religious striving has fostered.

The legal and administrative tools for managing denominational religions seem decidedly inadequate to deal with this uncontrolled dynamics of association.

One might wonder in the end if the specific anxiety of French public opinion with regard to sects is not, at least to a certain extent, a reaction to the cultural marginalization that the country's main religious institution is subjected to—a marginalization that opens (well beyond the problem of sects) an era of increased competition in the now deregulated market of symbolic goods. The dividing line drawn for two centuries between those who "had religion" (Roman Catholics for a large majority) and those who decided not to have any is now blurred. Believers are found in multiple, shifting, and often unstable forms of affiliation, borrowing their spiritual references from a broad cultural toolkit that includes Christian and Roman Catholic traditions among many others. This alarms the Roman Catholic Church and deprives the Republic of a simple regulatory device that, after much bitter conflict, has recently entered into a more serene *modus operandi.*[10] Public opinion senses that the erosion of devices for ideological identification, be they religious, political, or philosophical, which have so durably organized individual classifications and self-classifications in this country, may well leave them highly vulnerable to the multiplication of symbolic service enterprises now encouraged by the deregulation of the market. The "fight against sects" undertaken by government authorities can, from this standpoint, be perceived as revealing the end of an inseparably cultural, religious, and political singularity specific to France.

ENDNOTES

[1] In a memo to the Prime Minister in September 2000, the MILS itself suggested that the proposal to include the crime of psychological manipulation in the Civil Code was untimely and should probably be removed from the text that would be submitted to the deputies for a final vote.

[2] Alain Vivien, president of the MILS, estimates the number of people linked to groups considered sects at 500,000. Other reliable sources set this figure at 250,000. The truth probably lies somewhere in between.

[3] The number of people having a fairly regular tie with Buddhist groups is estimated at 600,000. On the phenomenal expansion of Buddhism in France, see F. Lenoir, *Le bouddhisme en France* (Paris: Fayard, 1999).

[4] On this issue, see P. Bouretz, "La démocratie française au risque du monde," in *La démocratie en France*, ed. M. Sadoun (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 27-137.

[5] Article 1 of the law of 1905 specifies that "the Republic does not acknowledge or subsidize any form of religion."

[6] Today they debate the place of sects in society, but it is Scientology that they have in mind.

[7] Interview given by Interior Minister J. P. Chevènement to *Le Monde* on 19 February 2000 on the shape of French-style Islam.

[8] Independent Protestant churches at risk of appearing towards the top of the list of groups placed under high surveillance have well grasped the meaning of this differential treatment and perceived that the only way to escape stigmatization is to join the ranks of "official" Protestantism as quickly as possible. In the eyes of the public authorities this official Protestantism is embodied in the Fédération Protestante de France. As soon as the first report of the parliamentary commission was published in 1996, Pentecostal and Adventist churches therefore entered into negotiations to obtain "institutional protection." Neither Pastor J. Tartier nor Pastor J. A. de Clermont, successive presidents of the Federation, denied them this protection, out of a concern widely shared in the Protestant church of preserving minority rights.

[9] J. P. Willaime, "Laïcité et religion en France," in *Identités religieuses en Europe*, eds. G. Davie and D. Hervieu-Léger (Paris: La Découverte, 1996), 153-71.

[10] D. Hervieu-Léger, "The Past in the Present: Redefining *Laïcité* in a Multicultural France," in *The Limits of Social Cohesion: Conflict and Mediation in Pluralist Societies*, ed. Peter Berger (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 38-83.

New Religions in Australia: Public Menace or Societal Salvation?

James T. Richardson

NEW RELIGIONS IN AUSTRALIA: AN OVERVIEW

New religions in Australia have had their share of controversy, although not as much as in some European and former Communist countries.[1] Indeed, as Gary Bouma has noted, the situation with most new religious movements (NRMs) has been remarkably peaceful in Australia, which has come to be more tolerant with its new, more pluralistic approach to religious and ethnic differences.[2] However, there are some who would dispute this assessment and who claim either that NRMs cause many problems in Australian society,[3] or that NRMs themselves suffer considerably at the hands of authorities and the media.[4] And some scholars, most notably Rowan Ireland, argue that the increasing religious and cultural diversity of Australian society might be considered a positive feature because many of the new religions, by virtue of their teachings and practices, actually contribute to a new kind of societal integration in Australia.[5] This brief essay will attempt to assess the current situation in Australia concerning NRMs.[6]

HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND LEGAL CONTEXT

One could easily argue, as does Bouma, that Australia is a land peopled by new religions on a regular basis, since it has always been a society with a heavy inflow of immigrants who carry their cultural values and practices with them. This influx of different peoples began almost immediately because of the presence of Irish Catholics among the convicts sent to Australia in the late eighteenth century. Catholics coming to Australia either as convicts or free citizens encountered significant numbers of Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists who had joined with the dominant Anglicans to form a mostly Protestant new nation.

While many smaller religious groups were allowed to exist and even prosper in early Australia, some groups were devalued and effectively left out of the amalgam that became Australia, especially groups such as the Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses, which were viewed with suspicion, as were Jews. That suspicion continues into the present and has spread to other, more recent religious groups, especially those making more life-changing demands on participants. But that suspicion of certain foreign groups did not dominate public policy, and indeed the demand for workers to assist with Australia's booming economy overwhelmed such concerns, especially after World War Two. Workers, no matter their religious and cultural affiliations, were desperately needed to build the Australian economy, and thus the Anglican-Protestant hegemony began to crumble under this pressure.

Thus, a "White Australia" immigration policy, with a strong preference for British and Irish immigrants, eventually gave way to a formal policy in the 1970s that declared Australia a multicultural nation which officially welcomed all comers, as long as they were willing to fit into Australian society and become productive citizens in the growing economy. Thus we see Australia's religious demographics clearly showing a shift from the Anglican-dominated Protestant hegemony of earlier times. As Bouma notes,[7] in 1947, the nation of 7.6 million people was 88 percent Christian, with one half of one per cent in the "other" category (Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Other), and the rest (11.4 percent) not claiming a religion or not answering the question. By 1996, the population had grown to 17.8 million, but the rapid immigration that contributed greatly to the growth resulted in only 70.6 percent claiming to be Christian, a dramatic growth to 3.5 percent in the "other" category, and a whopping 25.5 percent claiming no religion or not stating a clear preference.

What may seem remarkable to some is that this sort of diversity was achieved without the benefit of a federal constitutionally based Bill of Rights guaranteeing freedom of religion.[8] Early in Australia's history the effort to establish a Bill of Rights that included religious freedom with the initial Constitution was beaten back by those who wanted the dominant religious traditions to exercise more control. Indeed, the religious freedom/Bill of Rights issue has also been defeated twice since then by the voters, with religion being a focal point of those subsequent campaigns. The initial campaign and those since have used the United States as a problematic example of what can happen with such formal guarantees of religious freedom. Those efforts struck an apparently resonant chord with the Australian voters, who voted 69 percent to 31 percent against adding a Bill of Rights in 1988.

The Australian Constitution does include clause 116 which seems modeled after the language in the United States Constitution concerning religion, but the clause is more symbolic in its meaning since it does

not apply to the individual states and is virtually without legal force at this time. It states:

> The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.

There is an effort currently being made to develop the legal meaning of this clause by doing something analogous to what happened with the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which contains the famous "equal protection clause" that has been used to force federal constitutional guarantees of individual rights and freedoms upon the separate states. However, this movement, led by those, including some prominent judges, who think Australia should formally adopt and abide by international norms for human rights, has not gained momentum yet, leaving religious freedom protections mainly with the states.

Of the six Australian states, only one, Tasmania, has a guarantee of religious freedom in its state constitution, and that protection can be overridden by legislative action. New South Wales (Sydney) has explicitly rejected adding religious freedom to its anti-discrimination statutes, mainly because of opposition from traditional religious organizations. This rejection occurred in the face of thorough documentation about problems being faced by a number of religious minorities in New South Wales.[9] Included in the large study by the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board were details concerning the famous Lindy Chamberlain case in which Mrs. Chamberlain, a Seventh-day Adventist, spent three years in prison after being found guilty of killing her baby at Ayers Rock (Uluru) in 1980. She was eventually freed after some extraordinary efforts by those who believed she had been wrongly convicted, and that a dingo had actually taken the baby. (The movie, "Cry in the Dark," starring Meryl Streep and Sam Neil, chronicled this tragic episode.) The 1978 Hilton bombing case, in which three members of the Ananda Marga group were convicted after a massive, but apparently wrong-headed and misleading campaign by the police and media to convict them of setting off a bomb that killed two people during an international conference in Sydney, was also described. Again, these defendants were eventually freed after further investigation, suggesting some checks and balances within the Australian system of justice, but not before they had spent five years in prison.

Further removed in time are some famous episodes in Australian history concerning discrimination against minority faiths. Australia became, in 1941, the second country in the world to ban the Jehovah's Witnesses (the other was Nazi Germany). After being banned under

Australia's sedition statutes (and having their property confiscated), however, the Witnesses continued to operate and even doubled their membership within two years. Shortly thereafter, in June 1943, the High Court of Australia overturned the specific act under which the Witnesses were banned, making the ban inoperative.[10]

More recently, some of the controversial NRMs that have gained notoriety in other societies have also been the target of efforts at social control by Australian officials. The Family, formerly known as the Children of God (COG), experienced considerable attention from authorities at the federal level and within some states, and some 17 COG homes across Australia were raided in 1976 by immigration officials (no violations were found, however). This official scrutiny culminated in massive synchronized raids in May 1992 against Family communal homes in Victoria and New South Wales that resulted in 153 children being taken into custody.[11] The two states eventually failed in their efforts to have the children declared wards of the state and subsequently had to release the children and deal with various claims against the state made by the Family members affected. Again, the outcome of these cases, which engendered considerable media attention, suggests that there are some checks and balances within the Australian justice system.

The Unification Church (UC) has also garnered much attention in Australia over the past few decades, as documented by the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination study. Questions were raised at the federal level as well as by the NSW government about the operation of the UC within Australia. Specific concerns were raised about their requests to build training centers within Australia, and only after a two-year battle was the church even allowed to build a worship center, its initial request for a residency based ministry being denied and lost on appeal. The controversy sparked (or was sparked by) much extremely negative news coverage of the UC, focusing on claims made from overseas about activities of the UC in other societies, particularly England. UC members in Australia have been forcibly deprogrammed, as documented in the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination study.

Scientology has also come in for its share of negative attention in Australia over the years. Several states have, at one time or another, banned Scientology, making it illegal for the organization to register as a religion, advertise, teach their doctrines, or receive payments for services rendered to individual practitioners. At one time the federal "Companies Code" prohibited the use of the terms "scientology" and "dianetics" in any advertising materials. Scientology also lost a major High Court case in 1983 in which it appealed a decision that allowed the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) to engage in ongoing surveillance of Scientology members. This surveillance involved the reporting of personal information on individual members when they applied for jobs with federal agencies. The ASIO case seemingly dem-

onstrates little concern for religious freedom of members of Scientology (or for religious freedom in general). However, that same year the High Court handed down a resounding victory for Scientology by overturning a Victoria Appeal Court decision that had declared with much verbiage that Scientology was not a religion for purposes of tax exemption. This High Court decision is considered the major case on the definition of religion in Australia, and its careful delineation of what constitutes a religion makes the decision one of international import.[12]

Lynne Hume has written insightfully about the treatment of Wiccans and other Pagans in Australia, noting that the southern hemisphere context makes the practice of Wicca especially challenging and interesting. She also applies the criteria developed in the 1983 Scientology tax case to Wicca, concluding that it meets those criteria and should be considered a religion for legal and tax purposes. She notes the changing legal climate in Australia concerning the practices of Wiccan groups, making it less likely that Pagans will be prosecuted at either the state or federal levels for engaging in their faith.[13] It is noteworthy also that a 1998 major federal report entitled *Article 18: Freedom of Religion and Belief* issued a number of findings more positive toward Wiccans and Pagans, among them that: "There is no evidence to suggest that individuals or the community require specific protection from witchcraft or fortune-telling practices." The report goes on to state that any problems of fraud that might arise from such activities can best be dealt with under general criminal and civil laws, and it further recommends that states having laws against sorcery, witchcraft, fortune-telling, and enchantment (some dating from the 1800s) should repeal those statutes since "Wiccans and Pagans have the right to manifest their beliefs either individually or in concert with others in the practice of witchcraft and fortune-telling."[14]

This same federal report, *Article 18*, presents a more mixed picture when considering new religious movements in general. After beginning the discussion with an examination of the terms "cult" and "new religious movement," the report opts to use both somewhat interchangeably, dismissing the extreme negative connotations of the term "cult."[15] The report then goes on to attempt to "split the baby in half" by showing some recognition of the fact that many participants in such groups join voluntarily and claim to have positive gains from so doing, while at the same time giving considerable credence to anticult views of participation and listing several pages of alleged negative characteristics of involvement in such groups. In the end, however, the report shifts markedly in the critical direction concerning "cults" and new religions by using the term "brainwashing" as if it has scientific meaning, and using a brainwashing-based rationale to justify some recommendations about such groups.[16] The findings include several which assume that coercion is a regular part of decisions to participate in new religions ("Coercion includes the use of covert or brainwashing techniques to recruit new

members, . . .") and that guidelines or principles for what are acceptable religious practices need to be developed. The report also recommends that the Attorney General's department should convene "an interfaith dialogue" to "examine the question of methods of coercion in religious belief and practice . . ."; to "consider whether legal limitations should be imposed on religious groups regarding coercive tactics"; and to "formulate an agreed upon list of minimum standards for the practice of religious groups."[17]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Whether anything will come of the just-cited recommendations of the federal report entitled *Article 18* is not at all certain.[18] There is evidence that the report has been shelved by the Attorney General's Office, as indicated by Bouma. Apparently the Attorney General received considerable negative reaction to the idea of federal legislation guaranteeing more religious freedom, and then claimed that the problems uncovered were not of a magnitude as to require federal intervention.[19] Still, the report does suggest more animus exists toward new faiths in Australia than one might expect, given the long history of relative openness toward new religious groups. And the report also is relatively devoid of appreciation for the important theoretical point made by Rowan Ireland that the increasing religious diversity in Australia might actually contribute to a new type of societal integration not based on similar beliefs and values, but on a new negotiated social identity that could serve Australia and Australians well.

Australian history appears to ebb and flow with regard to religious freedom for newer and minority religious groups, with some sad chapters in that history, but also some definite bright spots, as operation of the checks and balances inherent in the Australian justice system have demonstrated on occasion. It remains to be seen whether the relatively optimistic views about Australia expressed by Bouma and by Ireland will be borne out, or whether the difficulties so well chronicled by Juliet Sheen will increase and become the way that Australians relate to and define NRMs.

ENDNOTES

[1] See special issue of *Social Justice Research* (12, 1999) edited by this author under the theme, "Social Justice and Minority Religions," which describes the situation in a number of European and Former Communist Countries in a series of eleven articles. Also see James Richardson and Massimo Introvigne, "'Brainwashing' Claims in Governmental Reports of Cults and New Religions in Europe," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (forthcoming).

[2] See Gary Bouma, "Social Justice Issues in the Management of Religious Diversity," *Social Justice Research* 12 (1999): 283-96.

[3] See Rachael Kohn, "Cults and the New Age in Australia," in *Many Religions, All Australian*, ed. Gary Bouma (Adelaide: Open Book Publishers, 1997), 149-62.

[4] See Juliet Sheen, "Living within the Tensions of Plurality: Human Rights Law and Policy," in *Many Religions, All Australian*, ed. Gary Bouma (Adelaide: Open Books Publishers, 1997), 163-82. See also the very thorough report (written by Juliet Sheen), New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board, *Discrimination and Religious Commitment* (Sydney: NSW Anti-Discrimination Board, 1984). On media coverage of such issues in Australia, see James Richardson, "Journalistic Bias Against New Religion Movements in Australia," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 11 (1996): 289-302.

[5] See Rowan Ireland's thoughtful paper, "Religious Diversity in the New Australian Democracy," *Australian Religious Studies Review* 12 (1999): 94-110.

[6] I am relying on my own work, some of which is cited herein, as well as some recent scholarly overviews of the area of new religious movements, including Lynne Hume, "New Religious Movements: Current Research in Australia," *Australian Religious Studies Review* 13 (1999): 27-39; and Rowan Ireland, ibid.

[7] See Bouma, "Social Justice Issues," 287. Australia has long allowed a question on religious identification on its federal census, which makes the kind of comparison offered by Bouma quite meaningful.

[8] See James T. Richardson, "Minority Religions ('Cults') and the Law: Comparisons of the United States, Europe, and Australia," *University of Queensland Law Journal* 18 (1995): 183-207.

[9] See New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board, *Discrimination and Religious Commitment.*

[10] Christine King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982). The Witnesses in Germany were not so fortunate, as thousands were imprisoned and died at the hands of the Nazis.

[11] See James Richardson, "Social Control of New Religions: From 'Brainwashing' Claims to Child Sex Abuse Accusations," in *Children in New Religions*, eds. Susan Palmer and Charlotte Hardman (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 172-86, for details on these raids.

[12] See New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board, *Discrimination and Religious Commitment*, and Richardson, "Minority Religions ('Cults') and the Law," for more details on Scientology's treatment by governmental bodies in Australia.

[13] See Lynne Hume, *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997); idem, "Exporting Nature Religions: Problems of Praxis Down Under," *Nova Religio* 2 (1999): 287-89; and idem, "Witchcraft and the Law in Australia," *Journal of Church and State* 37 (1995): 135-50.

[14] Quotes taken from p. 66 of Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Article 18: Freedom of Religion and Belief* (Sydney: Commonwealth of Australia, 1998). This report was supposedly a harbinger of dramatic changes in laws against various kinds of discrimination in Australia, but, as will be recounted herein, the effort has apparently gone for naught because of pressures similar to those that have kept Australia from adopting a Bill of Rights over the years.

[15] On problems using the term "cult" see Lynne Hume, "A Reappraisal of the Term 'Cult' and Consideration of 'Danger Markers' in Charismatic Religious Groups," *Colloquium* 28 (1996): 35-52; Jane Dillon and James T. Richardson, "The 'Cult' Concept: A Politics of Representation Analysis," *SYZYGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* 3 (1994): 185-98; and James T. Richardson, "Definitions of Cult: From Sociological-Technical to Popular-Negative," *Review of Religious Research* 34 (1993): 348-56.

[16] This is similar to many other governmental reports in Western Europe, which are analyzed in Richardson and Introvigne, "Brainwashing Claims in Governmental Reports."

For a thorough critique of "brainwashing" based claims about participation in new religions see James T. Richardson, "The Ethics of 'Brainwashing' Claims," *Australian Religious Studies Review* 7 (1995): 48-56.

[17] Quotes from Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Article 18*, 81-82.

[18] A more recent official report that is somewhat critical of the *Article 18* report has been called to my attention by Michael Hill. This report, produced for the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia by the Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade, is entitled *Conviction with Compassion: A Report on Freedom of Religion and Belief* (November, 2000) and adopts a more critical stance toward "cults" (a term it insists on using). However, the report ends up recommending support for the idea of the Commonwealth Attorney General "convening an inter-faith dialogue to formulate a set of standards for the practices of cults" (184).

[19] See Bouma, "Social Justice Issues in the Management of Diversity in Australia," 292.

New Religions in Germany: The Publicity of the Public Square

Brigitte Schoen

THE SETTING

Reformation has left its traces on Germany's religious landscape, which still shows a distinctively regional distribution of Roman Catholics and Lutheran and Reformed Protestants. While in 1950, 94 percent of the population belonged to the two churches,[1] recently, numbers have dropped rapidly, with 27 million members or about 33 percent of the population for each church.[2] Ex-members largely remain unchurched. Reunification also brought a significant increase in the number of nonbelievers. Minority religions are estimated to have five million members, or about six percent, with the largest minority religion, Islam, numbering about three million members. Figures for new religions vary considerably.[3] While there is disagreement concerning numbers as well as which communities count as new religions, they certainly are a fringe phenomenon. The typical size of new religions ranges from several hundred to a few thousand members.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND MODERN CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS

The fundamentals of religious freedom and church-state relations are laid down in the basic law, the constitution of 1949, which since German reunification is binding for East Germany as well. A major intention of the constitution has been to strengthen the fundamental human rights which are understood to govern the basic law.[4] These fundamental human rights are binding on legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government and are directly enforceable law (Art. 1 III GG). Their essential content must not be infringed (Art. 19 II GG). Freedom of religion is guaranteed through Art. 4 GG, which rules that freedom of creed, of conscience, and freedom to profess a religious or non-religious faith are inviolable; that the undisturbed practice of reli-

gion is guaranteed; and that conscientious objection against military service is respected. Art. 4 GG does not state an explicit limitation on religious freedom, which means that this right finds its limits only in the constitutional order as a whole as well as in the basic rights of other individuals. This means that a compelling state interest does not suffice to restrict religious freedom unless it is based on the above named limits. On the other hand, the basic rights of others have to be guaranteed, such as a child's right to freedom from injury in the case of Evangelicals calling for corporal punishment.[5] To sum up, constitutional guarantees of religious freedom are extensive in present-day Germany.

Church-state relations are the result of a double compromise, the compromise of the Weimar constitution of 1919 being incorporated into the basic law of 1949 because in both cases debates over how to reform the system could not be resolved politically. The constitutions merely prohibit a state church, they do not ask for a strict separation of church and state. Religions are organized either under public or under private law. A corporate body under public law is usually carrying out tasks of the state and therefore is granted a number of state powers, such as the right to levy a tax on its members; the purpose of this organizational form is to have an independent unit of public administration. Organizing religions in this fashion is of course a remnant of the former state-church system. The Weimar constitution produced an interesting compromise by making public law status accessible to all religions and *Weltanschauungen* which by their constitution and the number of their members guarantee longevity.[6] This meant in effect that the established churches did not lose privileges, but now had to contend with competition. Recently, the Jehovah's Witnesses have been denied public law status because of a lack of loyalty towards the state, which the federal administrative court has seen as contrary to the cooperation with the state connected with this status; the case has been brought before the constitutional court, which has promised a thorough examination.[7] The case clearly illustrates the tensions caused by assigning state powers to an organization which because of its religious nature cannot be under state supervision.

Religions that do not meet the requirements for public law status organize according to private law; there is no special legal form for them. On the whole the system increases the differences between large and influential religions and small minority religions. Quite often, however, different treatment does not derive from public or private law status but from the fact that those religions holding public law status also have far higher numbers of members. For instance, religious instruction in public schools does not depend on public law status but on whether sufficient numbers of students exist to form classes.[8] The right to public declaration of one's faith and to public recruitment, that is, the acknowledgement of a public religious mission, is granted to all.[9]

THE CONCEPT OF RELIGION IN JURISDICTION

The constitutional court stressed early that the right to freedom of religion has to be interpreted broadly.[10] There is no concluding definition of religion; a working definition of the constitutional court merely requires that members of a religion or *Weltanschauung* share and testify to a consensus on the meaning of human life and how to cope with it. This means a minimum of organizational form, a consensus on the meaning of human existence, and bearing witness to that consensus.[11] As a result, the acknowledgment of new religions has been unproblematic. Neither political activities[12] nor predominant engagement in economic activities[13] hinder the religious character of an organization. Only when religious teachings are alleged to be simply a pretext or facade for economic activities—that is, if the community in effect exclusively pursues economic interests—will it lose the guarantees of Art. 4 GG.[14] So far only Scientology has been affected by this stipulation.[15] The constitutional court has not had a chance to discuss the nature of Scientology at this juncture, but in another decision it has made clear that a community's own insistence that it is religious may not suffice. Finally, it is the task of the courts to examine and decide these issues in terms of the meaning and aim of the constitutional provisions for the basic right of religious freedom.[16]

The flip side of this generally pro-religious jurisdiction can be seen when it comes to religion in the public square, where Christian predominance is clearly felt. Religion in public school may serve as an illustration. The state court of Hessia ruled in 1965 that school prayer would violate the negative religious freedom of the non-believer.[17] However, the constitutional court in 1979 still held school prayer to be permissible as long as students were free to decide whether to participate or not.[18] A significant alteration was effected in the so-called crucifix decision of the constitutional court in 1995, which stated that crosses in the classrooms of Bavarian public schools violated the plaintiffs' religious freedom, since the children were legally required to attend school and thus to be confronted with the cross, a situation which differs from casual encounters with religious symbols of different faiths in daily life.[19] This decision attempted to resolve tensions between different faiths by at least removing religious symbols in situations where confrontation is unavoidable. However, it will not generally affect the presence of religious symbols in public. This active support for minority faiths against the predominant culture has been a comparatively late development, but because of the increasing numbers of non-Christians in Germany, this trend is likely to continue, Bavarian protests against the crucifix decision notwithstanding.

GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES

The most conspicuous activity of German governmental agencies has been the production of information booklets on new religions. One of the first of these was a published report by the Federal Government in 1979 to the Board of Petitions, which had called on the government to present a concept of how it was going to deal with certain problematic endeavours of new religions.[20] The government's report gave a general perspective on problems arising with new religious movements (NRMs) and specifically mentioned the Unification Church, the Children of God (Family of Love), ISKCON, Divine Light Mission, Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, and the Bhagwan Rajneesh movement. The legal part of the paper ruled out any prohibition of NRMs and emphasized the possibilities existing laws provide for eventual action.

This booklet as well as others distributed by state governments were challenged by lawsuits filed by the new religions affected. The courts then had to clarify the standard which the booklets needed to meet. They affirmed that authorities generally are bound by the precept of neutrality and tolerance, the principles of proportionality, requirement, and appropriateness, and the prohibition of excess.[21] While accurate factual statements are permissible, matters which are yet unclear are excluded, as are speculations and rumors. In the latter case, even speculations that appear as quotations from other sources must be excluded, since including them could lend them an air of authenticity.[22] An important controversy arose regarding the legal basis on which the booklets were issued, as they were taken to be an interference with the right to religious freedom of the religious groups cited.[23] While state governments can resort to police power which is situated at the state level, the federal government cannot. In much debated rulings both the federal administrative court[24] as well as the constitutional court[25] derived the legal basis for the booklets from the constitution itself.

The booklets themselves are of very mixed quality. Despite a large amount of legal information, the booklets aim to be accessible to the general public, and therefore often tend to oversimplify. Because of these court rulings, the booklets now mainly rely on quotations from publications of the religions in question. State warnings against new religions on the one hand seem drastic because of their publicity; on the other hand everyone is free to ignore them, as was pointed out by the federal administrative court.[26] While it is important that new religions protest against booklets which they perceive to be unfair, the courts have held this public form of debate to be legitimate. However, the booklets' influence on public opinion should not be overestimated.[27]

In 1996, the German Parliament appointed an Enquete Commission entitled "So-called Sects and Psychotherapy Groups." The general

purpose of Enquete Commissions is to provide parliament with background information on complex and important issues. The task of this commission was not to deal with particular organizations, but to analyze and to mitigate the potential for conflict in a range of new religious and ideological communities and psychotherapy groups.[28] As the commission was initiated at the request of critics of new religions, and as the majority of the commission's members can be counted among critics, the commission's results were all the more surprising. It concluded that at present new religious and ideological communities and psychotherapy groups presented no danger to state and society or to socially relevant areas.[29] Reasons for these moderate results can be seen in the presence of experts as permanent members of the commission, most notably among them Hubert Seiwert, who has analyzed the political conflicts and compromises behind the scenes.[30] The commission not only drew on social scientific research, but had itself ordered a number of research projects the results of which could not be ignored.[31] This is a significant contrast to the French Enquete Commission of 1996, which largely relied on intelligence service reports, or the Belgian Enquete Commission of 1997, which viewed sociologists and historians of religion as mere theorists who would only study the doctrines and texts of these movements and would use very vague categories for qualifying groups as NRMs. As a result, the Belgian commission found that the conclusions of scholars were insufficiently grounded and judged that their work was not really appropriate for the task of the commission, since the sociologists did not study the harmful aspects of the organizations in question.[32]

In 1997, the conference of the ministers of the Interior decided to put Scientology under surveillance. As the decision came in the wake of Scientology's international campaign against Germany, it certainly was influenced by public pressure on the government to act. The basis of the decision was the legal expertise of a task force of the intelligence service.[33] While there is general agreement that the state of affairs warrants surveillance, it is debateable as to whether it warrants it compellingly. Helmut Albert has raised the interesting question whether surveillance would actually bring substantially new information, since the intelligence service has to rely mainly on open sources, due to legal restrictions on the tapping of telecommunications.[34] So far, the surveillance has resulted in the production of further information booklets on Scientology.[35]

Taken together, governmental activities have mainly influenced the sphere of public opinion through the collection of information by the Enquete Commission and the intelligence service (on Scientology) as well as through the distribution of information to the general public. This of course means a high degree of publicity for the debate on new religions in Germany. On the other hand, governmental activity did not

go beyond the collection and distribution of infomation, mainly because of the restrictions arising from the extensive constitutional guarantees for religious freedom and the fact that new religions have been recognized as proper religions by the courts. This recognition has been an important factor especially in dealing with local public administration. It remains open to debate how far other tools of the state have been instrumentalized for political purposes. The Enquete Commission for its part has arrived at an independent position, and the intelligence service has refused to monitor new religions other than Scientology.[36]

ANTICULT ORGANIZATIONS

It does not seem appropriate to speak of a grass roots German anticult movement, as the degree of institutionalization of the organizations is high, as is cooperation between organizations. The prominent role of the churches makes it easy to overlook the fact that one is dealing with a number of quite distinct organizations ranging from concerned parents' initiatives to full-time church counsellors. Attitudes towards new religions also vary. Large differences occur especially within the Protestant Church, which accommodates both the generally moderate Evangelische Zentrale für Weltanschauungsfragen (EZW) information center as well as the aggressive anticultist Pastor Thomas Gandow.

During the late 1970s and the 1980s some anticult organizations received state funding, a practice which was stopped by the courts since such funding violates the principle of neutrality if the sponsored organization operates on a religious or ideological basis. In addition, private persons can rely on freedom of speech and do not face the same restrictions as public authorities; therefore authorities must not sponsor tendentious organizations in order to circumvent these restrictions.[37] Loss of state funding for private organizations on the other hand meant that the churches became more attractive partners for cooperation and occasional funding. It also led to the foundation of information centers which operate on a neutral basis and therefore may receive state funding, such as the IDZ (Informations- und Dokumentationszentrum Sogenannte Sekten/Psychokulte) in Cologne. This is an interesting development which may help to balance the predominance of Christian countercult information.

CONCLUSION

Some observers of the German situation may be surprised not to have read anything more alarming. After all, the United States granted political asylum to a German Scientologist in 1997 on grounds of reli-

gious persecution.[38] Some scholars have also claimed that German courts would rule according to the information they have been fed by church "cult" investigators;[39] or that Germans descend into persecutional frenzy in periodic cycles[40] because the German psyche associates nontraditional religions with destabilizing political movements.[41] Numerous factual errors notwithstanding, such publications seem to enjoy a certain popularity.[42]

Part of the predominantly negative view derives from the fact that there has been a very contentious public debate about new religions. Even the German government has participated in this debate, and the style some politicians have employed has been much frowned upon. But these concerns have to be seen in the context of a quite favorable constitutional and judicial background. The supportive stance of the courts did not make it into the news because it was not controversial. Still, public opinion on new religions has been quite negative, and Scientology's campaign against Germany led to an escalation of the situation in the mid-1990s. It was interesting to see that even in the case of Scientology the government's options for action turned out to be very limited. Instead, officials mainly concentrated on influencing public opinion on the issue. The attempt of the anticultist initiators of the Enquete Commission to jump on the train of current anticult sentiment eventually backfired, as the commission was not able to find evidence for the alleged dangers of new religions. If anything, these official results have had a moderating influence on public opinion.

A general evaluation of the situation of new religions in Germany must take into account the balance between the legal situation, jurisdiction, political action, as well as anticult activities and public opinion. It may be argued therefore that the bitter public dispute on new religions has to be seen as a counterreaction to the comparatively favorable stance provided for by the legal situation and jurisdiction. Religion old or new is not restricted to the private sphere, but neither is the discussion of religions. The price for a presence in the public square seems to be a public debate, which quite often has taken a negative tone.

ENDNOTES

[1] Lutheran and Reformed Protestants are organized in a joint institution, the Evangelische Kirche Deutschland (EKD).

[2] For this and the following cf. *Nationalatlas der BRD: Gesellschaft und Staat*, ed. Institut für Landeskunde, Leipzig (Heidelberg, Berlin: Spektrum Akademischer Verlag, 2000), 102-05.

[3] See also http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~religion/remid_info_zahlen.htm.

[4] Reinhard Mußgnug, "Entstehen der BRD," in *Handbuch des Staatsrechts der BRD*, eds.

Josef Isensee and Paul Kirchhof, vol. I (Heidelberg: C.F. Müller, 1987), 239.

[5] This is a major conflict between the Berlin Senate and the Gemeinde auf dem Weg, an evangelical community, which has prompted the Senate to issue a warning.

[6] Art.137.5 WRV.

[7] BVerwG, U.v. 26.06.1997–7 C 11/96, *NJW* (1997): 2396-399.

[8] Cf. Josef Jurina, "Die Religionsgemeinschaften mit privatrechtlichem Rechtsstatus," in *Handbuch des Staatskirchenrechts der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,* eds. Joseph Listl and Dietrich Pirson, vol. I (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 2nd edition, 1994), 689-713, 701.

[9] Jurina, 699.

[10] cf. Karl Herrmann Kästner, "Das Grundrecht auf Religions- und Weltanschauungsfreiheit in der neueren höchstrichterlichen Rechtsprechung," Rechtsprechungsübersicht, *AöR* (1998): 408-43.

[11] Rainer Scholz in summing up the jurisdiction of the constitutional court, in "'Neue Jugendreligionen' und Grundrechtsschutz nach Art. 4 GG," *NVwZ* (1992): 1152f; for a similar definition of the BVerwG see Kästner, 414.

[12] BVerwG U. v. 23.03.1971–BVerwG I C 54/66, *DöV* (1971): S.777-81.

[13] BVerwG, U.v. 27.03.1992–7 C 21/90, *NJW* (1992): 2496-500.

[14] Ibid.

[15] BAG, ruling of 22 March 1995–5 AZB 21/94, *NJW* (1996): 143-52.

[16] BVerfG, B.v. 05.02.1991–2 BvR 263/86–BVerfGE 83, Nr. 18, 341-62; interestingly, this passage was an aside and did not concern the plaintiff in this case.

[17] HessStGH, U.v. 27.10.1965–P.St. 388, *NJW* (1966): 31-36.

[18] BVerfG, B.v. 16.10.1979–1 BvR 647/70, *EuGRZ* (1980): 13-19.

[19] BVerfG, B.v. 16.05.1995–1 BvR 1087/91, *EuGRZ* (1995): 359ff; the plaintiffs are Anthroposophists.

[20] "Jugendreligionen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, " Bericht der Bundesregierung an den Petitionsausschuß des Deutschen Bundestages. *Reihe Berichte und Dokumentationen* 21 (Bonn: 1980).

[21] cf. Rainer Scholz, "Neue Jugendreligionen" und Äußerungsrecht, *NVwZ* (1994): 127-33.

[22] Ibid.

[23] cf. Stefan Muckel, "Staatliche Warnungen vor sog. Jugendsekten," *JA* (1995): 343-49.

[24] U.v. 23.05.1989–7 C 2/87, *NJW* (1989): 2272-278.

[25] B.v. 15.08.1989–1 BvR 881/89, *NJW* (1989): 3269-271.

[26] U.v. 23.5.1989–7 C 2/87, NJW (1989): 2276.

[27] Cf. Jürgen Eiben, "Erfolg um jeden Preis? Die Scientology-Organisation in der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Auseinandersetzung," *Die Scientology-Organisation. Methoden und Struktur, Rechtsprechung, gesellschaftliche Auseinandersetzung. 2. Bericht des Ministeriums für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen* (Köln: 1997), 25-46.

[28] *Endbericht der Enquete-Kommission "Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen,"* ed. Deutscher Bundestag (Bonn: 1998), 19.

[29] Ibid., 294.

[30] Hubert Seiwert, "The German Enquete Commission on Sects: Political Conflicts and Compromises," *Social Justice Research* 12 (1999): 323-40.

[31] *Neue religiöse und ideologische Gemeinschaften und Psychogruppen: Forschungsberichte und Gutachten der Enquete-Kommission "Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen,"* ed. Deutscher Bundestag (Hamm: Hoheneck, 1998).

[32] *Enquete Parlementaire visant à élaborer une politique en vue de lutter contre les pratiques illégales des sectes et le danger qu'elles représentent pour la société et pour les personnes,*

particulièrement les mineurs d'âge: Rapport, 313/8-95/96, 28.04.1997, Partie II, 114, 117, 118.

[33] *Abschlußbericht der Arbeitsgruppe SC der Verfassungsschutzbehörden: Zur Frage der Beobachtung der Scientology-Organisation durch die Verfassungsschutzbehörden*, ed. Innenministerium NRW (Düsseldorf: 1997).

[34] Helmut Albert, "Beobachtung der Scientology-Organisation durch die Verfassungsschutzbehörden?" *Die Öffentliche Verwaltung* (1997): 810-16.

[35] See http://www.verfassungsschutz.nrw.de and http://www.hamburg.de/Behoerden/LfV/homepage.htm.

[36] *Abschlußbericht der Arbeitsgruppe SC der Verfassungsschutzbehörden*, 125.

[37] BVerwG, U.v. 27.03.1992–7 C 21/90, *NJW* (1992): 2496-500.

[38] For the background see *Stern*: "Der große Bluff," 29 June 2000; according to *Stern* Scientologist Victore tried to escape a tax office bill. Victore had argued that she was not able to earn a living in Germany since employers would not hire Scientologists; however employers' letters refusing to hire her seem to have been written by fellow Scientologists at her request. For a general legal discussion see Arthur C. Helton and Jochen Münker, "Religion and Persecution: Should the United States Provide Refuge to German Scientologists?" *International Journal of Refugee Law* 11 (1999): 310-28.

[39] Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, "Verfassungsfeindlich: Church, State, And New Religions in Germany," *Nova Religio* 2 (1999): 208-27.

[40] Derek Davis, "Religious Persecution in Today's Germany: Old Habits Renewed," *Journal of Church and State* 40 (1998): 741-56.

[41] Davis, 754f.

[42] For a historical perspective see Randall Collins, "German-Bashing and the Theory of Democratic Modernization," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* (1995): 3-21.

Italy's Surprisingly Favorable Environment for Religious Minorities

Massimo Introvigne

International sources, including yearly reports on religious liberty issued by the United States Department of State, the Helsinki Commission, and the United Nations, suggest that Italy, comparatively speaking, offers one of the best environments for religious minorities. Unlike France, Germany, and Belgium, there is no official anticult activity, although there is some police watching of "cults." However, when a police report (although more moderate than its French or Belgian counterparts) was disclosed in 1998, political criticism was directed primarily against the police for possible breaches of religious liberty rather than against the "cults" themselves. Anticult movements in Italy are small, underfinanced, and not particularly active. Even the most controversial religious movements operate in Italy in a climate of freedom and have consistently won their most important court cases. On 15 November 1991, the Rome Court determined that "flirty-fishing," as practiced by The Family (formerly known as the Children of God), was not tantamount to prostitution and not illegal per se under Italian law. The Supreme Court has also determined, on two separate occasions, that Scientology is a religion, although it also maintained that Narconon, the drug rehabilitation program run by Scientology, is not in itself religious and, in consequence, not tax-exempt. A leading judge in Rome investigating the Unification Church for possible mistreatment of its members closed the case with no indictments in 1980. Jehovah's Witnesses, denounced in France as the epitome of dangerous "sects," have entered into a concordat signed by the Italian Prime Minister on 20 March 2000, allowing them to receive public funding (the concordat is due for ratification by parliament, and some opposition is expected). The Assemblies of God and the Seventh-day Adventists, investigated as possible "cults" in Belgium, already receive taxpayers' money under similar concordats in Italy. All this may seem rather strange, when one considers that religious liberty is a fairly recent phenomenon in Italy (it was only incorporated after World War II into the country's new constitution), and Catholic influence is probably more dominant here than anywhere else in the world. I will list six reasons which may explain why Italy's situation is apparently so favorable in terms of religious minorities, although I will also mention some emerging trends that may cause this situation to change.

1. First, religious minorities are not seen as particularly threatening in Italy, simply because they are comparatively small. The *Encyclopedia of Religions in Italy* (coedited by this writer) lists more than six hundred religious bodies active on Italian soil. However, the combined membership of such bodies (excluding the Roman Catholic Church) amounts only to 1.92 percent of the total Italian population. The situation changes somewhat, however, when one considers not only the Italian population, but also the foreign workers and legal and illegal immigrants (who are not Italian citizens). In this case, members of religious minorities amount roughly to 3.50 percent of Italy's total population. Most immigrants, however, are not members of new religious movements (NRMs), but are Muslims (with, in consequence, a growing Islamophobia in certain quarters) or Eastern Orthodox from Romania, Yugoslavia, and Russia (this latter religious minority is not regarded as particularly threatening). Religious minorities other than Islam, therefore, are often perceived as a mere footnote to the Italian religious scene as a whole, and voices are even heard among academics claiming that funds should not be wasted on social scientific studies of them.

2. A crucial role is played by the Italian legal system, which is based on the post-war constitution and the 1984 revision of the Concordat with the Roman Catholic Church. Under the present system (unlike in Germany, for instance), all Italian citizens are obliged to pay a church tax amounting to 0.8 percent of their total income tax bill. While in Germany taxpayers claiming to be secular may abstain from paying the religious tax, in Italy the religious tax payment is statutory. The law does allow, however, for taxpayers to opt that their payment be given to secular charities, or to leave the corresponding section on the tax form blank. In that case, their money is divided among the religious bodies which have elected to participate in the corresponding division. Although the constitution provides that only the treaty with the Roman Catholic Church is given the status of a "Concordat" (with a capital C), a number of other denominations and churches have smaller concordats called "intese," which grant them very similar financial and other benefits. Participating religious bodies include Waldensians and Methodists (these two churches merged in 1975), Baptists, Lutherans, Jews, the Assemblies of God, and the Seventh-day Adventists. In 2000, the Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema signed concordats with the Italian Buddhist Union and the Jehovah's Witnesses, and these await parliamentary approval at the time of this writing, while negotiations with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormon Church), the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Apostolic Church (another Pentecostal body) are on their way. Polls show that a very large majority of Italians support the system. Secular humanist organizations are generally fairly vocal opponents, although one of them, the National Union

of Atheists and Rationalist Agnostics, once claimed to be a religion and tried unsuccessfully to enter into a concordat itself. Although these secularist organizations have a limited number of members, they are somewhat overrepresented both among the media and the intellectual elite and are regarded by religionists as a real threat. This explains why mainline churches are extremely reluctant to oppose new entries into the concordats-religious tax system. They are afraid to "rock the boat," and to open the whole system (extremely beneficial to them) to debate and controversy. Although Jehovah's Witnesses are not particularly popular among other religions, most Protestant bodies, in fact, supported their application for a concordat, and the Roman Catholic Church remained officially silent (although criticism from individual priests and pastors was not uncommon, and a petition against the concordat gathered tens of thousands of signatures).

3. Protestants have a history of discrimination in Italy, under the Fascist regime in particular, when Mussolini tried to appease and accommodate an initially suspicious Roman Catholic Church. Some Protestant denominations were defined as "cults" and "sects" in official documents, including in the post-World War II period, and were subject to discrimination well into the 1950s. It was only during the 1960s, in a number of Supreme Court decisions, that what remained of the anti-Protestant measures was effectively dismantled (after Vatican II, with no opposition and the full approval of the Roman Catholic Church). The memory of this period of discrimination is still painful for Protestants and explains why Evangelical countercultism has such a limited presence in Italy. When foreign material written against groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons is translated by Italian Evangelicals, a foreword usually explains that strong theological criticism does not imply that these groups should be discriminated against by the state. The Fascist regime also introduced criminal legislation against "*plagio*," a word whose contemporary translation into English should in fact be "brainwashing" (although Italian legislation was passed well before this word was coined in the United States). On 8 June 1981, the Supreme Court declared Section 603 of the Italian Criminal Code incompatible with a democratic constitution, thus eliminating *plagio* from Italian law and making it more difficult to reintroduce anti-brainwashing legislation.

4. "Cult" and "sect" were labels frequently used by the Roman Catholic Church and by left-wing political critics against Italian Freemasonry, an organization which, for decades, was often the most vocal exponent of secular humanism (for which it had to sever its ties with British and American Masonic bodies). Freemasonry was also a vocal critic of the large Italian Communist Party. The only anticult legislation proposed

and occasionally passed in Italy was, in fact, anti-Masonic. In the 1980s and 1990s, after two Masonic scandals, left-wing governments passed laws (still in force) preventing Freemasons from holding positions in the national judiciary or as presidents of some of the country's chambers of commerce. While in France and other countries secular "continental" Masonic bodies (separated from non-anticlerical British and American Freemasonry) are very active in promoting anticult crusades, Italian Freemasonry has, understandably, developed a very different attitude over the years, simply because it has learned through experience that anticult campaigns in Italy often provoke new anti-Masonic legislation.

5. Scholars in Italy have (as in the United States, and unlike in France and Germany) a history of being fairly proactive and of siding with underdogs, religious and otherwise. Unlike the situation in France and Germany, however, there has also been a substantial body of empirical research on NRMs since, at least, the 1980s. Published social scientific and historical literature about NRMs is possibly twice as large as in France and Germany put together. A good seventy percent of this literature, in the form of some fifty books and hundreds of journal articles and chapters, has been produced by scholars associated with CESNUR, the Center for Studies on New Religions, established in Turin in 1988. From its very beginning, CESNUR has had an international board whose most active members are internationally well-known critics of the anticult movement. During its twelve years of existence, CESNUR has entered into several consultancy agreements with public institutions, law enforcement agencies, and mainline religious bodies; its courses, seminars, and reports (supplemented by many hundreds of media interviews) have helped spread a non-anticult perspective on religious minority issues in Italy.

6. The memory of the Fascist persecution of religious minorities makes Italian politicians extremely reluctant to act against "cults" or "sects." In nearby France, politics is still dominated by a secular humanist "old left" with a paternalistic view of government and state. In Germany, anticult crusades are often led by an "old right" which enjoys close connections with established churches and a widespread law-and-order attitude among the general population. In Italian politics, by contrast, there is a certain prevalence of a "new left" and a "new right," obviously different from each other, but both anti-paternalistic and libertarian. Both have opposed any attempt to widen state control of religion or anticult activity. A graphic illustration of this point is the joint representation by two senior lawyers on behalf of the Church of Scientology in recent court cases. One of the lawyers was a former cabinet minister from the libertarian wing of the conservative party "Forza

Italia," and the other an equally libertarian MP from a small neo-Marxist left-wing party. Such legal representation on behalf of Scientology by prominent politicians who also happen to be lawyers would be unthinkable in France or Germany.

These results might be questioned by a non-Italian observer reaching his or her conclusion on the basis of information derived from the Internet. Some of the most extreme anticult Websites are run by Italians (although they are occasionally hosted by foreign providers in order to bypass Italian law restrictions). The Italian Roman Catholic countercult organization GRIS (Research and Information Group on Cults) also has a significant international online and offline presence both in Europe and in Latin America. Whilst this is undoubtedly true, it remains the case that several Italian anticultists operate almost exclusively online and have a very limited offline presence. Their Websites are more well-known abroad than in Italy. There is, for instance, an entire Web site (operated by a former Italian leader of New Acropolis) devoted to slandering scholars associated with CESNUR. In this case, however, several hundreds of pages have been online for three years without generating (as far as I know) a single line of comment in any of the mainline Italian media. On the other hand, the anti-CESNUR Website (which includes many pages in languages other than Italian) has been quoted within the framework of local campaigns against "cults" (and "cult apologists") in France and Germany. An anti-Soka Gakkai page based in Italy, and a large anti-Scientology Website run by a pseudonymous "Martini," also have a larger impact abroad than in Italy. GRIS, as mentioned earlier, is a somewhat different organization, with a real presence in several Italian cities. It boasts of having the approval of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (although several dozens of Catholic associations are similarly "approved," and "approval" does not give GRIS the right to speak for the church). In recent years, the group has been plagued by internecine struggles, has exhibited different attitudes within its own local chapters, and its presence at the national level appears to be declining. It still maintains contacts, however, with several Italian Catholic bishops and with countercult bishops and priests in Germany, Latin America, and elsewhere. Generally speaking, there is only a limited degree of secular anticult and Roman Catholic countercult activity in Italy.

The Italian media, on the other hand, are just as interested in publishing lurid exposés of "dangerous cults" as anywhere else. And while the overall domestic impact of Italian anticultism has been quite limited, Italian anticultists have been lionized by the international anticult movement. Because a number of Italian scholars of NRMs (both associated, and not associated, with CESNUR), as well as some Italian politicians and legal experts, are among the most vocal critics of European

(particularly French) anticultism, European anticultists have a vested interest in claiming that these "cult apologists" are "controversial" at home. It is also worth noting that both Jehovah's Witnesses and Soka Gakkai have their largest European constituencies in Italy, and the same may well be true for Scientology, although in this case hard statistics are notoriously difficult to obtain. Anticultists in countries such as Germany and France, understandably, like to claim that these larger Italian bodies are as controversial in Italy as they are in their respective countries. Although it would be an exaggeration to claim that Italian anticultism (mostly propagated via the Internet) has no impact whatsoever in Italy, it would be true to say that the material is mostly produced for export and use in other countries.

In 2000, a self-styled "disgruntled former Italian anticultist" published an exposé and several documents on the controversial United States Website <http://www.tellitall.org> (whose real origins are unclear, and where anybody is allegedly allowed to post all sorts of outrageous claims, with anonymity guaranteed). The claim was made that extreme Italian anticult Websites (particularly the anti-Scientology site run by "Martini") are operated by a group involved in a number of illegal activities with the secret help of Ministry of Internal Affairs officials. The Church of Scientology called the attention of several MPs to the exposé, and both a parliamentary discussion and an official investigation followed. The latter suggested that, contrary to the claims on <http://www.tellitall.org>, no governmental officer has been shown to cooperate with the extreme anticult Websites. In addition, the concerned MPs were told that any illegal activity carried out by these Websites will, in the future, be monitored and prosecuted. It remains unclear who exactly was responsible for the exposé on <http://www.tellitall.org> (with critics obviously pointing their fingers at the Church of Scientology itself), but the whole story illustrates that in official quarters extreme anticultists in Italy are regarded more as part of the problem than as part of the solution. There have also been suggestions that intelligence services of countries with a more aggressive anticult attitude (rather than their Italian counterparts, as the tellitall.org exposé suggested) may play a part in the whole Italian imbroglio surrounding the "anti-cult terrorism via the Internet." A certain pressure exerted by France against the concordat with the Jehovah's Witnesses has undoubtedly been felt and appears to be continuing at the time of this writing. Just as Italian anticultism is mostly a product intended for foreign export, anticultism from countries such as Germany and France may well be imported into Italy. Proposals to set up official commissions to investigate Italian "cults," as has already occurred in France and Germany, have also been introduced by some members of the Italian parliament. To date these proposals have not been taken too seriously, but they may herald increasing anticult activity in the future.

New Religions and the Anticult Movement in Canada

Irving Hexham

INTRODUCTION

Canadians pride themselves on valuing tolerance, multiculturalism, and religious pluralism. Consequently, new religions are treated relatively well in Canada where, apart from the odd news report about a "dangerous cult," they receive relatively good treatment and are seen as a legitimate expression of belief. This article provides an overview of recent historical factors affecting the treatment of new religions in Canada and pays particular attention to a short period of intense anticult activity in the early 1980s.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It is arguable that Jan Karel van Baalen, a Christian Reformed minister serving in Edmonton, Alberta, did more than any other writer to shape contemporary attitudes towards new religions by identifying them as "cults."[1] His book became a best seller in North America, a standard text in both academic and public libraries, and remained in print until the 1980s. Van Baalen never defines what he means by the word "cult." Instead he says new religions are "essentially pagan."[2]

If van Baalen helped create the negative popular image of cults, another Canadian, S. D. Clark, provided academics with what became one of the standard studies of sects in 1948.[3] Like van Baalen, Clark never defines his terms in what is essentially a history of Canadian churches prior to 1900. It was Clark's student, W.E. Mann, who produced the first real sociological study of new religions in Canada. Although by modern standards his definitions are inadequate, at the time they were a major contribution to the discussion of religious groups. Mann defines a church as "a religious structure which has become well accommodated to the secular world, and is, for the most part, aligned with the middle and upper classes." Sects were viewed as "institutions of social and religious protest, as bulwarks of certain disadvantaged social groups in their struggle against the social power, moral conventions, and ethos of the

middle classes, and against institutionalized formalized religion."[4] He adopted the definition of a cult as "a religious group which looks for its basic and peculiar authority outside the Christian tradition," to which he added, "whereas sects emphasize recovery of primitive, first-century Christian doctrine, cults tend to blend alien religious or psychological notions with Christian doctrine with a view to obtaining a more 'adequate' or 'modern' faith."[5] He then listed a "number of common characteristics" found in cults including a "post-scientific outlook" and a lack of "emotional manifestations" and "ascetic tendencies."[6]

Using this framework, Mann produced an essentially historical account of religious movements in the Canadian province of Alberta with particular emphasis on the 1930s and the rise of evangelical Christian groups that he labeled "fundamentalist." On first reading, Mann's account seems essentially descriptive and nonjudgmental. Indeed, throughout the book he argues that both cults and sects help people cope with difficult situations by serving important social functions, including the integration of both immigrant and rural groups into urban societies.[7] Yet underlying his apparently positive assessment is a deeper level of criticism that implies people who join sects or cults are "inclined to neurosis and neurasthenia" caused by deep-seated social and psychological needs.[8] He also argues that many members profit personally from their role in these groups. Thus, although he saw the groups he studied as socially beneficial in the context of a developing society, his dependence on deprivation theory leaves the reader with the distinct impression that sects and cults ought not to appear in normal societies such as those found in Eastern Canada.[9] Therefore, although Mann does not attack new religions, he lays the groundwork for future attacks based on claims of psychological manipulation and the exploitation of members.

Finally, in the late 1960s and early 1970s Walter Martin's *The Kingdom of the Cults*[10] became a best seller in Canada, where it could be found in most public libraries. Consequently, when newspaper reporters were asked to write a story about some "strange new religion," very often the only work they could find that was remotely on topic was Martin's book. As David Virtue, the religion editor for *The Province* in Vancouver said, "I was asked to write a story on the Hare Krishna movement which was active in Vancouver. When I went to the library there were no books on the topic. The closest I could get to the Krishnas were the groups discussed by Martin in his book. So I called them a 'cult' following his example. After all there were no other experts to be found."[11]

CULTS AND THE CANADIAN PRESS UNTIL 1980

When new religions, or "cults" as they became known, came to the attention of the Canadian public in the early 1970s, most Canadians

seemed rather amused by the appearance of their members on city streets, and local newspapers gave them relatively fair coverage. This observation can be verified by studying the archives of Canadian newspapers. For example in Saskatchewan, the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* ran a number of stories about new religions in the mid-1970s, all of which saw "cults" as curious, but not dangerous.[12] The paper even reprinted an article from the *Toronto Star* by Tom Harpur that discussed and rejected the practice of "deprogramming."[13] Later it warned, "Cult 'rescuers' may expand to Canada" and took a negative view of deprogrammers as well as a positive view of the Hare Krishnas.[14] Similar findings appear in most other Canadian newspapers of the period.

Things began to change in 1978 with the successful deprogramming of Benji Carroll. This event involved Montreal reporter and later Canadian Broadcasting Corporation producer, Josh Freed, who subsequently wrote the best selling book, *Moonwebs,* and made the film *Ticket to Heaven* based on the book.[15] Before the book was published, Freed wrote several sensational syndicated articles for *The Montreal Star*[16] that "exposed" the Unification Church. Shortly after these disclosures the *Star-Phoenix* also ran a story about two young women in Boston who apparently killed themselves and their pets in the belief that they were entering the realm of Greek mythology. This appears to be the first cult suicide story of recent times.[17]

The negative publicity that gradually attached itself to "cults" led University of Saskatchewan's United Church of Canada chaplain, Colin Clay, to write a "confidential report" for the Saskatchewan government and give interviews to the press warning about "dangerous cults."[18] In September the Saskatchewan government rejected Clay's report and refused to establish the "deprogramming centre" he recommended.[19] Clay strongly disputed the government's decision causing the Minister of Education to explain that it was Clay who originally initiated contact with the government by claiming "several hundred young people in Western Canada" were "involved in cults." After examining his report, the government rejected his findings for lack of solid evidence.[20]

Following the government's rejection of his work, Clay organized the first national conference on cults in Canada at the University of Saskatchewan to which he invited a number of prominent Americans involved in deprogramming. These included Gifford Cappellini and Barbara Underwood. Herbert Richardson and Daryl Bryant from the Universities of Toronto and Waterloo also attended this meeting, but when they attempted to ask questions they were silenced and ordered to leave. Later they gave their own press conference stating that Clay was actually "selling deprogramming."[21] Thus, during the late 1970s the Canadian media slowly began to publish negative stories about "cults" or new religions.

CANADIAN ACADEMICS AND "THE CULTS" FROM 1955 TO 1980

James Penton played an important role in changing the attitudes of academics to minority religions in Canada through the publication of *Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada: Champions of Freedom of Speech and Worship.*[22] Penton documented the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada generally, and in Quebec in particular, from the founding of the movement until the 1960s. This shocking indictment established Penton both as a scholar and champion of religious liberty who in the mid-1970s emerged as an active defender of the rights of new religions.

In 1977, Herbert Richardson responded to the growth of deprogramming in the United States and its introduction to Canada by organizing two conferences in cooperation with the American Civil Liberties Union. The first was held in New York on 5 February 1977, the second at the University of Toronto from 18-20 March 1977. Following these meetings Richardson produced a zeroxed sourcebook exposing deprogramming.[23] These conferences led to the founding of a small academic pressure group, Canadians for the Protection of Religious Liberty, in 1977 with the well-known Mennonite scholar R. J. Sawatsky as president.

Richardson also founded the Edwin Mellen Press in 1978 (the press's inaugural publication was *A Time for Consideration: A Scholarly Appraisal of the Unification Church*) and organized a major session at the American Academy of Religion in New Orleans.[24] During that conference news about Jonestown broke, which launched Richardson into a high profile career as a leading academic spokesman defending new religions. Shortly afterwards, Daryl Bryant issued a short booklet entitled *Deprogramming and Media Coverage of New Religions* that was scheduled to become the first volume in a *Documentation Series* on *Religious Liberty in Canada*, but none of the other projected volumes appeared.[25]

THE CANADIAN ANTICULT CRAZE 1979-1982

From 1977 onwards various parent's groups, often encouraged by university chaplains, formed across Canada to promote deprogramming and encourage legislators to pass restrictive laws against religious conversion. Thus anticult organizations were founded in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and various other cities with names like the Toronto-based *COMA* or *Council on Mind Abuse.* Most of these groups were founded by an individual or a small group of concerned people. Only in Montreal, Toronto, and Saskatoon do they appear to have attracted more widely based support, and today only the Montreal group,

which is supported by the local Jewish community, continues to exist. Unfortunately, no one has studied the rise and decline of these movements in Canada, although Pauline Côté recently published a good overview of political and legal issues concerning new religions in Canada that deals with some of these topics.[26]

Things came to a head shortly before the Jonestown tragedy when, in October 1978, the government of Canada's largest province, Ontario, announced the establishment of a commission to investigate new religions led by the well-known civil libertarian, Daniel G. Hill. The commission was hailed as a victory by the growing anticult movement and greeted with alarm by most academics, established churches, and members of various new religions.

The Hill Commission led both sides to organize letter writing campaigns. Interestingly, the official spokespersons of groups as diverse as the Mennonites, the Lutheran Church in America, the Jehovah's Witnesses, various Baptist conventions, and the United Church of Canada, wrote open letters to Hill warning against the danger of restricting religious liberty.[27] Only members of the Society of Friends appear to have supported the anticult movement.[28]

When the Hill Report appeared in June 1980, anticult activists were disappointed because it concluded that, while occasionally some individuals may suffer harm as a result of the activities of religious groups, there was no evidence that members of the general public were in danger from new religions.[29] Consequently Hill and his fellow investigators recommended that the government reject calls for anticult legislation and other measures aimed at restricting the activities of religious groups.

Before the publication of the Hill Report, anticult stories multiplied in the Canadian media following claims by a Vancouver family that their son had been "brainwashed" by the Moonies. This story, which appeared in slightly different ways in numerous newspapers across Canada,[30] was followed by other sensational stories about the Moonies and other groups. This spate of anticult atrocity stories continued until mid-1982, when these tales suddenly disappeared from the press. The progress and decline of such stories, which were often syndicated across Canada, can be seen from their frequency in newspapers such as Regina's *Leader Post*. Significantly, most of these stories concern or at least mention "Moonies."[31]

Given the fact that Josh Freed's best-selling book, *Moonwebs*, appeared early in 1980 followed by his highly successful film, *Ticket to Heaven*, in 1981,[32] it is tempting to speculate that this intense anticult activity was the result of a skillful publicity drive by Freed. As a journalist he was in a position to promote stories that helped both his book and the subsequent film. If this is so it also explains why interest in "cults" dropped off so dramatically following the film's release. Unfortunately, we will probably never know whether Freed created or capitalized on the Canadian

"cult" craze of the early 1980s. All we can do here is note the relationship between the appearance of these stories and his book and film.

"CULTS" IN CANADA SINCE 1983

Daniel Hill's devastating debunking of the emerging anticult movement's claims and his equally caustic criticisms of deprogramming deflated the emerging Canadian anticult movement. Four years later a well publicized study by Saul Levine, an established psychiatrist working at Toronto's respected Children's Hospital, showed the lack of scientific support for notions of brainwashing and the often harmful effects of deprogramming on those who underwent the process.

Equally important for media perceptions of the role of new religions in Canadian life was the work of Reginald Bibby who, from the mid-1980s, began publishing regularly updated statistics concerning religious groups in Canada.[33] Other Canadian academics such as Irving Hexham, Karla Poewe, Lorne Dawson, and Susan Palmer, whose work was given wide coverage by the media, also contributed to a more tolerant ethos by publishing books that took a balanced view of NRMs and recognized the need to protect religious liberty.[34] Similarly, a significant number of Canadian sociologists including Fredrick Bird, Merlin Brinkerhof, Marleen Mackie, Raymond Currie, Joan Townsend, Nancy Nason-Clark, and Douglas Cowan are active in organizations such as the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and have published numerous academic papers providing solid information about the activities of new religions in Canada. The significance of this is that whenever the national radio or television network, the CBC, or other stations want academic comment on "the cults," they are likely to get a fairly moderate response from well-informed academics.

The one exception to the generally neutral tone of Canadian academics and their rejection of anticult rhetoric[35] is Stephen Kent, who has been outspoken in his criticism of many new religions, particularly Scientology, and who works closely with various anticult groups. Although Kent's views are widely known, few Canadian academics agree with his findings and most disagree quite strongly because of his tendency to use the testimony of ex-members.

CONCLUSIONS

Following the 1979-1982 anticult scare, occasional stories appeared in the Canadian press or on the radio or television about "cults." But, with a few exceptions, they have been relatively restrained despite the

Solar Temple affair in Quebec and both the Waco and Heaven's Gate incidents in the United States. Significantly, no major story appeared highlighting the deaths of Canadians in any of these incidents or claiming that these tragedies proved the need for anticult legislation.[36] Thus, Canadian academics, whose views are taken seriously by the media, played and continue to play an important role in encouraging responsible reporting about NRMs in Canada. The anticult movement, on the other hand, remains relatively weak. In conclusion, it is safe to say that Canada lives up to its image as a tolerant and highly liveable society with a strong tradition of political liberalism.

ENDNOTES

[1] Jan Karel van Baalen, *The Chaos of Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1938).

[2] Ibid., 18-20.

[3] S.D. Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1948).

[4] W. E. Mann, *Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), 5.

[5] Ibid., 6.

[6] Ibid., 7-8.

[7] Ibid., 154-58.

[8] Ibid., 86-87, 101, 111.

[9] Ibid., 29-35, 66, 153-55.

[10] Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1965).

[11] Private conversation with David Virtue, June 1977.

[12] *Star-Phoenix* (Saskatoon), 10 November 1977, 17 December 1977.

[13] Ibid., 5 April 1975.

[14] Ibid., 29 January 1977.

[15] Josh Freed, *Moonwebs: Journey into the Mind of a Cult* (Toronto: Dorset Publishing, 1980); *Leader-Post* (Regina), 13 July 1981.

[16] *Star-Phoenix* (Saskatoon), 6 and 7 March 1978.

[17] Ibid., 10 May 1979.

[18] Ibid., 1 May 1979.

[19] Ibid., 7 September 1979.

[20] Ibid., 13 September 1979.

[21] Ibid., 24 September 1979.

[22] Professor James Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada: Champions of Freedom of Speech and Worship* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

[23] Herbert Richardson, *Deprogramming: Documenting the Issues* (Toronto: private publication, 1977)

[24] M. Darrol Bryant and Herbert W. Richardson, eds., *A Time for Consideration: A Scholarly Appraisal of the Unification Church* (Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1978).

[25] M. Darrol Bryant, ed., *Deprogramming and Media Coverage of New Religions* (Toronto: Canadians for the Protection of Religious Liberty, 1979).

[26] Pauline Côté, "From Status Politics to Technocratic Pluralism: Toleration of Religious Minorities in Canada," *Social Justice Research* 12, no. 4 (December 1999): 253-82.

[27] *Toronto* Star, 31 October 1978. File letters dated 21 February, 25 April, 1 May, 14 May, 30 May, 1979.

[28] The Friends Committee fact sheet, "Bondage not Religion," 1 October 1981, mentions their support for anticult legislation in 1980 and attacks both Herbert Richardson and Canadians for the Protection of Religious Liberty.

[29] Daniel Hill, *Study of Mind Development Groups, Sects and Cults in Ontario* (Toronto: Government Printer, 1980).

[30] e.g. *Kelowna Daily Courier*, 10 March 1980, *Cape Breton Post*, 11 March 1980, *Thunder Bay Chronicle* 11 March 1980, and *Sherebrook Record*,19 March 1980.

[31] cf. *Leader Post*, 24, 28 September 1979; 14 January, 19 February, 10, 22 March, 7 April, 2 June, 13 July, 22, 29 August, 15 October, 1980; 2, 11 April, 29 June, 7, 13, 20 July, 1982; 26 August, 14 September, 17, 22, 26 October, 20, 23 November, 1981; 9 March and 13 July, 1982.

[32] See note 15.

[33] Cf. Reginald Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin, 1987); idem, *Unknown Gods: The Ongoing Story of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993); and idem, *The Bibby Report: Social Trends Canadian Style* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1995). A new book updating these figures is due in the near future.

[34] Cf. Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, *Understanding Cults and New Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986) and *New Religions as Global Cultures* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); Lorne L. Dawson, ed., *Cults in Context* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1996) and *Comprehending Cults* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Susan J. Palmer and Charlotte E. Hardman, eds., *Children in New Religions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

[35] Hexham and Poewe are also highly critical of certain aspects of new religions although they strongly argue that "understanding precedes criticism" and defend the right of new religions to propagate their views and receive full protection under the law. Thus they strongly reject Kent's arguments while recognizing that not all new religions are necessarily socially harmless.

[36] *The Alberta Report*, now known as *The National Report*, is a Canadian *Time*-type magazine and a good source for observing the attitude of reporters to new religions over time. Almost without exception the stories written in this otherwise highly conservative magazine are sympathetic towards members of new religions and highly critical of attempts to restrict religious freedom. Other Canadian newspapers and magazines display a similar restraint when dealing with new religions. Cf. *The Alberta Report*, 27 March, 18 and 25 September, 1981; 8 February, 15 March, 3 May, 1982; 6 February 1984; 28 January 1985; 21 August 1989.

New Religious Minorities in the Baltic States

Solveiga Krumina-Konkova

Although Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are united by their common past under the Soviet regime, the religious situation is quite different in these three Baltic States today. The first difference relates to the religious demography in each country.

In Estonia, there are over 170,000 members of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, over 30,000 members of the Russian Orthodox Church, 30,000 members of the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (EAOC), and over 5,000 members of the Union of Estonian Old Believer congregations. The majority of believers are Lutherans and Orthodox. Nonetheless, there are also communities of Baptist (about 6,100 members), Methodist (about 2,000 members), Roman Catholic (about 3,500 members) and other Christian denominations. Among new religious minorities in Estonia, the Union of Jehovah's Witnesses (about 3,900 members), the Union of Estonian Evangelistic Christian Pentecostal Congregations (about 3,500 members), the Union of Estonian Full Gospel Congregations (about 1,000 members), and the Union of Estonian Christian Free Congregations (about 1,000 members) are the most active.[1]

Religious life in contemporary Latvia could be characterized by the coexistence of five equally strong Christian confessions that claim to represent the priority of the Christian tradition in the life of Latvian society and are regarded by public opinion as the traditional confessions in Latvia.

As of the beginning of 2000, these churches have provided the following estimates of church membership to the Latvian Ministry of Justice: about 400,000 Latvian Evangelical Lutheran believers, about 500,000 Roman Catholic believers, about 190,000 Orthodox Believers, about 70,000 Old Believers, and about 6,000 Baptists.[2] These Christian denominations have endured historical vicissitudes for several centuries. They have demonstrated that their teachings and activities do not contradict the norms of morality existing in Latvian society. The Jewish community (about 6,000 members) has also been accepted as a traditional denomination similar to the above-mentioned Christian confessions in Latvia. Although Latvian legislation has not officially defined what reli-

gions are recognized as *traditional* religions, The Law on Religious Organizations prescribes that in public schools religion may be taught on a voluntary basis only by representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Old Believer, Baptist, and Jewish religious communities.[3] Nontraditional denominations may provide religious education in private schools only.

Jehovah's Witnesses (over 2,000 members), charismatic Christian congregations (over 20,000 members, although precise figures are not available) such as "Jauna Paaudze" [The New Generation] and "Prieka Vests" [Message of Joy], Pentecostals (about 6,000, although precise figures are not available), the New Apostolic Church of North Rhine-Westphalia (about 1,000 members), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (about 200 active members), and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (about 500 active members) are among the more active new religious minorities in Latvia.[4]

In Lithuania, the current religious situation is marked by the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1999, around 70 percent (3,210,000 members) of the entire population belonged to this church. The second largest denomination was the Russian Orthodox Church with 180,000 members, and the third largest was the Old Believers with 50,000 members. The New Apostolic Church (about 5,600 members), the Word of Faith movement (about 2,800 members), Jehovah's Witnesses (about 2,200 members), Pentecostals (1,800 members), Mormons (about 450 members) and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (about 300 members) are among the more active new religious minorities.[5]

In common with religious demography, the legislation governing relations between religious organizations and the state in the Baltic countries has both similarities and differences. Legislative acts concerning religions have two common elements in all three countries, namely, by the Constitution 1. the church is separated from the state; 2. there is no state religion. Moreover, there is a division into traditional and nontraditional religions in all three states. Thus, in Lithuania, according to Article 5 of the Law on Religious Communities and Associations adopted by the Seimas (parliament) in 1995, nine religious communities, namely, Latin Rite Catholics, Greek Rite Catholics, Evangelical Lutherans, Evangelical Reformers, Orthodox, Old Believers, Jews, Sunni Muslims, and Karaites have been declared "traditional" religions. As a consequence, "since in the law only the nine traditional religious communities were *recognized* by the state, the 'traditional' even in the later legislation became synonymous with 'recognized,' and the 'other' with nonrecognized, nontraditional, even 'sectarian' or destructive."[6]

Some observers also suggest that in Estonia a new draft law on churches and congregations includes preferential treatment for the larger, established religious communities in the country.

With regard to the situation of new religious minorities, the constitutions of all three Baltic States build on Articles 8 and 9 of the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* and declare that every individual has the freedom of conscience, religion, and thought. Everyone is free to profess their religion if they do not break the law. In the other legislation on religious organizations, the international understanding is also generally followed. At the same time, every Baltic State offers its specific model for the registration of new religious communities. These models reflect the individuality of the religious situation in these countries. Thus, in Estonia the existing Law on Churches and Religious Organizations requires all religious organizations to have at least twelve members and to be registered with the Interior Ministry and the Board of Religion. Leaders of religious organizations must be citizens with at least five years of residence in Estonia.[7] The draft law changes the responsibility for registry of religious organizations. Upon passage of this law, all registries in the country would fall under the auspices of the courts.

Although the Latvian Government does not require the obligatory registration of religious groups, according to the Law on Religious Organizations, any ten citizens or permanent residents over the age of eighteen may apply to register a church. Congregations functioning in the country for the first time that do not belong to a church association already registered must reregister each year for ten years. Ten or more congregations of the same denomination and with permanent registration status may form a religious association. A decision to register a church is made by the Minister of Justice. Problems could arise because the Law on Religious Organizations does not permit simultaneous registration of more than one religious union (church) in a single confession. Therefore, the government can not register any splinter groups, such as the Latvian Free Orthodox Church or a separate Old Believers group. In addition, Clause 11, Paragraph 3 of the Law on Religious Organizations provides that religious organizations shall not be registered "if their activities endanger national security, public harmony and order, or health and morals of other people; if they propagate religious intolerance and hostility; or if other of their activities contradict the Republic of Latvia Satversme [Constitution] and legislation."[8] As a consequence of this clause and because of serious opposition from the Latvian Doctors Association, the Christian Science congregation has been refused registration.

In Lithuania, according to Article 11 of the Law on Religious Communities and Associations, nontraditional religious communities have to present to the Ministry of Justice an application, a founding statement signed by no less than fifteen members, and a description of their teaching and its aims. The ministry has to review the documents within 6 months.[9] Since these regulations were enacted, the Ministry of Justice

has turned down two applications, those of the Osho Ojas Meditation Center and the Lithuanian Pagans Community. With regard to the first case, the official statement claims that

> Osho Meditation Center statutes did not present recognizable marks of the religious nature of the organization. The demand for the members to present an AIDS certificate, which would be valid for three months, could indicate activities that violate the morals of society, and the description of practice of 'therapy' was considered to be a possible violation of the Law on Health Care, since Osho Center did not possess a license. Osho Meditation Center was granted the right to appeal this decision to the court, but it has not done that as yet.[10]

In a society in which the majority of individuals and all traditional religions are more or less critical of the growth of new religious minorities, the circumspection of the state is justifiable. Representatives of the state are conscious of the fact that the state assumes certain responsibilities and gives known guarantees for every nontraditional or new religious minority that is officially recognized by the process of registration. Therefore, state officials try to avoid foreseeable conflicts by erecting barriers in the procedure of registration.

I have already mentioned the problems of Christian Scientists in Latvia. The same situation existed with the Jehovah's Witnesses several years ago. This religion has for some time attracted a great deal of public attention. They submitted their application for registration as a religious organization to the Religious Affairs Department of the Ministry of Justice in 1993. After much correspondence, the Ministry of Justice announced that, according to the then existing legislation of the Republic of Latvia, the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses would be postponed for 3 years. In 1995, correspondence with the Religious Affairs Department was resumed to find out whether the Jehovah's Witnesses could be regarded as a new or an old religion in Latvia. The issue was brought before court, and the Court of Zemgale Borough of Riga ruled on 26 May 1995 that "Jehovah's Witnesses started their activities in Latvia in 1933 under the name "International Society of Bible Researchers."[11] However, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Latvia overruled the Judgment of the Court of Zemgale Borough on 28 June 1995.[12] Three congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses were registered in 1998 for a year only. As of February 2000, the Ministry of Justice has registered eleven congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses.[13] However, Jehovah's Witnesses as well as other new religious minorities must reregister every year for the next ten years.

In reality, the greatest problem for the Jehovah's Witnesses relates to enrollment for military service. On 27 February 1997, the Law on Compulsory Military Service came into force. It did not provide for any alternative service, and the Jehovah's Witnesses' youths that had reached the age of conscription faced difficulties. For example, Roman Nemiro

and Vladimir Gamayunov were conscripted into the standing army. Both of them lodged complaints to the Court of the Vidzeme municipality of Riga concerning the officials' unlawful action, namely the decision of the Commission of the Military Conscription Office to recruit them into the military service in spite of the fact that the commission knew that their religious conviction forbids them to perform military service. Moreover, Gamayunov based his claims to exemption on the fact that he was a clergyman. The court rejected both complaints.[14] On 10 August 2000, the Minister of Defence issued an announcement concerning the position of the Ministry of Defence on the question of alternative service. It also invited the Parliament, the government, and non-governmental organizations to come forth with their suggestions and comments on this matter.[15]

Despite isolated cases of hostility, the public attitude to Jehovah's Witnesses has changed for the better recently in Latvia. Although Jehovah's Witnesses create their own subculture, they join in the life of society, too. For example, they are very conscientious employees in the workplace. As a consequence, many managers regard them favorably. According to the Jehovah's Witnesses themselves, there is no unemployment in their community. It is likely that this religious minority will continue to integrate itself into the life of Latvian society in the future.

Although the majority of society is more or less critical of the growth of new religious minorities, it is also true that the general population in all three Baltic States is rather tolerant of new religions. Perhaps such a situation has emerged because religious matters do not greatly concern the majority of population. Besides, both in Latvia and Estonia the greater part of the population consists of religious believers who lack strong commitment to any religious organization. In Latvia, for example, over half of those who claim some form of allegiance to the traditional Christian Churches—around 69 percent of the population—eschew active participation in particular congregations. Possibly they take their association for granted because of family tradition or because they hold the widespread notion that Latvians are Lutherans, Russians—Orthodox or Old Believers, inhabitants of Latgale are Catholics, etc. Some of these are likely to be so-called Christmas worshippers who believe that tradition and custom impose on them an obligation to attend church on Christmas. This conclusion is partly confirmed by statistics. According to an updated poll, only half of all participants replied that religion plays an important part in their lives. Four percent in turn could not answer this question at all.[16] These nonbelonging believers are broadminded with regard to the unconventional choices of other people. In such a context, the new religious minorities can adapt themselves little by little to the social and cultural situation. Only a few minorities seem to cause discomfort among the larger citizenry.

In Latvia, for example, in contrast to Germany, Russia, and other countries, there are no serious conflicts with the Unification Church and the

Church of Scientology for the present, although the prevailing public attitude to these religions is negative. At the same time, the conflict between part of the population and the Christian-oriented fundamentalist United Evangelical Congregation of God grows day by day. The core of this congregation consists of about two hundred people, but altogether there are around one thousand people who accept the teaching of this congregation nationwide. Although the Ministry of Justice has officially registered this congregation, it is at present considering the revocation of this registration.

The main impetus for such a reaction is the intolerant attitude this congregation holds against other Christian denominations and against Roman Catholics in particular. Moreover, the congregation has been reproached for harboring a "wrong attitude" toward its children. For example, children are forbidden to take part in out-of-school activities, to watch TV, and to listen to the radio. It is obvious that the congregation has increasingly isolated itself and that its reaction to outside criticism has become more aggressive. It therefore becomes increasingly possible that state institutions will have to interfere in this conflict.

With regard to Lithuania, it is worthwhile noting the conflict between the Lithuanian Ministry of Justice and the Collegiate Association for the Research of the Principle (the CARP). The Lithuanian Ministry of Justice has appealed to this association to discontinue "its religious activities in Lithuania because they contradict its own bylaws and violate the country's law on public organizations."[17] According to CARP's bylaws, the chief goal of the organization is to promote friendship and cooperation among students of different countries to ensure world peace.[18] CARP has repeatedly stressed that this organization is not religious in any sense; it only shares the pro-family policy of Rev. Sun Myung Moon. Moreover, CARP has warned some of its members not to commingle the religious and the social activities of the Unificationist movement. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Justice contends that events organized by CARP in Lithuania were aimed at recruiting young people into the religious community of the Unification Church.[19]

The main difficulties that exist between the new religious minorities and their host societies are:

1. The negative attitude toward these religious minorities on the part of mainstream churches;
2. The lack of accurate information about new religions and the prevalence of one-sided materials published by the mass media;
3. The development of anticult and countercult activities;
4. Isolationist and separatist tendencies on the part of religious minorities themselves.

Mainstream churches, with some exceptions deny any official dialogue with the new religious minorities. Sometimes they try to support

their theological differences with the help of political parties and official institutions. It is possible to assert that, from the point of view of mainstream churches, all new religions are "destructive sects and cults." The mainstream churches also support anticult activities every now and then. Still, these churches do not engage in serious countercult activities because they are fully preoccupied with their own renewal. For example, in Latvia an initiative to establish the Center for Apologetics Research—which would undertake countercult activities and education—only got off the ground in Summer 2000.

Nevertheless, if we compare the current situation with the situation five years ago, we can certainly say that the "moral panic" regarding new "sects" and "cults" in the Baltic States, except possibly Estonia, grows rather rapidly. The mass media and anticult groups have been largely responsible for the escalation of these "moral panics." For example, in 1992-93 the Word of Faith movement (in Lithuania) and in 1998-99 the congregation "Jauna Paaudze" (in Latvia) experienced active hostility from several anticult activists and a rise of negative publicity in the mass media. Negative stereotypes about new religious minorities "travel" from country to country. As regards the situation in Latvia, it should be remembered that here the public attitude toward new religious minorities is greatly influenced by the rising tide of hostility in neighboring Russia and Lithuania.

In Lithuania, the first anticult group was "Mothers against sects." Because of its activities in the Lithuanian government, the registration of new communities of the Word of Faith movement was delayed and some investigations were carried out by the prosecutor's office. Later, however, activities of this anticult group remitted. K. Andriuskevicius founded another anticult group in the middle of 1999, perhaps influenced by Dialog Centre International. This group has contributed greatly towards the rise of antisect hysteria in Lithuanian society. Because of this antisect disposition in Lithuania, the government decided on 14 April 2000 to establish an intergovernmental commission to investigate whether the activities of religious, esoteric, or spiritual groups comply with the law. It includes representatives of the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Education, Health, Foreign Affairs, the General Prosecutor's Office, and State Security. The Minister of Justice appoints the chairperson of the commission. The commission was established as a response to parliamentarians' calls for increased control of "sects" following negative coverage of some religious groups in the media.[20]

Consequences of these events in Lithuania could also be seen in Latvia where attempts to establish an anticult center came as early as 1998. We have mentioned the first attempts of some anticult groups to obtain generally honorable official status. For example, the establishment of the "Revival," the "Center for the rehabilitation and mental recovery of the victims of destructive religious and psychological sects

and cults," was announced officially in May 1999. It was decided that the main tasks of this center would be: 1. rehabilitation and psychological and psychotherapeutic deprogramming of the victims of sects, free of charge; 2. psychological consultations for the relatives of victims, free of charge; 3. the exchange of information with similar organizations, such as the Bureau for the Fight against Sects in France, American Family Foundation (AFF), and Cult Awareness Network (CAN) in the United States, and others; and 4. public lectures on sects, current psychotechniques, and the methods of defence against brainwashing, hypnosis, and suggestion.[21] Founders of this center, however, have not yet received sufficient financial support.

On closer examination, we can see that in the Baltic States most of society as well as state officials do not generally assist anticult activities at present. Nevertheless, this situation can change quickly. Thus, it is particularly urgent for the Baltic States to learn how to retain the rather fragile stability in their society and how to diminish tensions that could erupt into overt conflicts. One of the ways in which the situation could be made better is to offer accurate information about new religions and the current religious situation.

ENDNOTES

[1] See Ringo Ringvee, "Religions in Estonia," in *Beyond the Mainstream: The Emergence of Religious Pluralism in Finland, Estonia and Russia*, ed. Jeffrey Kaplan (Helsinki: SKS, 2000), 110-12.

[2] Such figures are published in the *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom.* Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, United States Department of State, 5 September 2000.

[3] According to Paragraph 6 of the Law of Religious Organizations, this right comes into force beginning 17 July 1996. *Likums par religiskajam organizacijam* [*The Law on Religious Organizations*], *Zinotajas* [*Government Monitor*] 21, 2 November 1995.

[4] The majority of this data is from personal sources.

[5] Statistics based on Donatas Glodenis and Holger Lahayne, eds., *Religijos Lietuvoje* (Siauliai: Nova Vita, 1999), and on data from personal sources.

[6] In Donatas Glodenis, "New and Non-Traditional Religious Movements in Lithuania," paper read by Donatas Glodenis at CESNUR's Fourteenth International Conference, "New Religiosity in the 21st Century," in Riga, Latvia, on 29 August 2000.

[7] See "Zakon o Cerkvjah i obschinah [Law on Churches and Religious Organizations]," *Pravovije Akti Estonii* [*Legal Acts of Estonia*] *33*, 3 September 1993.

[8] See "Likums par religiskajam organizacijam [The Law on Religious Organizations]," *Zinotajas* [*Government Monitor*] 21, 2 November 1995.

[9] See the *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom.* Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, United States Department of State, 5 September 2000.

[10] In "Law and Religion in Lithuania," paper read by Ruta Ziliukaité and Donatas Glodenis at the conference, "Law, Religion and Democratic Society," Tartu, Estonia, 19-20 October 1999.

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

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

[13] This figure was published in the *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom.* Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, United States Department of State, 5 September 2000.

[14] "Jehovah's Witnesses in the Social and Cultural Context of Contemporary Latvia," paper read by Nikandrs Gills at CESNUR's fourteenth International Conference, "New Religiosity in the 21st Century" in Riga, Latvia, on 31 August 2000.

[15] Ibid.

[16] "Pie kuras ticibas sevi pieskaitat? [Which confession do you set down as yours?]," *Diena*, 5 July 2000, 3.

[17] "Lithuania orders Moon followers to stop religious activities in Lithuania," BBC Monitoring, Baltic news agency BNS, 28 June 2000.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] See the *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom.* Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, United States Department of State, 5 September 2000.

[21] From the announcement of this center, officially distributed in May 1999.

Religious Minorities and New Religious Movements in Denmark

Armin W. Geertz and Mikael Rothstein[1]

The debate on new religious movements (NRMs) has been on the public agenda in Denmark for the past twenty-five years, and probably little can be said regarding this country which is not apparent in other places as well. However, one might point to one or two conditions that have been of special importance for the Danish situation compared to the situation in other European countries and in the United States. In short, Denmark has not seen the same kinds of conflicts that have emerged in some other countries, and it is worthwhile considering why.

The Danish debate on NRMs is not very different from what has transpired elsewhere. In Denmark, though, the general attitude towards new religions is not as unconditionally hostile as in Germany, France, Greece, Belgium, and Russia. Although the vast majority of people will express an unsympathetic attitude towards the new religions, most are basically uninterested in or ignorant of the subject. This lack of interest may point to a general indifference regarding religion among many Danes and to a tendency to perceive religious belief and religious affiliation as an entirely personal affair. One might also claim that negative sentiments are limited by the well-established tradition of democracy and freedom of belief in this country. We would suggest that general cultural mores may have prevented the development of a radical hostility towards religious minorities and new religions.

It should also be noted that most of the new or emergent religions have a very modest and generally insignificant following in Denmark. A guess would identify slightly under 2,000 individuals in Denmark firmly committed to and personally engaged in one of the new non-Christian religious movements that have emerged since World War II. This means that approximately 0.035 percent of the population is engaged in one of the new religions on a permanent basis.[2] In Denmark, religious pluralism is primarily understood with reference to the religions of immigrant and refugee groups, and the debate on Islam is much more frequent and much more problematic than that of new religions.[3]

In our opinion, religious minorities and new religions live a fairly secure life in Denmark, and actual violations of their rights are exceptional. In recent years two interrelated problems of principal concern have surfaced: political discussions concerning restrictions and privileges regarding minority religions and new religions, and in this connection a discussion about what kind of expertise the authorities should make use of when dealing with these cases.

THE LEGAL SITUATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE

Denmark is a constitutional monarchy[4] enjoying freedom of conscience and religion. Church historian Frands Ole Overgaard has summed up the situation:

> The freedom of not only religion, but also of expression, association, assembly and printing was an essential part of the first democratic constitution in 1849, even if the words "freedom of religion" were not used. The citizens were entitled to freedom of worship. They had the right to unite in a community to worship God according to their convictions, on the condition that nothing was taught or carried out that was inconsistent with morality and public order. The legislators were precluded from regulating the activities of a religious community if these related to or took aim at worship. Organization, financing and rites could not be banned. The freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief included freedom to establish and maintain places . . . of worship and association. No one was any longer obliged to contribute to a religion the person concerned did not affiliate with. Nobody could be deprived of civil and political rights because of his or her religious conscience.[5]

There is not, however, religious equality. This is because Article 4 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark of 1849 (amended in 1866, 1915, 1920, and 1953) establishes the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the Church of Denmark (called *Folkekirken* in Danish, that is the "Folk Church"), which "shall as such be supported by the State." This establishment introduced two sets of rights and privileges, namely, those of the Church of Denmark and those of the minority churches.[6] An important legal point in the status of the Church of Denmark is that it has no constitution even though Article 66 of the Danish Constitution states that the constitution of the church shall be laid down by statute. The relations of the church have instead been regulated by separate acts.

In a report published in 1999 by the Commissioner of the Council of the Baltic Sea States on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, including the Rights of Persons belonging to Minorities, it is stated that:

> The aim of Article 66 was to establish a constitution and a regulation of the Folk Church, which separates it from the rest of the public administration. This was seen as an important part of the establishment of religious liberty. However, the

proposed autonomy of the Folk Church has never been established, and it is in many ways still closely linked to the state. Because of its special status . . . it has never been under and is still outside the control of the Danish Parliament.[7]

In our opinion, however, even though the proposed autonomy of the Church of Denmark was never realized by constitutional law, the church is very much under the control of the Danish Parliament. The Ombudsman of the Danish Parliament, Hans Gammeltoft-Hansen, noted at a recent conference on the Constitution and the Church of Denmark that the Ruling Assembly of the Church of Denmark is in fact the Danish Parliament, the Government, and the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs. He stated that this Assembly has authority over the internal and external affairs of the church. The many inquiries and investigations initiated by the parliament and its subcommittees indicate that the parliament takes an active interest in the affairs of the Church of Denmark. Furthermore, authoritative bodies within the Church of Denmark itself do not have the power to rescind, restrict, or affect laws and regulations enacted by the parliament. Thus it can be stated that the favored status of the Church of Denmark, which includes among other things financial support from public funds, prevents the church from enjoying the autonomy that the freedom of religion should entail.

Furthermore, the rights and privileges of the minority churches are in certain crucial areas incumbent on de jure recognition from the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Related to this recognition, the Danish Constitution states in Article 69 that "rules for religious bodies dissenting from the established Church shall be laid down by statute." This has not occurred, with the result that these matters are regulated by administrative authorities. Because of this, Hanne Fledelius and Birgitte Juul conclude in their report on the freedom of religion in Denmark that such regulation is without parliamentary control. However, it seems relevant here to remember the above mentioned comments by Hans Gammeltoft-Hansen.[8]

During the period between 1849 and 1969 certain religious communities were recognized by Royal Decree, which allowed them to perform christenings and marriages with civil validity, to keep a church registry of births and deaths in Denmark, and to avail themselves of certain tax and other benefits. Several were recognized in 1849, but the list only includes the Jewish Community and ten Christian communities.[9] Communities that did not attain recognition were the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, the Adventists, and a group called Islam Denmark.

In 1969, the parliament passed a new Marriage Act allowing church weddings with civil validity to take place in the Church of Denmark, in the recognized denominations, as well as in other religious communities which have obtained authorization by the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Since then, fifty-seven denominations have received authorization. Among these are groups that failed to receive recognition before

1969 as well as a number of ethnic and new religions such as various Buddhist groups, ISKCON, the Sai Baba movement, an Anthroposophical Christian Fellowship group, Brahma Kumaris, and the Baha'i religion. Among the groups that applied but were rejected are fringe Christian organizations (the majority) and NRMs such as The Family, Proudiest Universal, Siddha Yoga, "A Course in Miracles" group, the esoteric White Eagle Centre, and Scientology. The total number of those rejected is now over forty. Currently there are eleven applicants, such as Scientology (again), a neopagan Asa group, Muslim and Hindu groups, and a few Christian groups.

To a large degree this model seems to work, but there are of course problems. For one thing the groups may not live up to the legal idea of what a religious group is. To meet the requirements, a religious denomination, according to the Brief of the Marriage Act, must be

> a genuine religious community in the normal sense of this word— i.e. not just a religious "movement" or a religious or philosophical society, but an association or assembly (a religious community) whose primary aim is worship of God (cult) in accordance with an elaborated doctrine and ritual.[10]

Until recently, the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs consulted the Bishop of Copenhagen concerning these applications in order to help it determine whether the applicants fulfill these requirements. This procedure has been criticized by religious groups, scholars of religion, and the public.[11] In 1992, jurists at the Danish Center for Human Rights (affiliated with the University of Copenhagen) opposed the fact that the bishop of Copenhagen and his pastoral advisor were the only official consultants used by the state in questions regarding the legal status of minority religions. They argued that a secular state should not allow representatives of one religion to be consultants in questions regarding other religions. Rather, it was suggested that the state should draw on the expertise of "professors of religion."[12] The mounting criticism moved the then Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Ole Vig Jensen, to establish an advisory committee in 1998 chaired by historian of religions Armin W. Geertz and further consisting of sociologist of religion Ole Riis, professor of law Eva Smith, and theologian Jørgen Stenbæk.

Attempting to bring coherency and transparency to the process of evaluation—both as a gesture to religious minorities and as a foundation for its work—the committee concentrated on interpreting the law and making it operational. Thus the committee published an eight page analysis in Danish on the laws and procedures for the evaluation process which it uses in their deliberations.[13]

The complex situation of Danish practice raises interesting perspectives from a legal point of view, especially in the context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of

1965, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, and the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950. The Advisory Committee on Religious Denominations has attempted to distinguish between freedom of religion and conscience on the one hand, and authorization of denominations on the other hand—considering the privileges that the latter entails. It seems that according to the law, freedom of religion does not imply that any organization claiming to be religious automatically receives authorization by the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Since ministerial authorization in effect confers an extension of executive power to an authorized denomination—however minor that extension of power may be—the authorization process rests on the assumption that the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs can and should decide whether the authorization of a particular applicant is reasonable in terms of administrative law. From this perspective, it is evident that the government does not find Danish law and administrative practice to be in violation of the above mentioned conventions.

The situation involves, nevertheless, potential sources of conflict from human, institutional, and principle perspectives. And thus knowledge of the administrative practices of the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Church of Denmark, the courts of law, law enforcers, and county and municipal authorities is essential to an understanding of the judicial situation of new and minority religions in Denmark. It will be interesting in the future to see if any court cases on these issues will arise in Denmark or in the international courts. So far, no cases concerning religious freedom have arisen in Danish courts of law. Cases have arisen on matters under the jurisdiction of other laws such as illegal ritual slaughter, exemption from military conscription, and determining custody of children in divorce proceedings, but none dealing with the articles on religion. In the early 1980s, Scientology legally contested a decision by the Directorate of Immigration not to extend residence permits to two Scientology missionaries. The suit was brought to the European Commission for Human Rights in Strasbourg on the grounds, among other things, of Article 9 (on freedom of religion) in the Convention of 1950. The suit was turned down on the formal grounds that local redress had not been attempted according to Convention Article 26, but the commission also noted that the granting or refusal of residence permits cannot be regarded as a "civil right" as defined in Article 6.[14]

AREAS OF CONCERN

Danes basically hold liberal attitudes with regard to religion and see it as essentially an individual concern. Attention is paid, however, to minority groups of any kind that in the media appear to contravene

public ideals or mores. The use of headscarves by Muslim women, for instance, is often considered to be in disregard of women's rights. The denial by Jehovah's Witnesses of blood transfusions to their sick children is deemed to be in negligent disregard of the right to proper medical care. Scientology's filings of the auditing records of individual members (the so-called "PC folders") is considered to be in contravention of the very strict laws on files and records ("Registerloven").[15] A final example is the practice of ritual slaughter performed by Muslims, which has led to legal prosecution.

Such matters reflect the commonly held view that the public should maintain legal insight into religious communities especially in relation to public laws and ordinances and to monitoring the use of public funds and tax exemptions. Other areas of concern include minority religions and public schooling, military service, and disinterment practices. All of these areas potentially involve judicial and social problems for minority members as well as for society at large. With few exceptions—most notably exemption from military service—most of the problems have been practical rather than judicial.

A further area of concern deals with a variety of needs from the perspective of individual citizens and aliens. The individual has the right of appeal in judicial and administrative decisions. In relation to the question of human rights, society has the duty to protect minority and individual rights. In questions concerning the rights of family members, children must be guaranteed the freedom of conscience and of religion as specified by the above mentioned conventions on human rights.[16] Another important problem that concerns many new and minority religions is the active role played by the newspaper and other mass media in criticizing minorities. Sometimes reports in the media are exaggerated and gratuitous. However, as indicated above, the Danish news media have been much less aggressive than their counterparts in other countries.

An offshoot of the attention that has been paid to Scientology through the years is the interesting case of a book published by a historian of religions. The case, though only indirectly involving Scientology, indicates a fundamental Danish steadiness and at the same time points to the potential for future turmoil. In November 1997, a debate surfaced in Danish newspapers concerning a historian of religions, Dorthe Refslund Christensen, who was a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Aarhus at the time and who had published a book about Scientology for the secondary schools.[17] The book deliberately avoided discussing the controversies surrounding Scientology, but focused instead on how and why this group could be understood and interpreted as a religion. The book focused among other things on the hagiography of L. Ron Hubbard, the development from Dianetics to Scientology, and Scientology's soteriological notions. One right-wing member of Parliament

asked the Minister of Education (who also happened to be the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs) to dissociate himself from the book. The Minister, however, stood firm. The book was posing no problem, he said.[18] The same conclusion was reached by those within the political and educational systems as well as by scholars who discussed the book. The new book about Scientology was composed in the same way as most educational books on religion in Denmark. Most people added, though, that it would be natural to include critical approaches of other kinds in the process of education in order to contextualize the issues. This was the first book ever to be put on the political agenda in this way, and the first schoolbook in modern times to be reviewed in a political forum.[19]

THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

The Church of Denmark has no official position on minority and new religions. There are, however, individual bishops and pastors who have quite clear positions. One very prominent person is Kjeld Holm, the Bishop of Aarhus. He has been politically active throughout his career and is presently Chair of the Board for Ethnic Equality. The board was appointed by the Ministry of the Interior in 1997 and consists of representatives from national, regional, and local authorities, major NGOs, the Danish Center for Human Rights, and the umbrella organizations and advisory boards of ethnic minority groups. Its primary purpose is to advise the parliament, the government, central and local authorities, private organizations, and other institutions on questions concerning discrimination and ethnic equality. It is also active in disclosing direct and indirect discrimination and in creating viable opportunities for ethnic minorities. The board has conducted investigations, held conferences, and produced books and publications to educate the Danish public on the concerns and needs of minority groups.[20]

The Church of Denmark has set up a small network of pastors with special interests in new religions and alternative spirituality. The idea is to keep abreast of developments, not because the new religions themselves are of interest to the church, but because it is considered to be a matter of pastoral concern in guiding and educating people with regards to these religions. Although there is tolerance and respect for individual freedom of conscience and religion, their attitude is clearly critical and apologetic. It should also be noted, however, that a number of pastors in the church have expressed favorable attitudes towards some New Age ideas, claiming that Christians might well learn from other religious traditions.

Denmark has become world famous for the activities of a now retired professor of theology at the University of Aarhus, Johannes Aagaard. Certainly he is well known to scholars of new religions. He established a

small Department of Missiology and Ecumenical Theology and the Center for New Religious Studies at the Faculty of Theology in Aarhus. The center is arguably one of the largest archives on new religions in northern Europe. Outside of the university context, Aagaard founded a Christian missionary organization called the Dialogue Center twenty-five years ago. The Dialogue Center is a private organization, and Aagaard has kept his university activities and missionary practices separate. However, it should be noted that Aagaard's apologetic focus has been the same in both contexts, which means that his university work over the years has corresponded closely with his efforts in the Dialogue Center. This has led many people to believe that the two institutions are identical. The university, however, and especially the Faculty of Theology, have through the years insisted on a legal separation between the two.

Aagaard's response to the new religions was from the beginning programmatically critical. New religions were seen as a threat to individual and societal norms. Aagaard has consistently claimed that politicians and the Church of Denmark are far too reluctant to meet the threat of and challenges from the new religions. He promotes instead Protestant Christian virtues, identifying himself and his organization with the founding fathers of the Christian Church. Apart from the intense use of the media and an extensive lecturing schedule, many books, pamphlets, and other educational materials have been published by the Dialogue Center. These publications have quite often have been used as resource materials by the press, school teachers, and Christian congregations.

The Dialogue Center has been associated with anticult activities in Russia and other Eastern European countries. Aagaard has personally promoted the prominent Russian anticultist, Alexander L. Dvorkin, who is considered to be one of the Dialogue Center's top associates in Moscow. Dvorkin is also Vice President of the Dialogue Center's international branch (the Dialogue Center International, the other Vice President being another prominent anticultist, German theologian Thomas Gandow).[21] While not wishing to draw guilt-by-association conclusions, it should be noted that Dvorkin and Gandow are currently among the most vigorous anticultists in Europe, and Aagaard's support of them most likely signifies something crucial about the Dialogue Center's ideology, if not its affiliations.

The Dialogue Center has been globalized. It has its own website, produces several magazines in different languages,[22] and has branches in approximately twenty countries throughout the world.[23]

In 1992 and 1993, a group of dissatisfied members of the group broke with Aagaard and formed their own organization, IKON, with the express purpose of engaging in "real dialogue" with other religious groups.[24] The new body has apparently succeeded. They made a breakthrough in 1993 with The Family, and soon other new religions showed a similar willingness to cooperate including Danish New Age leader, Jes

Bertelsen, ISKCON, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, Sai Baba devotees, and various others. This was a new situation not only for the new religions but also for the general public. IKON's style is different than that of the Dialogue Center in that it provides its members with a platform for interreligious dialogue.

Small human rights organizations formed by members of the new religions (primarily Scientologists) in opposition to the Dialogue Center, on the contrary, have had little impact on the Danish scene.[25] On more than one occasion people have tried to establish human rights groups in opposition to the Dialogue Center, but apparently the need for such task forces, when all is said and done, does not exist. The interests of minority groups are generally attended to by the authorities, and thus human rights groups very quickly decline or vanish.

INDEPENDENT BODIES

In 1992 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted "Recommendation 1178 (1992) on sects and new religious movements," which asks the member states to adopt educational, legislative, and other measures "in response to the problems raised by some of the activities of sects or new religious movements" (Article 6) with due consideration to the freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. It is recommended that the basic educational curriculum should include "objective factual information concerning established religions and their major variants, concerning the principles of comparative religion and concerning the ethics and personal and social rights" (Article 7.i) and similar information on the nature and activities of sects and new religious movements. Furthermore, it is recommended that independent bodies should be established to collect and circulate such information (Article 7.ii). In Denmark, education concerning NRMs has been going on for many years.

With regard to research, mention should be made of the establishment of a research network by the Danish Council for the Humanities called Research Network on New Religions (RENNER). RENNER was established in order to coordinate scholarship on new religions in Denmark, analyze the material already collected (by, for instance, the Center for New Religious Studies), and establish cooperation with colleagues and similar organizations worldwide. Many colleagues have not understood the nature of RENNER because it is not an information center (there are a number of such centers in existence in Denmark already), and it does not have any official position on new religions except that of scholarship as commonly understood in the humanities and social sciences. Perhaps the most difficult thing to understand is that the execu-

tive board consists of sociologists, historians of religions, and theologians. Among the latter was Johannes Aagaard until his retirement. Even though individual members of the board may object to one another's private activities, the essential Danish mentality of negotiation and compromise is as true in the politics of research as it is in parliamentary politics. RENNER succeeded in hosting a number of conferences, funding various research projects, publishing a newsletter, establishing two publication series, and encouraging young scholars to pursue research in new religions.[26]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In education as well as in research, systematic attempts are being made to educate the public on the nature of and issues surrounding new and minority religions. With the establishment of the above mentioned Advisory Committee, as well as the establishment of the Board for Ethnic Equality, the excellent relationship between governmental institutions and university researchers has borne fruit, and thus academic rather than confessional insight has some influence on administrative practice. This does not mean that we do not have problems and conflicts in Denmark. At the risk of sounding self-satisfied, we think that on the whole Denmark is more fortunate in its relations with minority and new religions than a number of other European countries.

ENDNOTES

[1] This paper is based on two separate papers: Armin W. Geertz, "Religious Minorities in Denmark," paper read at a conference on Ethnic Minority Rights hosted by the North/South Priority Research Area at the University of Copenhagen in May 1999, and Mikael Rothstein, "New Religions, State Policy and Anti-Cult Activities: Aspects of the Danish Discussion," in *Gudars och gudinnors återkomst. Studier i nyreligiositet* (*The Return of Gods and Goddesses: Studies on New Religiosity*), eds. Carl-Gustav Carlsson and Liselotte Frisk (Umeå: Umeå University, 2000), 219-29.

[2] No exact figures are available on every group. These findings are based on Mikael Rothstein's fieldwork and personal communication with people in charge of organizational matters in the various groups. According to the Danish Information Office, 85.1 percent of the population are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is the State's church (*Statistisk Årbog 2000* [*Statistical Yearbook 2000*] (Copenhagen: Danmarks Statistik, 2000), 116).

[3] At least two right-wing political parties, Dansk Folkeparti (Danish Folk Party) and Fremskridtspartiet (Progressive Party), understand Muslim immigrants to be the greatest threat to Danish welfare and national identity, and because of the fairly broad appeal of this populist stance, every political party in Denmark addresses the question of Muslim immigration on a regular basis. As far as we know, no party has NRMs on its agenda. Only two of the Danish parliament's nine political parties explicitly mention Christianity as part of the ideological basis of their party program.

[4] The legislative power is held jointly by the hereditary monarch (who is without personal political power) and the unicameral parliament. Executive power is exercised by the monarch through a cabinet led by the Prime Minister, who is responsible to the parliament.

[5] Frands Ole Overgaard, "New Religious Movements in 20th Century Denmark," in *New Religious Movements and the Law in the European Union: Proceedings of the Meeting* (Lisbon: giuffrè editore, 1999), 113-14.

[6] In 1849, about 98 percent of the population were members of the Church of Denmark.

[7] Ole Espersen, *The Right to Freedom of Religion and Religious Associations: A Survey of Recommendations* (Copenhagen: The Council of the Baltic Sea States, 1999), 19.

[8] Hanne Fledelius and Birgitte Juul, *Freedom of Religion in Denmark* (Copenhagen: The Danish Centre for Human Rights, 1992), 31.

[9] These were Roman Catholics, Reformed Community in Fredericia, the French Reform in Copenhagen, the German Reform in Copenhagen, the Methodists, Baptists, Orthodox Russians, Norwegian Community in Copenhagen, the Swedish Gustav Association in Copenhagen, and St. Alban's English Church in Copenhagen.

[10] *Folketingstidende* 1968-69, tillæg B, sp. 1927-30.

[11] Margit Warburg, "Lige ret for Loke så vel som for Thor? Religionsbegreber og retspraksis i forbindelse med religioner udenfor Folkekirken (Equality for Loki as well as Thor? Concepts of religion and judicial practice in relation to religions outside the Church of Denmark)," *Chaos* (1996): 9-32; and "Restrictions and Privileges: Legal and Administrative Practice and Minority Religions in USA and in Denmark," in *New Religions and New Religiosity* (RENNER Studies on New Religions, vol. 4), ed. Eileen Barker and Margit Warburg (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1998), 262-75.

[12] Fledelius and Juul, *Freedom of Religion in Denmark*, 104-06.

[13] Armin W. Geertz has argued recently that seen in this light, analytical and judicial definitions of religion have little to do with one another. See his "Religion eller trossamfund? Ordforklaring som strategi (Religion or Denomination? Definition as Strategy)," IKON 28 (1999): 9-11.

[14] Commission's Decisions 12097/86, 12436/86, 12468/86, discussed in Hagel-Sørensen and Holst-Christensen, *Ugeskrift for Retsvæsen* (*Legal Weekly*) (1989): B, 277; and in Peter Garde, "Legal Status of Minority Churches and Religious Communities in the Kingdom of Denmark: Liberty without Equality," in *The Legal Status of Religious Minorities in the Countries of the European Union: Proceedings of the Meeting, Thessaloniki 1993*, European Consortium for Church-State Research (Thessaloniki: Sakkoulas Publications & Milano: Giuffrè Editore, 1994), 81-114. See especially the discussion on page 91.

[15] In 1987, a court ruled that Scientology's auditing records were illegal, and for many years the group had to manage in alternative ways because the PC-folders are needed during auditing sessions. Nine years later, in 1996, a judge decided that Scientology could keep "logs" relating to specific individuals at the organization's headquarters during periods when people were actively participating in auditing.

[16] See the interesting discussion on this difficult topic in Rex J. Ahdar, "Children's Religious Freedom, Devout Parents and the State," in *Law and Religion in Contemporary Society: Communities, Individualism and the State*, eds. Peter W. Edge and Graham Harvey (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2000), 93-114.

[17] The case was primarily debated in the newspaper *Dagbladet Information* during November 1997. The book is entitled *Scientology: En ny religion* (*Scientology: A New Religion*) (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1997).

[18] This statement was quoted in the press but a more thorough argumentation was given during the Minister's answer in the parliament's committee of education (Undervisningsministerens talepapir, Ministertale, samråd A, alm.del - bilag 168, 16 December 1997).

[19] The Danish educational system is autonomous to a high degree. School books do not need approval by the state, but examination requirements are regularly reviewed through spot tests by the Ministry of Education. The responsibility for educational materials is placed on the schools and the teachers.

[20] See their recent publication with English summaries, Lisbet Christoffersen and Jørgen Bæk Simonsen, eds., *Visioner for religionsfrihed, demokrati og etnisk ligestilling* (*Visions of Religious Freedom, Democracy and Ethnic Equality*) (Copenhagen: Nævnet for Etnisk Ligestilling, 1999).

[21] Dvorkin occasionally writes for the Dialogue Center's magazine (for instance, *Den Nye Dialog* 53 (1993): 21), and he is associated with the Dialog Center's branch in Moscow. On Alexander L. Dvorkin's status and contributions, see a report by Marat S. Shterin (*New Religions, Cults and Sects in Russia: A Critique and Brief Account of the Problems*) and his writings on the influence of Western anticult movements in Russia (available at CESNUR's website).

[22] *Den Nye Dialog* (*The New Dialogue*), *Netop Nu* (*Current Events*), *Kirken Arbejder* (*The Church at Work*), in corporation with The Danish Missionary Council, *Spirituality in East and West*, *UPDATE* (renamed *Aeropagus*), *Berliner Dialog* (*Berlin Dialogue*) and others. Magazines are in preparation for the Baltic countries, Russia, and several other countries. The Dialogue Center's web site is found at <http://www.dci.dk>.

[23] For instance, the Dialogue Center International (DCI) in Bombay, Delhi, and Bangkok. The group has spread into most European countries including the former Communist countries where missionaries from the Dialogue Center are very active. In Moscow the group is associated with the Paulus Society, and in India another Dialogue Center branch is the Saint Thomas Society. The Dialogue Center has also established a youth branch known as International Dialogue (ID). Finally ABCD (A Buddhist Christian Dialogue) has been founded. On the globalization of the Dialogue Center compared to developments in other religious groups, see Mikael Rothstein, "Patterns of Diffusion and Religious Globalization: An Empirical Survey of New Religious Movements," *Temenos* 32 (1996): 195-220.

[24] The acronym stands for Informations- og Samtaleforum Om Kristendom og Nyreligiøsitet (Forum for Information and Dialogue on Christianity and New Religiosity).

[25] An organization imitating the name of the Dialogue Center and the layout of its magazine was established around 1995. It is called Den Ægte Dialog (The Real Dialogue). After a court case, which was settled by compromise, this organization was forced to alter its name, but their target remains Johannes Aagaard and the Dialogue Center.

[26] The newsletter is called *News from RENNER*, and the two series are called *RENNER Studies on New Religions* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press), and one in Danish, *Gyldendal—Nye Religioner* (*Gyldendal—New Religions*) (Copenhagen: Gyldendal Publishers).

New Religions in the New Russia

Marat Shterin

Over the last decade, Russia's treatment of her religious minorities has been the subject of domestic and international debate. The origins of the present controversies can best be understood in the context of recent systemic change, and within a broader historical perspective of the relationship between Russian society and religion, particularly at times of modernizing reforms. Moreover, while in the current transitional period societal structures and culture are in flux, reactions to NRMs reveal certain identifiable patterns, assumptions, and trends.

RELIGION AND THE MODERNIZATION OF RUSSIA

Despite its commonly held image as an Eastern Orthodox country, Russia has long been religiously diverse, with large ethnic religious minorities—such as Muslims, Jews, Roman Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, and Shamanists—and ever present religious innovation and dissent, from the Old Believers to G. I. Gurdjieff and Pyotr D. Uspenski. Although suppressed, religious culture in various forms continued during the Soviet period; a "cultic milieu" became increasingly prominent beginning in the 1970s.

At the same time, the country has a long history of suppression in managing this diversity. Before the adoption of the Edict of Toleration in 1904, official policy was guided by the ideology of the inseparable unity of the Eastern Orthodox Faith, Russian State, and Russian Land. This ideology was inimical to proselytizing by non-Orthodox groups.[1] Religious minorities were seen as enclaves in the Orthodox Land, which, according to the imperial legislation, were either "tolerated," e.g., ethnic faiths, or "persecuted," e.g., "sects."[2] A short period (1904-1917) of attempts to institutionalize religious toleration was followed by decades of another type of "organic unity"—that of the Communist Ideology, Soviet State, and Soviet Land, which relegated all faiths to a position of "tolerated" or persecuted minorities and justified the institutionalized destruction of religion.

It seems useful to place these policies in the wider context of the "challenge of modernity" that Russia has faced throughout its history

and that was commonly perceived as attempts to "catch up with the West." This challenge characteristically compelled the Imperial State to incomplete reforms, which, in turn, caused fear of imminent erosion of its traditionalist basis.[3] At the same time, cultural anxieties over the perceived association between modernization and westernization took the form of the *Westernizers versus Slavophiles* discourse that made a major imprint on the Russian intellectual tradition. It has been argued that this discourse reflected Russia's generally ambiguous attitude to the West, which was looked upon with a mixture of frustration and infatuation.[4] In contrast, Soviet modernization was a radical attempt to do away with traditionalism. However, as an ideologically driven modernization,[5] it was accompanied by the fear of external ideological contamination, which led to the country's political isolation.

Religion was deeply imbedded in the politics of Russian modernization. Before 1917, the state saw the Eastern Orthodox faith as the key ideological source of its legitimacy, while the slavophilic sections of the intelligentsia regarded it as the core of the country's national integrity. The Soviet modernizing project declared Orthodoxy the major obstacle to its success. However, the communist ideology promoted by the Soviet leadership has been usefully described as a political religion designed to form a new type of society by uniting people around a set of prescribed ideas, symbols, and rituals and at the same time distinguishing these people from other nations.[6]

These comments are not intended to suggest that what has happened *had* to happen let alone determines what will happen. Indeed, the attempts over the last decade at systemic change highlight the significance of discontinuities in the turbulent history of Russia and the resulting deep insecurities of Russian national identity. In many ways, the scenario of the present modernization has been different. Its early stage was dominated by the liberal ethos of dismantling the "totalitarian system" and by the country's identification with the outside world. However, the subsequent disintegrative processes—the collapse of the USSR, the crisis of the federal system, ethnic conflicts, continuing economic decline—brought the issue of internal integration to the fore. While the pro-western liberal orientation was rapidly losing its appeal, the dramatic cultural and institutional discontinuities in Russian history provided opposing models rather than shared guidance on how best to deal with contemporary issues. This was compounded by the abandonment of the usual reference to external threat.

In this context, references to the *traditional* role of Russian statehood and religion as the bedrock of national unity at times of insecurity are increasingly appealing. This appeal is linked to the temptation to revert to *traditional* patterns of managing religious diversity. References to rootedness in Russian history are seen as a valuable "social capital" that is used by the various religions to define their distinctive roles in the

contemporary politics of modernization. However, the value of this kind of "social capital" is contested by those who draw on another type of "social capital" produced within the recent stage of modernization, such as partial institutionalization of human rights, legal provisions for religious pluralism, and integration into international structures.

The controversies over religious legislation are a telling example of this clash between two kinds of responses to the challenge of modernity.

RELIGIOUS LEGISLATION AND RELATED CONTROVERSIES

The 1990 Law on Freedom of Religions and the provisions of the 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation reflect the early liberalizing aspects of the present systemic change. For the first time in Russian history, the 1990 Law treated religious freedom as "the unalienable rights of Russian citizens" and extended these rights to any individual residing in Russia, irrespective of their citizenship. The law contained strong clauses that deprived various state agencies of the means to control religion. Compulsory registration of religious associations was abolished unless tax exemption was sought. Strong nonestablishment clauses were designed to guarantee the ideological neutrality of the state and the legal equality of all faiths.

At the early, anti-totalitarian stage, the liberating effects of the 1990 law were almost unanimously welcomed—even by the Moscow Patriarchy. However, the consequent enormous increase in religious diversity was not readily translated into religious pluralism. In general terms, the primacy of *individual* rights and *equality* of faiths was in conflict with the vision of a *hierarchy of religions* based on their *historical* links with the Russian nation and its various ethnic groups. A corollary of this vision was the demand to limit proselytizing by "foreign faiths." This was initially justified by reference to the post-communist disadvantage of Russian historical faiths in their competition with "well-off" foreign missionaries. However, the opposition to the 1990 law also tapped into the emerging basic dilemma of Russian politics—pro-Western liberalism *versus* restoration of historically rooted Russian statehood. The issue of "sects" provided the critically important argument that contributed to the change of the law.[7]

The new 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations had the obvious signs of a political compromise.[8] It retained the basic provisions for freedom of religion and nonestablishment, but introduced different statuses for different religious associations. Its preamble favored the role of Russia's historical faiths, in particular Eastern Orthodoxy which, arguably, received quasi-establishment status. More significantly, the 1997 law made a distinction between religious *organizations* that enjoyed the full rights of a legal entity, and *groups* whose rights

were seriously restricted. It also limited the rights of foreigners to proselytize. Finally, in apparent reference to NRMs, the law specifically prohibits the "use of hypnosis," "break-up of the family," and "actions against the Russian State."

We should bear in mind that in Russia the operation of constitutional and other legal provisions is profoundly affected by a *legal culture* that tends to "give permission" for political considerations to take precedence over legal requirements.[9] Moreover, the laws introduced during the transitional period have often been perceived as lacking full legitimacy on the grounds that they were against national or regional interests. Thus, many Russian regions have adopted their own laws and regulations that contradict the 1990 and even the 1997 laws.[10] Religious minorities are often totally dependent on the discretion of local officials, who monitor their activities in close cooperation with other regional authorities, including the police and security agencies, and who sometimes turn to Orthodox diocesan authorities for advice and even instruction.

NRMS IN THE RUSSIAN "RELIGIOUS MARKET"

It is worth remembering that Western NRMs were only part of the recent influx of "foreign religions" and occurred against the background of a resurgence of Russian historical religions and the emergence of indigenous religious innovation. Current data indicate that the groups which would normally be seen as NRMs make up only a small segment of the Russian religious scene, and it is unlikely that there have been more than 40,000 committed members—about 0.025 percent of the population—at any given time in the 1990s.[11] At the same time, "Charismatic Protestant" groups and "established sects" such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons may have 300,000 members—about 0.2 percent of the population. However, conversion to "foreign" and new indigenous faiths took place against the background of rapid extension of the cultic milieu, particularly in urban areas, and gave rise to the impression that the country was being overwhelmed by a tide of "alien religions." Indeed, some semiofficial sources spoke of between three million and five million "sectarians" in Russia.[12] While the total membership in NRMs probably reached a plateau in the mid-1990s, the data clearly indicate increasing diversification of the new religious segment of the Russian scene over the last decade. However, this diversity—about 100 different NRMs and 1,000 local communities in the late 1990s—is still at a lower level than in Britain or the United States.

The evidence suggests that NRMs have adapted well to Russian society, despite the initial fears triggered by the exaggerated reports of the activities of the Great White Brotherhood.[13] Opponents of NRMs found

little evidence of antisocial, let alone criminal activities among their members in Russia, and not for lack of trying.[14] Simultaneous conversion to a whole spectrum of religions throws light on whether the characteristics of new converts are due to the general effects of conversion or to (alleged) mental manipulation by NRMs. Indeed, complaints resembling those of members of anticult parental groups have been made about the behavior of new converts to different religions, including traditional faiths. An example is the Moscow Patriarchy's recent grievances about certain practices of some of its younger priests and converts.[15] However, the allegedly negative effects of participation in newer religious groups are usually attributed to their policies and methods of coercion, which may be seen as further evidence that the plausibility of such allegations derives from the perceived lack of legitimacy of certain groups rather than their practices per se.

I would hazard the generalization that over the last decade imported and indigenous NRMs have undergone a rapid evolution towards *depoliticization* and *deradicalization*. This is probably due, in part, to sociodemographic changes similar to those observed by Eileen Barker in Western societies.[16] However, there may be some additional factors in Russia that reflect the relationship between the emergence of NRMs and the overall systemic change in the country. Thus, the initial radical millenarian message of some indigenous NRMs was mainly concerned with the anticipation of the collapse of the "evil" Soviet regime (the Mother of God Centre) or with its legacy in the early 1990s (the Great White Brotherhood and the Vissarion Movement).[17] Subsequently, with the demise of the Soviet system and the shifts in public concerns in the 1990s, these radical theologies lost their appeal, and this contributed to their rapid evolution towards a more accommodating stance. At the same time, the initial appeal of some imported NRMs and their thrust to contribute to cultural and social transformation were attenuated as the search for *traditional* roots and suspicion of external influences came into prominence. We should also remember that many imported NRMs that had caused anxieties in the West, such as the Unification Church, had already undergone considerable accommodative changes before they arrived in Russia. Paradoxically, Russian societal responses to NRMs, and in particular imported ones, were becoming less accommodating, with increasing politicization and rejection.

UNWELCOME GUESTS OF MOTHER RUSSIA.

In many ways, the sequence of societal reactions to NRMs in Russia was similar to that in many Western societies and moved from a mixture of welcome, curiosity, and some apprehension to hostility and negativ-

ity. However, even the initial positive response was politically colored, and the arrival of foreign missionaries in the early 1990s was generally welcomed as symbolic of the country's exit from isolation. Also, before that time Russia had had relatively little exposure to the negative views expressed in the Western "cult controversies."

The first symptom of the Russian "cult syndrome" was the response to indigenous groups whose emergence was typically attributed to the legacy of the "totalitarian past." This was seen most clearly in the media responses to the Great White Brotherhood.[18] Ironically perhaps, with the flow of negative information from the West—in particular with regard to Aum Shinrikyo and the Solar Temple—and the buildup of the effects of the "negative summary event,"[19] the anticult media became increasingly dominated by the motif of "religious insecurity" supposedly inherent in the open religious marketplace. There was also a considerable polarization in the media along politico-ideological lines, with their anti-Western sections interweaving the antisectarian rhetoric with the general theme of *spiritual aggression against Russia.* In contrast, some *liberal* (or *pro-Western*) sections of the media tended to regard anticultism with considerable scepticism as they saw it as playing in the hands of *traditionalists.*

In some ways the Russian objectors to NRMs were similar to those in the West, and they formed a network connected with their Western counterparts.[20] However, the overarching ideology of Russian anticultism and its mode of operation have some distinctive features.

At present, the Russian anticult (or antisectarian) ideology sees the issue of "sects" as a matter of national survival in the face of the insecurities of the country's transitional state. One motif is that of *cultural subversion,* which rationalizes fears of foreign proselytizing by portraying it as destroying the "Russian civilisation code," or "ethno-religious balance," or "Russian cultural identity."[21] At the same time, the motif of danger from "totalitarian sects" specifically points to NRMs as presenting particular social and political risks; they are portrayed as "mafiosi structures" and "criminal organizations" and even agents of espionage.[22] These two motifs tend to merge into the theme that *sectarianism* undermines Russian statehood and leads to disintegration of the Russian nation. This ideology stems from a combination of cultural assumptions grounded in an idealized vision of past history (Russia *versus* other "civilisations") and negative representations of NRMs ("totalitarian sects"), mainly based on the Western anticult images, put into the framework of contemporary Russian anxieties ("crime," "mafia," and threat of disintegration). It is *political* in its ethos, appealing to the state to take over the antisectarian agenda as its most serious concern. Moreover, the politics of the recent attempt at the modernization of Russia guided the process of adjustments and alignments between the different interests and aims of the Russian objectors to NRMs.

Two segments of the opposition to NRMs emerged almost simultaneously, reflecting different but rapidly converging parental and ecclesiastical concerns. Like their counterparts in the West, the first Russian parental groups were initially concerned with the effects of conversion to NRMs on individual careers and family relations.[23] The Russian versions of the brainwashing metaphor, such as "coding," "zombification," or "programming" provided simple early explanations, and the overall aim was to "salvage" the converts. At their initial stage, the parental groups found themselves in considerable social isolation, as governmental agencies were reluctant to offer them support, and their lack of material resources and relevant experience prevented them from developing their own organizational structures. However, they soon found their concerns heard by the St. Ireneus of Lyon Information Centre (SILIC), whose status was determined by its affiliation with a department of the Moscow Patriarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Alexander Dvorkin, an American citizen and a Russian ex-expatriate, was the founder of SILIC and initially provided what the Moscow Patriarchy was looking for—access to Western anticult circles, in particular the Danish Dialogue Centre and its branch in Berlin.[24] Through this cooperation and the affiliation with the Moscow Patriarchy, SILIC legitimized its approach and conveyed the Western anticult images and concepts to the public through the mass media. The Western material was used to construe the "cult issue" in mainly political and "criminal" terms. However, initially the emphasis was on the alleged threat to fledgling Russian democracy, and adoption of the anticult policies was presented by Dvorkin and his Western supporters as a necessary part of Russia's integration into the "civilised world."[25]

The Moscow Patriarchy has been generally opposed to proselytizing by other religious groups on the "absolutist" grounds that "Russia is a canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church." The church put increasing emphasis on its historical role in the formation of the Russian nation, which justified its present claim to integrate Russian society and to contribute to the restoration of Russian statehood.[26] The corollary of this is the anti-proselytizing stance of the church and its reference to "sectarianism" as a major threat to "the integrity of our consciousness and our national identity." However, the church has so far refrained from a direct appeal for reestablishment, probably for pragmatic reasons. Instead, the church has chosen what can be called the tactics of *reestablishment through denial*, which focuses on appeals to the state for protection on the grounds of the illegitimacy of foreign proselytizing. Undoubtedly, the political and criminal charges against NRMs, disseminated by SILIC on the basis of Western material, provided useful evidence. In this sense, Western anticultism serves as a substitute for theological arguments on the place of ecclesiastical antisectarianism, and as a political argument supporting the church's claim for restora-

tion of its historical role. Indeed, the Missionary Department of the church supports its appeal for the "greater religious security" of Russia by reference to Western experts on "mind-control" and the Russian historical tradition of using the secret police to "regulate spiritual affairs."[27]

Some mental health professionals adopted a similar politically colored combination of Russian indigenous and Western rhetoric. In the search for a socio-psychological norm that could replace what was laid down by the Soviet "political religion," they came to adopt the concept of the "originally" Russian psychological makeup formed by the "traditional religions." However, the apparent lack of definition of this "traditional norm" is handled by reference to foreign faiths representing deviation from it. In this context, Western anticult concepts of mental manipulation are used opportunistically for rationalizing the psychological mechanism of the asserted deviation from the "traditional norm." However, these concepts proved unnecessary for some Russian anticult psychiatrists, who interpret and treat "sectarian deviations" in the light of Russian Orthodox teachings.[28] Others explain conversion to "foreign faiths" by reference to the concept of socially induced "delusion" which used to be routinely employed by Soviet punitive psychiatry.[29] All these perspectives tend to enter the political master narrative of Russian anticultism. Thus, the publications of the leading Russian institution for forensic psychiatry cite Western anticult sources to corroborate its general claim that NRMs are in fact "criminal formations" that destroy Russian "national spirituality" and the "spiritual symphony" between the "traditional religions and the State," and even "engage in espionage."[30]

It is worth considering the implications of the differences in the cross-cultural usage of the concepts of coercive mental manipulation by NRMs. In the West, and in particular in the United States, these concepts originally gained credibility during the Cold War; "mental manipulation" was used as a plausible explanation for the communist "mass indoctrination." The key question concerning conversion to NRMs was formulated in a similar fashion: how an individual could possibly give up the crucial human ability of, and the right to, free choice.[31] The mental manipulation discourse was central for opposition to NRMs. In contrast, in the Russian settings, the references to the concepts of mental manipulation arise not so much from general cultural preoccupation with free choice, but from the political intention to use them as forensic evidence to delegitimize deviation from *the tradition*. The Western concepts that were originally developed to show the abnormality of conversion to specific NRMs proved their versatility in application to a wider range of minority faiths that were perceived as legitimate in the Western settings but are assumed to be subversive in the Russian situation.

The Russian anticult ideology was finally shaped and gathered momentum in the mid-1990s following the shifts in Russian politics towards a "traditionally based" modernization. The increasing emphasis on the

necessity for historically rooted Russian statehood gave rise to a confluence of interests between the Russian Orthodox Church and state agencies. At the same time, the rhetoric of "spiritual aggression" was attuned to the increasing preoccupation with issues of national security, which was further highlighted by the continuing Chechen war and its frequent association with the general threat of imported "Islamic fundamentalism." Both professed allegiance to historical religions and manifestations of negativity towards "sects" became valuable resources for claiming political legitimacy. Antisectarian and pro-Orthodox statements were included in a series of agreements between certain governmental bodies and the Russian Orthodox Church, and similar statements were contained in political manifestos of the major political blocks during the 1995 parliamentary and 1996 presidential campaigns. The latest *Doctrine of National Security* (2000) makes a point about "spiritual security," which is spelled out as support for "traditional religions" and counteracting "spiritual aggression." However, while these statements use the generalized threatening image of sectarianism indiscriminately, more investigative official documents, such as the reports of the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Health (23 October 1996), tend to draw on more specific allegations recycled within the international anticult networks.

However, the stridency and even grossness of the official antisectarian rhetoric has not yet been translated into a consistent policy. There remains a degree of pragmatism in relation to sects, as traditionalism is unlikely to be seen as the sole source of political legitimacy in the new Russia. The federal and regional authorities have been under continuous internal and external pressure to comply with their constitutional and international obligations. In the light of these pressures, the Constitutional Court decided in November 1999 that the "15-year rule" on the length of existence in Russia does not apply to the associations that were registered under the 1990 law. Nevertheless, the negative image of "sects" that lumps together disparate religious minorities continues to tap into powerful trends in Russian politics. External political pressure for freedom of religion is counterbalanced by the antisectarian caveats embedded in the resolutions of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe and the anticult policies of some Western governments.[32] Indeed, this decision of the Constitutional Court refers to these resolutions in justification of the right of the state to

> prohibit legalization of sects which violate the rights of the individual and practice illegal and criminal activities, as well as to prohibit missionary activity (including the problem of proselytizing) if it is accompanied by psychological pressure or threat of violence.

Considering that the antisocial and antistate nature of sectarianism is increasingly taken for granted by Russian officials, this decision is unlikely

to inhibit further ad hoc actions of state agencies against religious minorities and the development of a more consistent antisectarian policy.

Finally, the negative assumptions about "sects" have encouraged several legal actions against certain NRMs, mostly brought by parental anticult committees. Parental grievances were usually supported by recycled evidence and concepts from Western anticult literature and the general antisectarian rhetoric. Considering the lack of autonomy within the Russian legal system, the judiciary in these cases characteristically found themselves torn between the apparent lack of what would normally be seen as evidence and considerable social and political pressure.[33] While their outcomes have varied, these cases characteristically lasted for a long period of time, with the judiciary delaying their decisions. Thus the case against the Moscow congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses has been pending since 1998, and so far has produced no evidence for the antisocial activities of which the group was accused.[34] A suit against the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), a Unificationist student association, lasted three years and was finally rejected by a St. Petersburg municipal court, which found no evidence against the defendant. However, in May 2000, under apparent political pressure, the Supreme Court overruled that decision.

CONCLUSION

The unfinished story of the present spiral of modernization prompts caution against too definitive conclusions, although the dice is obviously loaded against NRMs in Russia. Antisectarianism seems to have a useful *political* function in a society that lacks shared elements of national identity but has a tradition of identifying itself negatively through contrast with the *West* and the enemy within.[35] It can also be argued that the appeal of *the traditional* symbiosis of Land, State, and Faith stems from the general lack of social experience in negotiating different interests in a modern society which has a multitude of legitimate ways of social expression, be this in religion, politics, or the economy. The emergence of a diversity of new religious phenomena requires a language to describe, concepts to interpret, and means to handle it. Some aspects of the present treatment of NRMs are the results of Russia's exposure to Western "cult controversies." It can be argued that the anticult concepts tend to encourage a restrictive approach to the issue of the legitimacy of religious expression and hinder pluralistic accommodation.

ENDNOTES

[1] For a useful discussion of the origins of this ideology, see Hosking, G., "The Russian National Myth Repudiated," in *Myth and Nationhood*, eds. G. Hosking and G. Schoplin (London: Hurst and Company, 1995).

[2] This notion of toleration was quite different from the modern understanding of tolerance. It referred to the right to practice religion as part of ethnic identity, but by no means to proselytize among the Russians, which was a criminal offence.

[3] See D. Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia: Power, Privilege and Challenge of Modernity* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997).

[4] See L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 86-7, 222-23.

[5] M. Field, "Introduction," in *Social Consequences of Modernization in Communist Societies,* ed. Mark G. Field (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 1-15.

[6] Christel Lane, *The Rites and Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society—The Soviet Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[7] See Marat Shterin and James T. Richardson, "Local Laws on Religion in Russia: Precursors of Russia's National Law," *Journal of Church and State* 40 (1998): 319-42.

[8] For a detailed discussion of the 1997 law, see C. Durham, Jr., and L. Homer, "Russia's 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations: An Analytical Appraisal," *Emory Law Review* 12 (1998): 101-246.

[9] For fuller discussion, see Marat Shterin, "Legislating on Religion in the Face of Uncertainty," in *Law and Informal Practices in Post-Communist Society,* eds. J. Gallighan and M.Kurkchiyan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, forthcoming).

[10] See L. Homer and L. Uzell, "Federal and Provincial Religious Freedom Laws in Russia: A Struggle for and against Federalism and the Rule of Law," *Emory Law Review* 12 (1998): 247-312; and Shterin and Richardson, "Local Laws."

[11] This percentage is very similar to that estimated by James Beckford in 1985 with respect to Britain. See James Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to New Religious Movements* (London: Tavistock, 1985), 244. I justified my estimate for Russia in M. Shterin, "New Religious Movements in Russia in the 1990s," in *Religious Transition in Russia,* ed. M. Kotiranta (Helsinki: Alexander Institute, 2000), 185-88.

[12] For example, *Report of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation,* 23.10.96

[13] See E. Borenstein, "Articles of Faith: The Media Response to Maria Devi Christos," *Religion* 25 (1995): 249-66.

[14] Since 1997 the Office of the General Prosecutor of the Russian Federation has produced several letters intended to show the criminal nature of sectarianism. However, these documents have consistently failed to produce any evidence for this. Thus, according to the letter of 29 March 1997, there had been seven criminal investigations of members of NRMs, in which only one resulted in a criminal conviction. This conviction was later appealed and overturned.

[15] The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church (*Zhurnal (Journal)* N 114, 29 December 1998) expressed its concern over "increasing cases of abuse" by some priests and monks of their position. In particular, the practice of *mladostarchestvo* was criticized (but not named), whereby lay or religious clergy exercise a form of "charismatic authority" over the lives of their followers, including their family relations, financial matters, medical treatment, employment, and education.

[16] Eileen Barker, "Plus ça change. . . ," *Social Compass* 42 (1995): 165-80.

[17] It is interesting to note that in the early theologies of the Russian indigenous NRMs the Russia-centric and messianic overtones were more pronounced than in the general cul-

tural ambience of the early 1990s, but were in tune with what was quite common within the Russian Orthodox Church.

[18] See Borenstein, "Articles of Faith."

[19] James Beckford defines this as a "practice of creating continuity between episodic . . . stories by adding a capsule summary of the negative features of the phenomenon which is in focus." See James Beckford, "The Mass Media and New Religious Movements," in *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response,*" eds. Bryan Wilson and J. Cresswell (London and New York: Routlege, 1999), 103-19.

[20] See Marat Shterin and James T. Richardson, "Effects of the Western Anti-Cult Movement on Development of Laws Concerning Religion in Post-Communist Russia," *Journal of Religion and State* 42 (2000): 247-71.

[21] See L. Levinson and V. Polosin, *Belaya Kniga* (*The White Book*) (Moscow: Allegro, 1998).

[22] See, for example, A. Dvorkin, *10 Voprosov Naviazchivomu Neznakomtsu: posobie dlia tekh, kto ne khochet byt' zaverbovannym* (*Ten Questions to the Intrusive Stranger: A Manual for Those Who Do Not Wish to Be Recruited*) (Moskva: Otdel Religioznogo Obrazovania Moskovskogo Patriarkhata, 1995).

[23] The first anticult parental groups were formed in 1992 in Moscow (The Committee for Salvation of Youth from Totalitarian Sects) and St. Petersburg (The Committee for the Defence of the Individual and Family).

[24] See Shterin and Richardson, "Effects of the Western Anti-Cult Movement."

[25] See, for example, Pastor Gandow's statement in the Russian Duma in 1995, quoted in Shterin and Richardson, "Effects of the Western Anti-Cult Movement."

[26] See, for example, *Vsemirnyi Russkiy Sobor* (*The World Russian Council*) (Moscow, 1995).

[27] *Novye Religioznye Organzatsii Rossii Destructivnogo and Okkultnogo Kharaktera* (*Russia's New Religious Organizations of Destructive and Occult Character*) (Belgorod: Missionerski Otdel Moskovskogo Patriarkhata, 1997).

[28] One of the leading psychiatric centres in Moscow requires a reference letter from an Orthodox priest for treatment of disorders allegedly caused by "cult involvement."

[29] Undoubtedly, there is a great deal of continuation between Soviet punitive psychiatry and the present involvement of some Russian psychiatrists in the antisectarian struggle. The fact that the two main anticult experts continue to work for the Institute of Forensic Psychiatry, which was notorious for its involvement in the suppression of Soviet dissidents, including religious activists, is suggestive.

[30] F. Kondratiev F., et al., *Mediko-Sotsial'nye Posedstvija Deiatel'nosti Totalitarnykh Sect: analytichiskiy obzor* (*Medico-Social Consequences of the Activities of Totalitarian Sects: An Analytical Overview*) (Moskva: Gosudarstvennyi Nauchno-Issledovatel'skiy Institut im. V.P. Serbskogo, 1998).

[31] D. Anthony, "Pseudoscience and Minority Religions: An Evaluation of the Brainwashing Theories of Jean-Marie Abgrall," *Social Justice Research* 12 (1999): 421-56.

[32] See Shterin and Richardson, "Effects of the Western Anti-Cult Movement."

[33] On the treatment of NRMs within different legal systems, see James T. Richardson, "Religion, Law and Social Control," in *Frontier Religion in the Public Sphere*, ed. P. Cote (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000).

[34] Characteristically, the prosecutor in that case insisted that the Jehovah's Witnesses teachings are socially damaging in themselves as they destroy the mentality of the Russians. See G. Krylova, "The Jehovah's Witnesses Case in Moscow," a paper presented at CESNUR-99, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 1999.

[35] An interesting attempt to present a uniting national idea was Nikita Mikhalkov's recent film, *The Barber of Siberia* (1999), which offered a highly idealized version of the Russian past dominated by Orthodox symbolism. However, even this image was constructed through references to the subversive influence of Western culture and enemies within (godless Russian revolutionaries).

Psychic Phenomena, Neoshamanism, and the Cultic Milieu in Hungary

László Kürti

What best signals the arrival of the twenty-first century and the close of the twentieth century in Hungary may be described as an era of cultic ambivalence, societal fragmentation, and chthonic fermentation. At the threshold of the third millennium, one is obliged to acknowledge the many faceted new religious as well as the political and cultural developments that the country and its people have experienced since the collapse of communism. On the one hand, this is arguably an era of transition: leaving behind the state socialist system and entering into what may loosely be characterized as a market economy and parliamentary democracy. Together with such a fundamental economic and political transformation, changes in the cultural and religious spheres are inevitable. Yet, stressing the overwhelming nature of a transitional era and its coeval societal side effects will not necessarily provide adequate answers to many of the questions concerning the rise of new, alternative political, cultural, and religious phenomena. Rather, I would like to emphasize that we look for those answers in an analysis of the social milieu of the last decade of state socialist rule and its aftermath. A millenarian atmosphere is certainly felt in the alternative milieu which has emerged during the past decade. In fact, the notion of "milieu" is what I see as a useful term to apply here, but not just any kind: a milieu which could include such diverse concepts as social space, habitus, culture, and many of their postmodern and post-communist critical descendants.

Instead of reinventing this as a new term, I defer to the definition established by the British sociologist, Colin Campbell, who introduced the productive notion of the cultic milieu more than two decades ago.[1] Campbell's concept is interesting because similar occult milieu phenomena were occurring throughout the world in the 1990s. This is true as much for North America as for the recently liberated eastern part of Europe, where new and alternative religious phenomena have become the accepted staple of life. We have, for example, the extreme suicidal cults (Solar Temple, Heaven's Gate) in the West and the re-

emergence of non-state religions and communal cults all over the former Soviet bloc.

Looking at the changes and the new developments in Hungary, I want to recall Ernest Gellner's point concerning our own society, namely that modernity may be best understood as an ironic culture: one in which most people take the rational canons and science as the only way of thinking, while relegating everything else to the informal sphere of leisure activities.[2] As Tanya Luhrmann, a student of English witches and magical practitioners, puts it: "The larger cultural order probably tolerates magical practice because it seems unthreatening—foolish perhaps, but not genuinely heretical."[3] Neither do new religions seem to pose any serious threat to state ideology. Most Hungarians, similar to citizens of neighboring states—although there are some real differences in the proportion of people accepting and participating in the alternative religions—only shake their heads in disbelief when they see Buddhists, Hare Krishna followers, psychics, and urban neoshamans of all kinds.[4] Yet, more and more of them do not turn away but instead engage in these activities.

Thus, it is high time to ask the question: what makes East-Central Europeans in general, and Hungarians in particular, turn away from state religions and accept alternative worldviews and religious practices? Most surveys of the 1970s and 1980s revealed that only a small fraction of Hungarians were practicing Catholics and Protestants, thus enabling the state to maintain its secularized profile. Although long gone were the days of Stalinist-enforced atheism, even during the 1980s when more people admitted their religious adherence than before, most young people were indifferent to church affairs. One of the places where a frenetic religious activity took place was a small Bosnian town, Medjugorje, where the apparitions of the Virgin Mary led hundreds, and later, tens of thousands of followers to a revived sense of Catholicism.[5] However, since 1990 a reinvigorated religious fervor has been in the air, and, for an increasing number of Hungarians, Western-style esoteric and New Age culture seems to provide salvation. This is true not only with regard to mainstream and alternative religions, but also with regard to popular culture and its often questionable side effects. Recent estimates, for instance, stress that the number of habitual drug users in Hungary may be as high as 53,000, with an additional 100,000 people also involved with drugs on an occasional basis.[6]

Clearly, something has happened since the late 1980s, when a state socialist, Moscow-directed system collapsed, bringing about a Hungarian society so fundamentally transformed that tons of heroin and hashish are now confiscated by border guards, arsenals are discovered, and multimillionaires are sentenced for bribery, while, at the same time, thousands find new values and gods to celebrate the coming of the new millennium. In fact, 1989-1990 witnessed the beginning of the cultic

milieu for many alternative semi-political and religious groups. Many of these circles operate in the cultural shadows, others quite openly, but both claim knowledge of the truth and answers to long debated scientific questions while relying on the "best" available explanation of supernatural phenomena.

We now see televangelists speaking out not in hidden shelters but in public squares and theaters; Billy Graham, for instance, filled the largest stadium in Budapest on his first visit to Hungary in the early 1990s. In June 1997, Jehovah's Witnesses organized the largest gathering ever in a Budapest sports arena, with tens of thousands of converts celebrating the church's reawakening in Hungary. By the beginning of 1998, the Islamic community in Hungary numbered almost 25,000 followers, of whom about 3,000 were Hungarians and the rest were people from various Arabic-speaking countries. Pope John Pope II also visited Hungary twice in the 1990s, attracting millions of listeners. However, Roman Catholicism is a state religion (as it has been for the past 1,100 years), and so it does not concern us here.[7] Orthodox Jewish groups also arrived from America to spread their own words about salvation, orthodoxy, the state of Israel, and Jewishness.[8]

In the shadow of the twenty-first century, Hungarian governmental policy seemed to be a wholehearted acceptance of mainstream religions and religious education in schools, a fact supported by the signing of agreements between Hungary and the Vatican on 27 June 1997.[9] Even religious fundamentalism, while relegated to the spheres of church matters before, now is out in the open and taking more and more of a leading role in political, economic, and international relations. By 1998, seventy-seven registered religious organizations, many of which were well-known in the West, provided ardent seekers with a mixture of home grown surprises and an imaginative blend of mysticism, esoteric knowledge, alternative healing styles, and a reinvigorated sense of national identity.[10]

MILLENNIAL THINKING

After 1990 even the mysterious circles in wheat fields, known for many years all over the world, together with the almost three dozen new cults, alternative medicinal practices, and various folk religions appeared in Hungary, a signal for many of the arrival of the "Age of Aquarius" in East-Central Europe.[11] Hungary's Church of Scientology had grown to twelve regional centers and had three offices in the nation's capital alone.[12] At the end of 1997, the Hungarian versions of AMORC (the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis) and Lectorium Rosicrucianum were revived. In its first call, the AMORC issued a small recruiting message in which it identified its main mission as being "to work for a harmonious, tolerant and peaceful world."[13] Even The Fam-

ily, the Independent Missionary Community Society, arrived in Hungary in 1992; this group continues to operate in semi-secrecy to avoid media sensationalism and public scrutiny.[14]

The Hare Krishnas, or the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), is undoubtedly one of the most visible phenomena of the 1990s, embracing a few thousand young people in Hungary. While most of their religious practices are relegated to centers at faraway country retreats, during the winter season the Krishna Society offers warm soup for the homeless in Budapest and other regional towns, an act which certainly helps to legitimize the group in the eyes of the authorities as well as in the minds of the general public. At the end of the 1990s, the group operated in fifteen cities and possessed four temples. Its most impressive religious building was opened in the spring of 1997 (in Somogyvámos), with about 1,000 followers and interested bystanders watching as the gathered Krishna believers consecrated their newly finished temple and communal living compound.

Aside from Krishna followers, there are thousands of Buddhists and followers of the Dalai Lama, a well-known figure in the field of human and minority rights. The success of the latter group is more clearly understandable once one realizes that the Dalai Lama has visited Hungary twice, the last time in 1996. Because of his stature on the international scene, the Dalai Lama was received by statesmen, ranging from the mayor of Budapest, to ministers, the prime minister, and even the president of the country. Having such a famous person behind them, the Dalai Lama's Hungarian followers were extremely successful in collecting large amounts of money to build an impressive stupa in Zalaszentgrót, a small village in the southwestern part of Hungary. In fact, Hungarians seem to have a special liking for the various forms of Buddhism; by 1998, there were six registered Buddhist congregations with several thousand followers.

THE NATIONALIST CULTIC MILIEU

But alternative lifestyles and information networks may be detected in other areas of Hungarian contemporary life as well. No one questions the legitimacy of dozens of Gypsy civil rights and cultural organizations, the scores of political factions, or even the existence of a special Gypsy fundamentalist Christian church, the Christ's All Nations Charismatic Hungarian Gypsy Christian Congregation (Krisztus Minden Nemzeté Magyarországi Cigány Karizmatikus Keresztény Gyülekezet).[15] Moreover, no one looks suspiciously at other political circles such as the Knights of Malta, the Lions, and the Freemasons, groups which now boast an illustrious membership, including figures from Hungary's artistic and cultural life as well as members of the political elite.

To a certain degree it is to be expected that following the collapse of strict state controls on religious and cultural life, communal cults and religions of all sorts would come into vogue among old and young alike.[16] Before, only a few individuals, like the Roman Catholic priest Father Bulány and his Circle of Bushes (Bokor Kör) movement, dared to speak out against official policies on religions. However, after 1989 a majority of churches have developed an openly confrontational stance with state and Catholic authority.[17] One can see a politico-religious fervor not only in the more traditional churches within the borders of the Hungarian state, but also in those of neighboring countries as well. In particular, one can observe a full scale radicalization of both the Hungarian Catholic and the Hungarian Protestant faiths in Slovakia and Romania respectively.

Without a doubt, however, fundamentalist Christian sects have the most converts in Hungary. These range from small evangelical groups, such as the Complete Evangelical Christian Mahanaim Association, to middle- and upper-class denominations, such as the Faith Association, an exclusive group with important political connections. There are also lesser known fundamentalist circles such as the Sisters of Israel-Daughters and Messengers of All Immaculate Conception (Izrael Kisnõvérei Minden Kegyelem Szeplõtlen Közvetítõjének Leányai), and Gottfried Holic's new "Christian" group that founded a community center in the city of Dunaföldvár.[18] The Mahanaim Association only gained notoriety since the early 1990s, although the group was first registered in 1989, when it openly began its large-scale evangelical mission.[19]

However, of the newest home grown fundamentalist Christian groups, the "Faith Association" (Hit Gyülekezete) is probably the most unusual. This group, formed as early as the late 1970s, registered freely only in 1990 and then began an aggressive media campaign within the next several years. The church claims that it is the "most significant independent Hungarian representative of the international Christian charismatic movement" and has received considerable help from American fundamentalist ministries and from various Korean church leaders.[20]

By the mid-1990s, the Faith Association managed to achieve nationwide fame; in the beginning of 1997 several of its leaders decided to speak openly about their membership in the church.[21] Included among them are major politicians, professionals, artists, and prominent members of Hungary's *noveau riche.*[22] One of the most visible media stars in their ranks, besides the congregation's high priest, Sándor Németh, is Tamás Pajor, onetime punk rocker and film star, whose 1988 film, *The Rock Missionary (A Rocktérítõ)* sent the message of sex-drugs-rock-and-roll to Hungary's youth. Now Pajor is a well-groomed choir member in the Faith Association. While membership is voluntary, all novices must make a serious commitment to the organization. For instance, in addition to silence about their involvement in the organization and upholding its

fundamentalist Christian tenets, members must offer ten percent of their income to the association on a yearly basis. Such a solid economic base allows the group to purchase expensive real estate and businesses, a fact which elevates the Faith Association above the rest of the country's new religions. This extramural activity on the part of the Faith Association has prompted one member of the center-right party in Hungary's parliament to mount a fact-finding campaign against the church. However, despite the negative tone of this official campaign, the Faith Association now boasts 170 local groups of about 35,000 members and over 100,000 supporters nationwide. In addition, it has the second largest theological college in Hungary, St. Paul's Academy, with about 430 students enrolled.[23] This short excerpt will suffice to give an idea how religious rites are performed:

During the services of Faith Church believers sing psalms and songs with biblical lyrics in a modern, gospel-music style. At the meetings Christians may spontaneously express their emotions to God in the form of clapping, dancing, lifting of hands, and laughter. The church is also famous for ecstatic manifestations accompanying the services, for example falling to the ground, charismatic experiences, crying, laughter, etc.[24]

Another recently formed new religious movement is New Babylon (Új Babylon), a group of a few hundred individuals operating from an apartment in the Óbuda district of Budapest. While this organization is not registered as a church, it began as a foundation and only later revealed its full-scale Christian fundamentalist aims—similar to the Christian Identity movement in the United States—with an extreme nationalistic ideology at its base. Its followers believe the stories of the Bible took place in Hungary and that Jesus Christ was Hungarian.[25] Its slogan is "With God for Earth and People," a phrase, which, in addition to its religious fervor, combines historical, nationalistic, and ecological concerns. They also advertise themselves as "free of all religion and politics," an interesting twist on words and ideas from such a fundamentalist religious body.

According to the movement's doctrine, the original Bible was written in Hungarian, and there are now two messiahs walking among us in Hungary. Their identities, however, are revealed only to a select few. Already the group lists fifty organizations nationwide, a figure roughly corresponding to about five hundred practicing followers.[26] There is one cautionary note, however. Among its mystic followers there is one person who gives cause for worry; his name is Albert Szabó, Hungary's self-proclaimed Nazi leader.[27]

Even the so-called "historical religions"—a phrase referring to the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox, and Jewish denominations—are now in much better shape than before as the result of the socialist-liberal government's attempt to settle sensitive state and religious issues. For

example, in early May 1997, the socialist government settled with the Vatican to return all Hungarian Roman Catholic Church properties nationalized after the communist takeover in 1948.[28] In such a conciliatory climate, and with the "historical religions" tamed, it is not surprising that the most radical antistate stance and programs emanate from religious groups that are outside this religion-state contract. As more and more of the historic religions receive support from the state, one can expect alternative religions to thrive as well.

MEDIA, GAMES, AND THE CULTIC MILIEU

Mainstream religious life is not, however, the only sphere for a thriving cultic milieu. It is evident even within the state supported media, the film industry, television, theater and the publishing world. Since the 1997 liberalization and privatization of television, Hungarian television programs have been cheap imitations of Western, specifically American, shows. One consequence of the current popular cultural scene all over East-Central Europe has been the emergence of instant new "stars" and programs. Naturally, personality "cults" have formed around these new stars: former actors and actresses, rock artists, and media personages. Among Hungarian teenagers, for example, "Xenia Fever" has been making the rounds. Originally a semi-educational and semi-competitive science-fiction show, it is now considered a manipulative TV program. Based on this show, an organization, the Association of the Xénia Fever (A Xénia Láz Egyesület), has grown to become one of the largest children's organizations in Hungary. In early 1998, it became known that some of the directors of this sci-fi program were closely involved not only with high-level members of the then ruling socialist party, but also with some questionable figures of organized crime. It was also revealed that the association was contemplating a political union with the Young Pioneers Association.[29]

Hungarian teenagers are also not immune to the influences of the mystic, vampiristic, cyberpunk sci-fi, sword-and-sorcery, and role-playing games such as the popular "Advanced Dungeons and Dragons." The glossy *Dragon* magazine, a Hungarian version published by the American White Wolf company, offers various fantasy role-playing games such as "Vampire and World of Darkness."[30] A separate, special fanzine called *Runes* (*Rúna)* is now in its fourth year, and, according to its publishers, subscriptions continue to rise.[31] Mysticism, sorcery, witchcraft, and sci-fi fantasy have already converted tens of thousands of young fans mainly through the mystic and necromantic fantasy card game, the MAGUS.[32] Young players formed their own association in 1996 called Coventus, after the present day group practicing the *Ars Magia.* Most of those responsible for Coventus' daily operation are also involved with manag-

ing small publishing firms and sci-fi and horror-fantasy bookstores. Some operate clubs for social events for fans.

However, in addition to cultic media shows—of which the *X Files*, the *Xénia* series, *Encounters of the Zero Kind* (a Hungarian documentary about unexplained and extraterrestrial phenomena), and the *PSI Factor* are the most popular ones—the media and everyday politics also provide bizarre accounts of horror, gore, and Hollywood-style hypertextual realities as they are played out on the streets of Hungary. In none of these things are the media innocent bystanders; for they not only reproduce society and reality, they also enhance it. Certainly, books, magazines, and videotapes are being produced in amazing quantities to feed the hungry minds of the populace. Cultic milieu books, long familiar to Westerners, are being translated into Hungarian and sold in legitimate bookstores. The latest examples are *Akashic Records* by Victor Charon and *The Message of the Grail* by Abd-Ru-Shin [Oskar Ernst Bernhardt (1875-1941)]. Both are fashionable books involving esoteric worldviews with messianic claims, and both are widely distributed on the Hungarian publishing market. An interest in mental techniques (especially "the Silva method") began in Hungary as soon as the Iron Curtain was taken down; but literature on out-of-the-body experiences, UFO abductions, lost continents, mediums, and psychics are just as popular now as books and tapes on Hungarian superstitions, witchcraft, and reincarnation.[33]

However, there are now believers in witchcraft on television who are keen in declaring that they are to be distinguished from Satanists, another group of loosely organized cult followers. One leader, in fact, claimed that the Heaven's Gate group suicide in San Diego in 1997 was nothing but Satanism out of control, the logical consequence of the rise of ill-informed and amateur Satanists around the world.[34] Although there are witches' societies and Satanist groups now operating in Budapest and the larger regional cities that enjoy the support of middle-class and middle-age populations, the Hungarian practitioners of witchcraft do not kill cats, but strongly believe in their black power.[35] All over Hungary, one can buy witch dolls, a fad with strong sexual overtones, since many of the dolls depict old hags with bare behinds.

Hungarian Satanists, on the other hand, are claiming to be a special group of people separate from the witches, just as they are elsewhere in Europe.[36] Satanists believed that 1998 was to be their special year (666+666+666=1998). Hungarian Satanists do not advertise themselves, as some of the witchcraft fans do with shops like the Witches' Boutique in Budapest. Rather, they foster a self-image of distinctiveness and exclusivity by operating in semi-secrecy.

But unlike the Satanists, who operate illegally, the Hungarian Association of Witches, founded and registered as a religious organization in 1992, claims that it has 9,800 members. It admits, however, that only about 1,500 are hard-core practitioners, including 120 initiated, high-

ranking priests. The association's leader, József Mészáros (literally Joseph Butcher in English), became famous nationwide when he appeared on a news program advertising "love magic." However, whatever the witches may think, in the eyes of the state, the association is a tax-fraud: the chief prosecutor's office has initiated action against them for tax evasion. While the prosecutor claims that manufacturing aura glasses and telling fortunes from crystal balls is an entrepreneurial activity and not a religious service, the HAW's spiritual leader responds that "the constitution guarantees that we can provide religious services."[37]

Compared to the Satanists and witches, the Church of Esoteric Teachings has a more intellectual and pseudo-scientific aura. Founded in the early 1990s, this church makes no secret of its mission and function. In 1997, it advertised the beginning of a special Esoteric and Parapsychological University, a two-year program with an entrance examination and a diploma at the end for those who successfully complete its curriculum. Courses range from bioenergetics, radiesthesia, distance-healing, anthroposophy, and astrology to chiropractic and herbal healing.

FOOD, DRUGS, AND ROCK AND ROLL

It is interesting to see the interconnections between cultic media programs and mainstream popular culture and science. With the continual rise in drug prices and the costs of medical care, Hungarians have found good reasons for turning to faith healing and alternative medicinal practices, all of which now utilize both printed and electronic media to boost sales and create popular demand. Until 1986, all homeopathic medicine was illegal in Hungary, but since 1990 all sorts of medical practices have been allowed to thrive. During this panic of the moment, so to speak, Russian herbal doctors and massage therapists, some even working with precious and semi-precious stones, are especially welcomed among the elderly, the sick, and the desperate. In the regional city of Kecskemét, a certain Chinese "miracle doctor" by the name of Dr. Li Yue Geang openly advertises his practice of acupuncture and massage for all kinds of illnesses. Some of these alternative healers rent small storefronts, others advertise in local newspapers, and still others gain more and more followers by word of mouth. In 1998, however, the alternative medical community was dealt a serious blow when the government introduced a new law allowing only licensed practitioners to work. Now they will have to find new methods while operating under the watchful eyes of the state and the tax office.

The name of the "Béres Drops" may not be familiar to Western ears, but to most Hungarians it conjures up images of the miracle drug, a potent mixture of herbs and (secret) ingredients that can successfully

fight cancer. The Béres family, operating several major pharmaceutical companies throughout Hungary, is a textbook example of how new, post-communist entrepreneurs have operated. By all accounts one of the richest family clans in Hungary, the Béres family started its business in the 1980s by manufacturing small bottles of tinctures that were claimed to be a natural blocker to the growth of cancerous cells. Under the last years of state socialism, most people only laughed at the idea, while the desperately ill were already hooked. The family tried in vain to obtain scientific credibility as well as a permit to operate legally. But (and this is where we can see the cultic milieu's influence on daily politics and the society at large), as soon as the tight control of food, drugs, and the medical system started to crack, the Béres family found more and more supporters. They came not only from among the elderly and the desperately ill who sought a cure and were in need of pain killers, but even from people who had no illnesses but who had begun to take the Béres drops—which were becoming a hot commodity on the black market—for their beneficial effects. As one young enthusiast claimed, "If it doesn't hurt, why not take it?"

Clearly the task of any scholar who is bent on understanding the "culture of the cultic milieu," to use Colin Campbell's phrase, is to connect those elements which may span, broadly speaking, the "religion-science axis." The story of the Béres drops is a clear indication of how this axis operates in the current, more lenient socio-economic and political climate of Hungary. Certainly after 1990, the Béres family's acceptance is easily discerned in a number of ways: in the availability of the drops in legitimate drug stores, in the existence of their many drug factories in Hungary, and in their open claims of medical successes in the fight against cancer. Now the family proudly boasts that in some African countries and even in places in the former Soviet Union, there are hospitals and clinics administering their famous cancer fighting miracle drug. By 1992, the Béres firm had become one of the largest (and perhaps the most respected) herbal-homeopathic drug producing companies in Hungary.[38]

Following in the footsteps of the "miracle" drops is another recently "discovered" miracle drug on the market called Somadrin. Among other things, it is supposed to be a cure for asthma. Its discoverer is István Somogyi, a painter and a loner, who lives in a small apartment in Budapest and who has no diploma in medicine or pharmacy.[39] His claim is that, as in air found in underground caves, Somadrin exudes vapors which, when inhaled, are supposed to work on throat illnesses. Following this much publicized discovery, there are now several "in-house caves" in Hungary where asthmatic patients can go for the miracle cure. There is, to be sure, a strange correlation between media support and miracle drugs; the more people know about them, the more successful they become in fighting many different diseases.

At present, Somadrin is used against the flu, allergies, and a host of other kinds of breathing disorders.[40]

The food and liquor industries, not surprisingly, are also involved in the cultic phenomena in Hungary. Tokaj wine is perhaps one of the best-known marketable commodities the country has to offer. A recently created company, named Geoproduct, now bottles and sells this famous wine together with the healing rocks gathered on the Tokaj mountains. The small bottle—with rocks and pebbles actually in the bottle with the wine—is advertised as being capable of "healing the mind and the body." The label also advises buyers to use a small glass every morning and evening for "the healthy heart and soul" and "a healthy 120 years of life." Not only wine, but miracle water may also be bought in alternative stores and health food shops. Water enriched with bio-energy—also referred to as the "water of life" or simply as "p-water"—replicating some Japanese "scientific" research is being marketed together with small water-purifying appliances. Those who cannot afford these machines may simply go to these stores and buy only the water. Among other "miracle" products on the alternative market, one can find an "energy stimulating" foot support called Piokal, a "Life Crystal" tincture (advertised under the name of a certain American Dr. George Merkl, the Kapsipap creme for rheumatism, the disease preventive "Q10," and the Tethys primal sea salt, a miracle drug manufactured by the Society for the Healing Miracles Minerals.

Health, beauty, and youth are the three most important areas interconnected in the alternative healing professions. Long gone are the days when women only worried about their makeup and men about their growing waistlines. In major newspapers, one can read advertisements such as this:

> Become beautiful! Become rejuvenated! With us you become slim and attractive! You may know your future and yourself. Our address is 5th. Dist. Hercegprimás street, No. 13. We offer: horoscopes, tarot, soul-seeking, graphology, medical pedicure and manicure, reflexology, hairdressing, make-up, solarium, Vacu-press celluloid treatment, slimming, firm breast creation, wrinkleless face, body-wrapping. Call us![41]

The fact that advertisements of this type appear in legitimate, and not just alternative, newspapers is itself proof that such ideas and services are not only accepted, but also sought after by Hungarians.

Aside from the sciences, the arts, and food and drugs, rock music has long been associated with a belief in alternative esoteric, religious, and extraterrestrial worlds. Recent examples of this association include Nicolas Roeg's 1976 cult classic film with David Bowie, *The Man Who Fell to Earth,* and the 1984 American classic, *Repo Man.* The members of one of Hungary's established alternative rock bands, the Galloping Morticians (Vágtázó Halottkémek), continue to pride themselves on being the

spokesmen for an eccentric mysticism, supernaturalism, and shamanistic knowledge.[42] Despite a lack of state funding and sponsorship, this group has been extremely skillful in managing its affairs during the past two decades. The group has also been one of the pioneers of the alternative musical scene in Hungary.[43] Their vision, while quite chaotic at times, plays off neoshamanism; it incorporates transcendental themes, raging, violent sounds, and a mystical blend of the fantastic. The group's leader, Attila Grandpierre, has often admitted to performing on stage in an altered state of consciousness.[44] Whether such neoshamanic performances reflect the serious beliefs of this alternative musical group remains to be seen, yet we cannot discount the group's long success and the existence of faithful followers who have allowed this unique band to exist for such a long time. The leader's own worldview, however, is an indication of the serious connection between Hungary's educated and the new alternative religious phenomena sweeping through the country.[45]

Another former rock star, László Waszlavik, once the lead singer and a founding member of the Galloping Morticians, claims to be one of the truly authentic shamanic rockers. He also speaks openly about the usefulness of alternative lifestyle and religious belief, which, in his case, amounts to a curious mixture of fundamentalist Christian teachings, Far Eastern mysticism of all kinds, and nationalistic folkloristic slogans.[46] There is also a small but noisy group of Hungarian "black" or "death" metal groups and their ardent followers who copy American and well-known west European satanic and death metal groups.[47]

PSYCHICS, FAITH HEALERS, AND SEERS

There are more glaring examples of the acceptance of the cultic milieu, or to extend Campbell's idea, how society supports it. The Maharishi Transcendental Meditation workshops are already popular among those young Hungarians prone to participate in special courses. Some of their sessions advertised in 1997 were: reiki workshops, radiesthesia, aura diagnostics, bioenergetic healing, transbreathing and regression techniques, folk healing and traditional Thai massage, bone setting, psycho-cybernetics, and chakra-based meditations.[48] In addition, there are now several seers and self-proclaimed psychics in Hungary who have achieved nationwide notoriety because of their skills in the magic arts. The psychic Rózsa Müller is a successful spirit medium; her male colleague, Antal Bujka, is well-known for conversing with the dead and is knowledgeable in the art of love magic as well. He advertises himself in the media by giving his mobile telephone number. Another well-known practitioner is Emma Ilona Veres, a middle-aged woman who travels continents in her dreams; she claims to have received her ex-

trasensory knowledge during various (real and imagined) trips to the Egyptian and Mexican pyramids as well as to monasteries in Tibet.[49]

Equally famous is the well-known celebrity with extrasensory and mystical knowledge, Ferenc Dombi. Born into a poor family with twelve children, Dombi was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1954, but clashed with state authorities in 1960 over his alternative views. Working semilegally as a faith healer, the priest developed an interest in mysticism, astrology, and Indian beliefs. In the late 1980s, he spent two months in Medjugorje, a city in Yugoslavia notable for miracles associated with the apparition of the Virgin Mary. Father Dombi claims that in Medjugorje he received miraculous cures and began to hear "the Voice." In 1991, after a long and arduous fight with the authorities (both church and lay), he received permission to practice as an assistant to the chaplain in his home village, Inárcs. His conversations with the Voice (the Virgin Mary and other heavenly creatures) have been published since 1993 in a series which currently consists of twenty-four *The Voice* books.[50] These small pamphlets faithfully capture the messages from the Voice concerning such topics as love, politics, karma, local affairs, personal traumas, and other quasi-religious matters.

While Father Dombi clearly exists on the margins of accepted and tolerated religious practice, there are others with supernatural powers whose status among locals is both accepted and questioned and, thus, feared. In the small town where I was born and to which I returned to live (about sixty-eight kilometers south of Budapest), there was a woman known simply as Aunt Éva. Born in 1930 and living in this settlement for thirty-seven years, she was a lonely woman with a conservative Roman Catholic faith laced with a healthy dose of mysticism and the occult. As a mother of five girls, she advertised herself as a seer, palm reader, fortune-teller and a faith healer, an advertisement which became more sophisticated as local cable television started its operation. While earlier she was simply dismissed as a "crazy spinster"—called Eve the Hitchhiker by many—by the early 1990s she had become an accepted religious and cult figure among both locals and visitors from outside the settlement.[51]

In no time, and as a retiree, Aunt Éva made a real alternative career out of claiming supernatural powers as a necromancer. When a double homicide took place, a crime that left local policemen gasping for air, the police chief turned to Aunt Éva to learn what she "saw" in the zodiac and the Chinese calendar. As it turned out, she was not very far from the truth: the killer was a relative of the old couple murdered! More recently, she has also been featured in various regional newspapers for predicting the location of a dead man's body.[52] Building upon successes of a similar kind, she is featured regularly in the local and regional papers, offering her wisdom about astrological signs, health, and even fundamentalist Christian ethics.[53]

Although it is not known what kind of license she was able to obtain (probably none besides her ownership license) to run a small storefront grocery store, she promoted herself as Eve the Truthsayer. In her store, which she advertised as a "place of truth," she sold alcohol, cigarettes, stationery, and even condoms. Half of this store was curtained off; it was her sacred corner, her altar. On the walls there were plenty of reproductions of Catholic iconography and letters written to her by her admirers. In addition, she produced a book, a small but nicely crafted volume containing her yearly forecasts.[54] Already in its third printing, Aunt Eve's book and daily, monthly, and yearly personalized forecasts have been making the rounds outside the confines of her town, transforming her into a national media celebrity.

She was not alone. The profession of bone setting—the Hungarian equivalent of chiropractic medicine—started on a massive scale in Hungary after 1990, when the American chiropractor, Steven Anderson, introduced his own special techniques here. Following this, several international sessions and workshops—to which Russian, German and American specialists were invited—were held.[55] Today, together with the Hungarian Medical Acupuncture Association, chiropractors form one of the largest alternative medical societies in Hungary.

One can also find diverse forms of faith healing and miracle work in Hungary today. For example, Imre Oláh, living in the western town of Gyõr, is a well-known distance faith healer. There is a special healing coin, charged with cosmic energy, which one can purchase from the paraphenomen, L. Harasztosi. Another nationally known energy healer is József Gyurcsok, who operates out of the northern town of Nagybörzsöny. He has five different mobile phone numbers to provide telepathic or distance-healing for various health and mental problems.[56] Gyurcsók, who crowned himself as Hungary's only legitimate and chosen sacred king, selected this small settlement as the base for his art for an interesting reason: he claims that the settlement has extraterrestrial energy provided by UFOs that used this place as a landing site for centuries. He claims that he, as well as his select apprentices, are in constant contact with these extraterrestrials. He has developed a serious group of followers—as well as registered his church in 1996 as the Church of Universal Love (Egyetemes Szeretet Egyháza)—and claims to be able to cure all kinds of sick people, including children, who are treated free of charge. Gyurcsok, however, is not only a successful UFO-abductee and astro-healer, but a seer of Nostradamus' caliber. In fact, he foretold a great cosmic natural disaster—an unavoidable cosmic dust storm—causing havoc on Earth in 1998.

NEOSHAMANISM

Aside from these phenomena, neoshamanic practice is widely in vogue among Hungarian intellectuals and alternative religious thinkers. The prime movers behind Hungary's neoshamanic resurgence are men, young and old alike. One such celebrity with a long history of alternative thinking is Gábor Papp, an art historian in his late fifties. His eccentric views helped him to gain national recognition among Hungary's university students and middle-aged intellectuals. Papp, whose name incidentally means "Priest" in Hungarian, emerged in the 1980s as a free and uncompromising alternative thinker.[57] His lectures and public seminars are filled with interpretations of ancient and contemporary phenomena. He has analyzed, among other things, the building of the pyramids (both Mayan and those of Egypt), Scythian art, the chakras of Hindu spiritual physiology, Celtic mythology, Arab medicine, lost continents, medieval alchemy, the music of Zoltán Kodály, and Hungarian peasant art. He and his followers can be also credited with discovering another Hungarian eccentric, a former steel mill worker by the name of Paál Zoltán (1913-1982), who wrote the *Arvisura*, a text combining esoteric Eastern philosophy, folk religion, mythology, and Hungarian prehistory.[58] Several of Papp's followers have become professionals themselves, disseminating views that straddle the religion-science axis. One of them is Marcell Jankovics, a filmmaker of national repute who is currently president of the Hungarian Cultural Fund. He achieved acceptance as a filmmaker when he produced a whole series of animated interpretations of Hungarian folktales. However, Jankovics did not stop there. He became a self-appointed scholar; he now has several books to his credit ranging from the symbolism of the sun and trees to mythology.

I was able to witness the influence of Papp and his art on the widespread development of neoshamanism in Hungary in the summer of 1995 when Papp led a mission to Siberia to find some of the ancient locations where important events described in the *Arvisura* took place. Improvising several rituals, Papp and his followers utilized drumming, singing, incantations and offerings to bring back the "force." By revitalizing the spiritual life among Khanty and Mansi tribal hunters of the Siberian north, they were hoping to reverse the evil energies caused by modernization and sovietization. Since all of the wooden sacred images of these tribal groups had been destroyed, burned, or taken to museums by the Soviet government,[59] one of the functions of these rituals was to reinstall a tribal spiritual presence in these lands. In one of their rituals, the group offered a wooden image to Khanty elders who then put the effigy in a secret tribal shelter.[60]

Papp's small group had its own shaman (a theater director), who brought his drum and offered séances three times during the trip. His

initiation into shamanism is also an interesting aspect of the Hungarian cultic milieu. He received his knowledge and power from the American anthropologist-turned-shaman, Michael Harner, who visited Hungary several times, and who now heads the Foundation for Shamanic Studies. Harner's shamanistic séances, while new at first, were crucial in initiating several Hungarian young men into the art of shamanizing, both in its old and new world varieties.[61] Now these neoshamans are themselves initiating others and practicing a sort of shamanism that they claim to be the true folk religion of the Hungarians. Neoshamanism is also rising in Russia, and the notion of a practicing, urban shaman would not turn any heads now.[62] However, while similarities between Hungarian neoshamanist believers and Siberian urban shamans are revealing, the differences between them are also substantial.[63]

In Hungary, books are now being published on shamanism with renewed vigor. Shamanistic séances and trancing are rather frequent occurrences among the country's youth and middle-aged elite. The basic differences between classical shamanism and neoshamanism as it is practiced by the few hundred fans in Hungary is that the latter is not tribal, it concerns present-day affairs, and it is kept alive in an urban environment mostly among intellectuals who see no conflict in conflating basic Christian tenets, folkloric magic, and various shamanistic worldviews. For example, neoshamans and alternative religious enthusiasts organized several international events in 1997 and 1998, actions which reveal the seriousness with which these followers view their art and knowledge. In April 1997 the Fifth Esoteric Spiritual Forum was held for two days; in August 1997 an International Shaman Expo went on for almost one month with various activities ranging from initiations, teaching sessions, trance séances, and talk shows. This event, and a subsequent one in 1998, was advertised as follows: "Mystical Encounters: Old Sciences—Today. Supernatural phenomena, extraterrestrials, UFOs, witches, shamans, magicians, and herbal doctors will meet at the International Shaman Expo. Shamans live among us!" Also in August of the same year, an alternative esoteric music and poetry festival was organized by three hundred enthusiasts in the city of Kecskemét. Now videotapes and CDs—all charged with cosmic energy—may be purchased from those who attended and who received special forces.[64]

What is even more fascinating with regard to neoshamanistic rejuvenation is that the meteoric rise in the numbers of some of these young devotees may signal the millennial spirit in the air. In the eastern town of Nyiregyháza, for example, András Kovács, a man in his forties and originally trained as an electrical engineer, registered his Shamanic Church in addition to opening a private shaman school (Táltos Iskola).[65] At this school one can gain firsthand knowledge of holistic healing and supernatural phenomena.

UFO MYSTICS

Interestingly enough, groups within the cultic milieu do not only look to the past for inspiration, but, as we have seen with regard to the Healer of Visegrád, József Gyurcsok, they also look to science fiction and the world of extraterrestrials and UFOs. To them, these things are not the unknown, but a well-known universe. There are now circles calling themselves UFO Research Groups, and there is one legally registered church in Hungary, the Alien, United Believers in Higher Intelligence (Idegen, Fejlettebb Intelligenciában Hívõk Közössége). Another special group well-known for its outspokenness in defending the extraterrestials operates in the southern city of Szeged. They openly declare the existence of extraterrestrial life, publicize the "real" stories behind UFO abductions, and rely on constant communications with UFOs through the medium of a few, carefully chosen individuals. The American sci-fi series, *The X Files*, and the magazine of the same name inadvertently support the belief system of such groups as well as the growing camp of Hungarian UFO believers. Other journals (such as the *UFO Magazine*) started immediately after 1990. Their subscribers organized the Second Meeting of the Encountered Ones in 1997. There are even some among these groups who have analyzed the mystical inscriptions found on the UFO crash at Roswell in the United States in 1947. According to András Oláh, Hungary's foremost UFO mystic and abductee, the runiform writings can only be deciphered as an archaic Hungarian message,[66] a point of view which puts him in opposition to the American Michael Hesemann, who proposed a Phoenician origin for the Roswell inscriptions. Another unique development in the current Hungarian obsession with extraterrestrial life is how present psychics claim connections with past, historical figures. One such example is the Báthory Philosophical Society. Their leader, Gizella Bartha, a self-reputed philosopher, takes pride in declaring that she is able to converse regularly with Elizabeth Báthory, a sixteenth-century Transylvanian princess whose name the society now bears.[67]

Special journals unite these types of mystics, religious avatars, UFO fundamentalists, and alternative consciousness groups all over Eastern Europe. One of them, entitled *Open World (Nyitott Világ)*, is a Hungarian periodical and a real treasure for anthropologists and cultural studies specialists. It is published in the regional city of Kecskemét by a group called Association of the Bio-Shield Positive Thinkers (Biopajzs Pozitiv Gondolkodók Egyesülete).[68] What is interesting about this group is their unrelenting belief that the Hungarian nation is the chosen nation with a long prehistory originating in the lost continents of MU and Atlantis.[69] This association, together with the New Babylonians, is very close in its mystical beliefs to the occult, necromantic magazine, *Other World*

(Túlvilág), which began publication in 1993.[70] While some of the individuals involved in these groups see the "other" world and claim to possess powers to communicate with the dead, others offer horoscope readings for politicians and political parties. In the first instance, we find popular Hungarian actors and celebrities talking about their otherworldly experiences.[71] In the latter case, readers and astrologers offer their opinions about Hungarian political parties and major politicians. In fact, at the millennium, Hungarians seemed to have discovered the utility of political horoscopes.[72]

There are important connections between these Hungarian developments and what has taken place in the West in the last decades of the twentieth century. Some of the leaders of these groups, much like the neoshamans, are not only admirers of their Western counterparts, but they also take an active role in Western seminars, retreats and workshops. One such alternative school visited by Hungarians is the Royal Teton Ranch in Montana, the worldwide headquarters of the Church Universal and Triumphant. There visitors can learn from specialists from the United States and elsewhere. This information, in turn, is given publicity in the *Open World* magazine, a journal that offers reinterpretations of biblical stories, accounts of faith healing successes, dream interpretations, reinterpretations of medieval history, reports of UFO encounters, and reincarnation stories. This interesting journal has a sentence from Goethe as its motto: "Whether we are true or not, as living creatures we have the responsibility to help the living and prepare the future." This statement suggests that, for this group, the past and future are one, and going back into the past to meet historical figures, or traveling into the future to meet UFOs, is as easy as a sneeze. At the same time, there is also something utopian and millenarian in this view. For instance, in one article published in *Open World*,[73] entitled the "Chosen Nation," the author discusses why Hungarians must fight against the current wave of privatization, capitalism, and Western cultural influence with a reinvigorated sense of spirituality. In the words of the author, "Western financial institutions give us money knowing well that some of it will end up, where? Among other places in Cuba. We sold our country to the West. For what? So we can pay back the loans they gave us. Today money rules our lives."[74]

From this type of declaration it is easy to discern the chiliastic frame of mind within these groups. For them, the current evils—a breakdown of social values, unbridled capitalism, consumerism, and the threat of Westernization—must be fought with the spiritual strength which is outside the accepted and mainstream culture. In their view, nothing serves this purpose better than alternative values, lifestyles, and religious practices which provide both explanations for the past problems and solutions for the present ills of the world.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, what Colin Campbell had in mind when he argued that the culture of the cultic milieu falls "in the property space bounded by the religion-science axis and an instrumental-expressive orientation axis" is the fact that these axes "only result in a very rough approximation to reality."[75] The cases presented above reveal that, in the post-communist world of emerging democratic traditions and Western values, religion and science, magic and fantasy are intertwined in the thinking of alternative religionists in Hungary. Indeed, these conflations make up a large portion of their reality on the eve of the new millennium. The quest seekers, magical practitioners, and mystics are bound up in a strange time travel relationship. On the one hand, they are both approximating and negating the past-present-future time axis in the backward East from state socialism to capitalist democracy. On the other hand, many sense that the present-day realities are harsher than ever before and that paradise on earth can only be experienced in a magical world of their own creation. Referring again to Campbell, this may indeed be called a post-totalitarian cultic age, one in which the mainstream and scientific ideas are blended with the marginal and half-beliefs.[76]

Many questions about the present age must still be answered. For instance, one of the most intriguing is how such a new cultic milieu can thrive not only in Hungary, but simultaneously throughout the former communist bloc. One simple answer may be that the formerly isolated state socialist world provides prime territory for new missionary and messianic movements. Turning away from the communist past brings with it New Age mysticism as well as alternative religions such as neoshamanistic societies in Siberia, the Council of All Being in Poland, and East European and Baltic Neopaganism.[77] Another argument could be that such movements are not novel to the post-communist world at all. Certainly the Bogomils in Bulgaria and various sects of Old Believers and mystic societies in Russia were well-known in the past. Similarly, the Baptists, the Church of the Nazarene, populist mystics, neognostics, and Jehovah's Witnesses were already on Hungarian soil at the beginning of the twentieth century.[78]

While it is true that East-Central Europe was not wholly outside the orbit of European religious and political developments, it is clear that with the fall of the strong central control over cultural and religious life, all sorts of religious and quasi-political activities have begun to thrive. As Campbell aptly suggests, there is a substantial "commercial substructure" and media development which allows for the popularity of such activities. John Fiske makes an equally apt point with regard to popular culture when he writes that it must be aggressively disseminated in order to achieve its hegemonic aim:

> Popular culture circulates in a number of ways . . . always encompassing a wide variety of social formations. Popular culture is made when these cultural resources meet the everyday lives of the people. It may consist only of this dialogic relationship between the reader and the industrial text, it may exist only in the interior fantasy, but it will remain at this level in all cases: the interior fantasy will typically demand some form of social circulation.[79]

In this way, then, the high priestesses and priests of the alternative religious worldviews and prominent life-seekers return, in a strange but by no means unusual twist, to fundamentalist Christian tenets, Neopagan worldviews, and nationalist mysticism in their search to externalize their fantasies or their new, noncommunist identities. As the Baltic Neopaganists argue, the alternative religious movements reveal "one of the directions of quest of identity in this region . . . [is] to exploit tradition in order to create a new response to the contemporary challenges."[80]

What the contemporary Hungarian scene points to is of interest to scholars of religion and alternative religious movements. The trends of the 1990s increasingly reveal that a new religious consciousness and the creation of alternative symbols of the divine originating in the countercultural movements of the 1960s and early 1970s have become global phenomena. They seem to provide a positive ethical foundation for a new, millennial social order in the nation-states emerging from the ashes of the crumbled Soviet empire. Robert White sees this similarity when he notes with regard to the functioning of the countercultural movement, that "some of the central symbols in the countercultural movement have been concerned with a future of restoration of the harmony of nature, the harmony of the person with nature, and the internal harmony of the person—all in direct contrast with the antisymbols of modernizing development."[81] Clearly, citizens of the former Soviet bloc countries have been searching for meaning in their lives to cope with both the alienation caused by communism and its aftermath, and the uncertainties of their future. The cultic milieu of the moment may be seen as a positioned liminality (after Victor Turner) expressing desires to control and negotiate between the individual and the social, the magical and the religious, and between the sacred and the profane. For, as Richard Fenn argues,

> Individuals often construe time in various ways that may or may not coincide and may even conflict with the times constructed by the social order. Individuals have their own dreams of accomplishment and satisfaction, and the times of which they dream may be far in the future or quite imminent. . . . To relieve and control the potential conflict between the way that individuals and societies construe and construct time has been the function of ritual in many societies.[82]

For Fenn, religious movements serve to overcome "temporal panic: the conviction that time is running out on the social order and on the self."[83]

This last point may be part of the good news. If we are able to say that one of the reasons for the increasing popularity of the cultic milieu is media sensationalism surrounding celebrities, politicians, and mainstream scholars creating rituals to solve the problem of "temporal panic," then it should follow naturally that the disappearance of such rituals, or at least their confinement within a minute part of the populace, will occur when these people give up their ideas, change their minds, or simply disappear from public view. Whether such cultic milieus are able to maintain themselves over time or not is mainly a matter of the presence of a charismatic leader or an elite group to lead others. Nothing summarizes this better than the statement of a pop shaman who, when asked about reincarnation, answered: "Yes, I do believe it. And I hope that in my next life I will be a politician, so I can change the world into a much better place than it is now." As fads and fashions seem to pop up unexpectedly from time to time, so too do alternative religions come and go as every new generation discovers its own shamans, psychic healers, and media tricksters. In fact, discovering the truth, or rejecting the basic tenets of science is the *raison d'être* for every generation feeling temporal panic. For them, with 1989, time has become not only just a new commodity, but a constantly and abruptly changing brute force that must be redefined, influenced, and, if possible, changed. Indeed, in Eastern Europe this is an ironic age.

ENDNOTES

[1] Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu, and Secularization," *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, ed. Michael Hill (London: SCM Press, 1972), 119-36. Campbell's investigation was followed by many similar works. See, for example, the following large edited volumes on the religious and occult phenomena of the early 1970s: I. Zaretsky and P. Leone, eds., *Religious Movements in Contemporary America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); and E. Tiryakian, ed., *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, Esoteric, and the Occult* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1974). Yet, strangely enough, most sociologists, Campbell among them, who used the notion of the cult and the cultic extensively, did not take notice of the anthropologist Anthony Wallace, who in his classic study, *Religion: An Anthropological View*, utilizes the same notion but with different meanings to incorporate religious phenomena in an evolutionary scale. See Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological View* (New York: Random House, 1966). It should be noted that the use of "cult" and "cultic" is different from the derogatory and negative use of these words in the old American and new European discourses. Many readers reading "cult" or "cultic" would simply understand this as "bad" or "dangerous." Here, on the contrary, the terms are more neutral and free from such biases.

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[2] E. Gellner, *Legitimation of Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

[3] T. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 343.

[4] These differences are detailed by S. P. Ramet, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), especially Part 5, "Postcommunist Trends and Conclusion." For the Hungarian data see A. Lugosi and Gy. Lugosi, eds., *Szekták új vallási jelenségek* (Budapest: Pannonica, 1998).

[5] M. Bax, "Marian Apparition in Medjugorje: Rivaling Religious Regimes and State-Formation in Yugoslavia," in *Religious Regimes and State Formations*, ed. E. Wolf (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 29-54; and L. Kürti, "A Mennyek Asszonya: a medzugorjei látomások antropológiája" ("The Lady of Heaven: An Anthropology of the Apparition of Medjugorje"), in *Extázis, Álom, Látomás* (*Ecstasy, Dream, Apparitions*), ed. É. Pócs (Budapest: Balassi, 1998), 174-90.

[6] Although there are no reliable estimates as to how many young people are drug abusers, most scholars would agree that abuse is on the rise since the early 1990s; see Zs. Elekes, "Kábítószerek és kábítószer-fogyasztás," in *Társadalmi Riport*, ed. R. Andora, T. Kolosi, and Gy. Vukovich (Budapest: Tárki, 1992), 318-34; the figures in the Hungarian daily, *Népszabadság*, 19 June 1997, 1; the analysis by E. Bácskai and J. Gerevich, *Ifjúság és drogfogyasztás* (Budapest: Animula, 1997); and Zs. Elekes and B. Paksi, "A fiatalok és a drog," *Belügyi Szemle* (November 1997): 74-89. The drug phenomenon is, of course, a world phenomenon, and the globalization of culture also means globalization of drug trafficking. Yet the nature and extent of the drug culture is only one aspect of the fundamental changes that came to Hungary after the fall of communism.

[7] State and church relations are by no means unproblematic even in this post-communist moment; for analyses, see the chapters on Hungary in the edited volume by J. Pungur, *An Eastern European Liberation Theology* (Calgary: Angelus Publishers, 1994); and M. Tomka, "Egy új társadalmi-politikai szereplõ. Vallás és egyház a rendszerváltozás folyamatában," *Társadalmi Szemle* 53, nos. 8-9 (1998):19-34. The vitality of Christian fundamentalism may also be witnessed in the strong connection between Hungarians and the order of Roger Schütz operating in Taizé, France. Every year tens of thousands of Hungarian pilgrims make their way to participate in Father Schütz's weekly retreats. See "Zarándokok városa a franciaországi Taizében" ("The Town of Pilgrims in Taizé, France"), *Magyar Nemzet*, 4 August 1998, 5. For an earlier analysis I recommend Edit Fél's informative essay, "Roger Schütz és a taizé közösség," *Vigilia* 51, no. 3 (1986): 187-91.

[8] After a successful tour in the Baltic republics, an American Jewish organization arrived in Budapest in August 1998. It rented the Budapest Sports Hall for three days for an International Jewish Praise, Music, and Dance Festival, an act that was immediately followed by severe criticism from the Hungarian Jewish Association (MAZSIHISZ). For an analysis of Hungarian Jewish revivalism, see A. Kovács, "Changes in Jewish Identity in Modern Hungary," in *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*, ed. J. Webber (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994), 150-60.

[9] *Népszabadság*, 21 June 1997, 1. The agreement, however, did not go smoothly. Opposition parties and the governing Liberal Social Democratic Party, objected to the government's preferential treatment of the Roman Catholic Church. This conflict was resolved when the government immediately took the action of inviting church leaders for a roundtable discussion to work out cooperative agreements between the state and the churches. This treaty concerns the church properties nationalized during the communist takeover, religious education, and state subsidies to churches and religious orders. The treaty was ratified by the Parliament on 2 December 1997. Concerning the debates see "Egyház-állam-emberi jogok" ("Church-State-Human Rights"), *Fundamentum* 1, no. 2 (1998): 77-80.

[10] "A világvége hangulatban szaporodnak a vallási közösségek" ("At the Millennium's End Religious Groups Are a Growing Trend"), *Magyar Hirlap*, 24 December 1997, 4.

[11] P. Gál, *A New Age keresztény szemmel* (*A Christian Look at New Age*) (Abaliget: Lámpás, 1997); J. Szántó, "Vallásosság, vallásos hiedelmek Magyarországon," in Andorka, Kolosi, and Vukovics, *Társadalmi riport,* 259-88; B. Tarnay, *Katolicizmus és kultuszok* (*Cults and Catholicism*) (Pannonhalma: Bencés, 1994). In Romania, for instance, the Minister of Cults sent a circular letter to all mayors in Romania with a list of the fifteen recognized religions of the country that were authorized to build places of worship. Not included were Buddhists, Hindus, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baha'is, and the Salvation Army. This prompted the Helsinki Committee and the Human Rights Without Frontiers (Brussels) to condemn the "biased decision" of the Romanian government. See Press Release, Human Rights Without Frontiers, 9 May 1997.

[12] Detailed information and specific data on the Church of Scientology in Hungary may be found at the website <http://www.smi.org/address/hungary.htm>. For a criticism from Roman Catholic theologians, see A. Benkõ, *Igaz-e, hogy a szicentológia egyház* (*Is It True that Scientology Is a Church?*) (Szeged: Agapé, 1995); and Gál, *A New Age keresztény szemmel.*

[13] "AMORC," *Léleküdítõ Magazin* 3 (1997): 24.

[14] Several publications were printed to assist the group's smooth integration into the emerging climate of alternative religions in Hungary. See *Családunk eredete, avagy a kezdete* (Budapest: World Services Press, 1992).

[15] It deserves to be mentioned here that among Hungarian Gypsies (Roma) the Baptist faith seems to be on the rise, with many communities opting to join Baptist churches instead of Roman Catholic congregations.

[16] The Jewish community in Hungary is also experiencing a religious revival with its Dohány street synagogue restored to its earlier pre-war glory and the Jewish theological school admitting more and more students from East-Central Europe.

[17] Joseph Pungur's short but informative analysis on the Bulányi movement will be helpful for non-Hungarian readers. See Pungur, *An Eastern European Liberation Theology.* Father Bulányi, who was forbidden to practice as a priest in 1982, was readmitted into the Roman Catholic Church in 1997; this, however, was more symbolic than real, for he was forced to remain in isolation. "Visszafogadták, de továbbra is mellõzik," *Magyar Hirlap,* 13 January 1999, 6.

[18] The Sisters of Israel arrived in Hungary in 1996 and were immediately surrounded by conflict and hostilities with locals concerning their faith, real estate deals, and educational practices. "Megfosztva az egyházi elismeréstõl," *Magyar Nemzet,* 3 October 1998, 6. At the end of 1998 the group was asked to leave Hungary.

[19] The group's full name is the Complete Evangelic Christian Community of the Mahanaim Association (Teljes Evangéliumi Keresztény Közösség Mahanaim Gyülekezete). It is a Protestant fundamentalist school upholding the primacy of Jesus Christ and the evangelistic teachings of the New Testament by trying to convert nonbelievers to Christianity. In 1997, the association claimed that they already had six groups in Budapest and operated Bible classes in 180 schools throughout the city. In addition, the group produces its own religious tapes and operates a book store. "A Mahanaim Gyülekezet" ("The Mahanaim Association"), *Magyar Nemzet,* 28 June 1997, 12.

[20] The church's history, structure, and management is discussed by Gábor Váczi, "Az üdvösség birodalma. Egy keresztény szekta nyomában" ("In the Empire of Salvation Tracing a 'Christian' Sect"), *Magyar Szemle* (May 1997): 483-94; and K. Leon, "Kigyók és galambok: háttérvázlat a Hit Gyülekezetérõl" ("Snakes and Doves: Background Report of the Association of Faith"), part 1, *Demokrata* 9 (1998): 27-9; part 2, 10 (1998): 27-9; part 3, 11 (1998): 33-4.

[21] See the interview with the leading minister, Sándor Németh, "A Hit Gyülekezete nem akar politikai hatalmat" ("The Association of the Faith Does Not Want Political Power"), *Népszabadság,* 7 March 1997, 9.

[22] The membership is recruited largely from Hungary's professionals, prominent business people and politicians; its party base is strongest among the second governing party in Hungary, the Free Democrats (SZDSZ). See "A Hit Gyülekezete nem akar politikai hatalmat." The two most prominent members of the association are Sándor Németh, who is the religious leader of the group, and Péter Hack, vice-president of the SZDSZ party. István Elek, "Az SZDSZ és a Hit Gyülekezete," *Magyar Nemzet*, 17 July 1999, 15. Hack was demoted in 1999, no doubt because of his church involvement.

[23] Information is available about the Faith Association on its own website: <http://www.hit.hu>. For the Roman Catholic Church's view see A. Benkõ, *Igaz-e, hogy nem szekta a Hit gyülekezete* (Szeged: Agapé, 1995). For a view from a previous member, see László Bartus, *Fesz van. A Hit Gyülekezet másik arca* (Budapest: The Author, 1999).

[24] Ibid., 12.

[25] An interview was printed in Hungary's number one daily with the female leader of the group. See Viktor Kiss, "Új Babylon: magyar egyház születik Óbudán?" ("New Babylon: A Hungarian Church Is Born in Óbuda?") *Népszabadság*, 17 June 1997, 9.

[26] During their religious meetings, members sit around a large table with twelve chairs, utilizing the symbols of the national tricolor and the triple cross symbolizing the founding of the Hungarian state. They often recite poetry from Hungarian poets and use embroidery to create religious iconography. According to the leader, heaven will be achieved on Earth but must be created by willing participants; it will, naturally, be an Hungarian-speaking paradise. Another significant aspect of the New Babylon community is that they also gain their ideological strength from Hungarian prehistory; they are working to reunite the ancient twelve Hungarian tribes.

[27] I have analyzed Hungarian Neo-Nazis in László Kürti, "The Emergence of Postcommunist Youth Identities in Eastern Europe: From Communists to Skinheads, to National Socialists and Beyond," in *Nation and Race: The Developing Euro-American Racist Subculture*, ed. Jeffrey Kaplan and Tore Bjørgo (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 175-201.

[28] This is, of course, no small amount—around $100 million. However, it will not be a monetary payback, for most of this will be through reinstating property rights to former church land and real estate holdings. I should mention that before World War II, Hungary's Roman Catholic Church was one of the largest landholders in Hungary.

[29] See the insightful articles by Ágnes Féderer, "Xénia-láz: nyerésre játssz!" ("Play to win! The Xénia Fever"), *Népszabadság*, 10 January 1998, 16-17; and Gyula Varsányi, "Ûrgammák: a kezdettõl a bevételen a hangsúly" ("Emphasis Is Only on the Profit for the Space-Gammas"), *Népszabadság*, 10 January 1998, 17. The Association of the Xénia Fever, however, immediately responded to their severe criticism by claiming that the authors were viciously attacking the association with lies to besmirch its educational goals; see "A Xénia Láz Egyesület tiltakozása" ("Objection by the Association of Xénia Fever"), *Népszabadság*, 12 January 1998, 4. A member of the Socialist Party's board, Sándor Csintalan, also responded to the two articles, especially with regard to the fact that the articles emphasized the connection of the association to well-known underground figures, rejecting these claims and hinting at the possibility of libel suits against the authors. See "Csintalan: As MSZP-nek nincs kapcsolata az alvilággal" ("Csintalan: The MSZP Does Not Have Connection to the Mob"), *Népszabadság*, 12 January 1998, 4. Note that the Young Pioneers organization was the communist youth organization, membership in which was mandatory for all Hungarian youths during the communist era. See "A Xénia perli a lapunkat" ("The Xénia Files Suit against the Newspaper"), *Népszabadság*, 15 January 1998, 4.

[30] The dozens of homepages now operating in Hungary are an indication of the popularity of these fantasy role-playing games; for example see <http:www.rpg.hu/>; <http://www.valhalla.hu>; <http://www.goliat.eik/bme.hu/endrosz/>; <http://www.sci-fi.hu/cherubion/index.html>; and <http://www.nitor.hu/nitor/htm>.

[31] *Rúna* 4, no. 1 (1998): 1.

[32] Ibid., 3.

[33] In fact a whole series of videos are being produced now with the title "The Nether World." In the first, we may watch spirit mediums performing table dancing, conversing with dead relatives, and other curiosities. The series producer and director, Károly Sirkó, admitted that he is in contact with the spiritual world and the undead himself. See the advertisement in *Túlvilág* (July 1997): 29. A similar publication with the title Metamorfózis (Metamorphosis), published in the regional city Gyõr since 1995, has the same content.

[34] For a slightly amusing but insightful understanding of Heaven's Gate, see the short collage in *The New Yorker*, 17 April 1997, 31-33. I would like to thank Marjorie Balzer for providing me with this article. To be fair, most Hungarian UFO believers also looked at Heaven's Gate with criticism and trepidation; see "Intelligens erõ" ("Intelligent Power"), *UFO Magazin* 8, no. 7 (July 1997): 38-39.

[35] Earlier I presented my findings concerning Hungarian villagers in the Transylvanian region of Romania in "Ethnicity, Religion and Tradition: Hungarian Families in Zsobok, Romania," paper presented at the International Conference on Family and Tradition, Jÿveskÿla, Estonia, 1995. In 1990, animals were returned to individual families as the result of the disassembling of former state farms. With the cattle returned to the homes, witchcraft beliefs and accusations were also revitalized.

[36] Although there is a lot of talk about Satanism in Hungary, tangible evidence of satanic practice is very rare. For some authentic documentation, see L. Bódi and B. Szûk, "A gyûlület neve: 666" ("The Name of Hatred: 666"), *Vigilia* 6 (1996): 255-69; and B. Tarnay, "Sátánizmus, démonok, ördögûzés" ("Satanism, Demons, and Devil Worship"), Vigilia 6 (1996): 249-54.

[37] "Witches Face Tax Trial," *Budapest Sun*, 4-10 December 1997, 1.

[38] Even regular users of the Béres drops, who were surveyed as to the exact effectiveness of the medication, declared openly that they do not know why but they feel healthier and more energetic when using the drops. It should be added, however, that by now there are "legitimate" doctors working for the firm involved with "scientific" testing of the Béres drops. In order to further legitimize themselves, the Béres family embarked upon a philanthropic and social mission by offering their products to hospitals, the homeless, and the needy. In addition, the family offers humanitarian benefits by appearing as a promoter and organizer of various artistic activities throughout the country. At this point there are no more debates and scientific arguments against the Béres drops. Most people take it for granted that the drops are on store shelves, and if the medication is there, so goes the folk wisdom, it must be useful for something!

[39] According to a personal story, he has spent his life fortune on making and perfecting this drug. To be administered, the drug must be put into water, and in no time a chemical reaction takes place, replicating the special air of a cave.

[40] K. A., "Az asztmások csodaszere: a Somadrin" ("Somadrin, the Miracle Drug for Asthma"), *Nyitott világ* 2, no. 4 (1996): 14.

[41] In fact, this advertisement was placed in the largest circulation program weekly, *Pesti Müsor*, 12-18 December 1996, 46.

[42] Hungary's famous music group, the Galloping Morticians, was also elevated to national fame in Gábor Bódy's 1984 film, *The Dog's Nightly Song (A kutya éji dala)*.

[43] See my article "'How Can I Be a Human Being?': Culture, Youth, and Musical Opposition in Hungary," in *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. S. Ramet (Boulder: Westview, 1994), 73-102.

[44] Grandpierre is not only an astronomer and a musician, he is also an avid poet. To give a taste of his neoshamanism, I will cite an excerpt from his poem, "World Talk" ("Világbeszéd"), *Polisz* 2 (1990): 44.

Dance calls.
Drum.
Numbness.
Covered face.
A child's face.

Looking at you knowing that you look back.
Music nears.
Eyes are sparkling.
Swallowing you. . . .

[45] Grandpierre also offered an interview on cosmic phenomena in which he was characterized as a "shaman-scholar"; "A Vágtázó Halottkémek Nap-útja" ("The Solar Voyage of the Galloping Morticians"), *Nyitott Világ* 3, no. 2 (1997): 3.

[46] An interview with this self-titled rock shaman appeared in the extreme nationalistic publication, *Hunnia.* See "Waszlavik," *Hunnia* 10, no. 98 (1998): 7-8. For an interesting comparison between rock music, esoteric beliefs, and Satanism, see M. Moynihan and D. Soderlind, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground* (Venice: Feral House, 1998).

[47] Some of the most well known are Fresh Fabrik, Slow Fermenting, and Detox. See *Metal Hammer* 7, no. 8 (1998).

[48] In fact, every single one of these was held in the first half of 1997 throughout Hungary. The sessions were led by one of Hungary's famous healers, László Faragó, who lives and operates in the regional city of Kecskemét. See his printed brochure, "Holisztikus természetgyógyász tanfolyamsorozatok, Jan. 18-Júl. 1 1997." Although single sessions cost between $30-$50 (between 3,200-7,200 Hungarian *forints*, or roughly an average week's salary), the healer advertises his workshops even for those who have no money: "Even if you cannot pay the fees, come and meet me, let the rest be taken care of by the Universe."

[49] An interview with her was published recently in the occult journal, *Open World.* See "Vigyázz! A vágyad beteljesül!" ("Watch out! Your desires will come true!"), *Nyitott Világ* 3, no. 2 (1997): 10.

[50] For these volumes see the series of publications all titled the same and numbered consecutively by Ferenc Dombi, *A hang: Egy katolikus pap párbeszéde égi lényekkel (The Voice: Conversations of a Catholic Priest with Heavenly Creatures)* (Inárcs: Author's Publications, 1993-1997).

[51] In fact, Aunt Éva started her arduous professional career in the late 1980s when Hungarian media and society were experiencing more freedom from state repression. She was featured in 1986 on the talk show of a small-time media host by the name of Sándor Friderikusz, an independent showman of the 1990s who is himself a cultic milieu participant with his eccentric television programs. As more and more people consulted her, she slowly turned into a minor local celebrity; she was admitted into the mayor's circle of friends and held regular sessions for regional politicians, local officials, and even the police. During the regular local summer festivals, Aunt Éva had a special tent set up for those wishing to hear the future, find their lost ones, or try their luck. With the help of a translator, she was even able to tell fortunes, see the dead, and give advice for love magic and sicknesses to foreigners traveling through the town.

[52] Articles about this incident were published in both national and local papers. "Lajosmizsei Halottlátó" ("The Necromancer of Lajosmizse"), *Mai Nap*, 5 July 1997, 24; and "Aki megmondta, hogy hol a halott" ("She Told Where the Dead Was"), *Petöfi Népe*, 8 July 1997, 6. This famous local necromancer, fortuneteller and seer was hospitalized with a nervous breakdown and neurosis at the end of 1997; her house was immediately demolished by her family.

[53] This feature article, with a glossy picture of her, was titled, "Mrs. Eve on the Sound-Waves" ("Éva néni az éteren"), *Hölgyválasz* 3, no. 5 (May 1997): 17. She was hosted on the Kecskemét radio talk show, a call-in program during which she told the future by asking people's birth dates and relating them to the various signs of the Chinese zodiac.

[54] F. Horváth, *Az Igazmondó Éva Asszony. Bübáj koktél (The Truthsayer Mrs. Eve. Magic Cocktail)* (Kecskemét: Petöfi Nyomda, 1995).

[55] K. Borics and G. Kürti, *Csodatévö csontkovácsok (Miraculous Chiropractors)* (Budapest: MILU, 1990).

[56] J. Gyurcsók, "Elmélkedés egy hipotézisrõl. Gigantikus katasztrófa" ("Thinking about a Hypothesis: A Gigantic Catastrophe?"), *UFO Magazin* 8, no. 7 (1997): 27.

[57] For an interview with him, see "Beszélgetés Pap Gábor müvészettörténésszel" ("Conversations with the Art Historian Gábor Pap"), *Zöldövezet* 2 (1993): 29-43. His English language articles have appeared at <http://www.flc.klte.hu/jvegvari/>.

[58] The *Arvisura* has been posthumously edited and published in Z. Paál, *Arvisura-Igazszólás. Mondák, regék, népi hagyományok a Palóc kézmûvesek világából (Arvisura—The Truth: Sagas, Stories and Folk Legends from Craftsmen of the Palóc Region)*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Püski, 1998). For a critical evaluation of his practice, see "Vaskereszt, vagy amit akartok" ("The Iron Cross, or What Do You Want"), *Magyar Nemzet* 27 (February 1999): 13. Similarly, in current Russian mysticism and neopaganism, for example, there is the *Book of Vles*, a controversial ancient text describing the golden age of Aryan-Slavic prehistory. This is described in more detail in V. A. Shnirelman, *Russian Neo-Pagan Myths and Anti-Semitism: Analysis of Current Trends in Anti-Semitism,* no. 13 (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism, 1998). A comparison between the Hungarian *Arvisura* and the Russian *Book of Vles* would yield interesting information concerning similarities and differences of contemporary alternative religious worldviews in East-Central Europe.

[59] That this was not the fancy of the neoshamanistic group but a historical fact is easily proved by the ethnohistorical records. For a discussion on how the Soviet government eradicated "pagan" and shamanistic religions, see M. Balzer, "Flights of the Sacred: Symbolism and Theory in Siberian Shamanism," *American Anthropologist* 98, no. 2 (1996): 305-18; J. Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Y. Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

[60] This group did not consist of uneducated individuals; one was a film director, another a theater director, and another a female ethnographer. In addition, one woman "seer" or psychic also followed the group; her presence was overwhelming since, before every major step the group wanted to make, she was consulted. With the help of a translator, she also read the cards for many people, one of whom was the governor of the region. After the séance was over, the governor expressed his awe, arguing that many of the seer's statements were in fact in his previous night's dream! During the trip, a frail woman in her mid-thirties was consulted several times by the group's female seer and male neoshaman. Once the two found out that she was willing to share her dreams and personal story, including the ones of childhood filled with mystical and folkloric events, she was given instructions that she should "find the lost energy within her." They were obviously disturbed by the family's poverty, her husband's alcoholism, job insecurities, and perhaps even physical abuse, and the woman was urged to "step out of her depressed state" and take up shamanism, for one of her ancestors was a truly great shaman.

[61] Michael Harner's *The Way of the Shaman* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982) has become the Bible of these young neoshamanic enthusiasts.

[62] In fact, Marjorie Balzer makes an apt point with regard to the similarities of Siberian urban shamans and New Age shamanism in Europe and America: "The two have in common a straining to get at some inner core of human effect, to break the bonds of received distinctions between realty and unreality, and to touch people spiritually and aesthetically." Balzer, 312.

[63] As Balzer notes with regard to Siberian native Sakha (Yakut) practitioners, "Some Sakha healers are turning to Slavic-style 'new age' seminars for 'extrasense' training in Moscow and Kiev, whether or not purist ethnographers approve. They find it feasible to add theories about energy transference, auras, and Indian chakras to their shamanistic heritage. Some call them charlatans, and indeed their curing abilities vary widely. But one patient's charlatan can be another's curer (313).

[64] There is a fundamental connection between the scholarly world and popular neoshamanism, for the latter find enjoyment in reinterpretations of classical studies of shamanism. Moreover, one trained ethnographer with a regular job at the Academy of Sciences

makes his living as a researcher of shamanism; many of his publications serve as food for thought for today's urban shamans. This person one day admitted to me that he found out by chance that he has an extra bone in his body, the only explanation being that he is now a true shaman as well! On the revival of urban shamanism see Caroline Humphrey, "Shamans in the City," *Anthropology Today*, 15 (1999): 3-10.

[65] In Hungarian, the term for shaman is *táltos*. In a strange coincidence, the American novelist Anne Rice appropriated this term for her series beginning with *The Witching Hour* (1990) and continuing in *Taltos, Lives of the Mayfair Witches* (1994). An anonymous reviewer of this article called attention to the fact that Rice may have read the articles by the Hungarian folklorist Éva Pócs, especially her "Hungarian Taltos and His European Parallels," in *Uralic Mythology and Folklore,* ed. M. Hoppal and J. Pentikainen (Budapest: Hungarian Ethnographic Institute and Finnish Literature Society, 1989). I am more inclined to believe that Rice may have read something of Geza Roheim, Linda Degh, or some other earlier Hungarian folktale collections. On possible traits of shamanism in Hungarian culture, see my article, "Language, Symbol and Dance: An Analysis of Historicity in Movement and Meaning," *Shaman* 2, no. 1 (1994): 3-60.

[66] A. Oláh, "Roswelli feliratok" ("The Inscriptions of Roswell"), *UFO Magazin* 8, no. 7 (1997): 34-35.

[67] *Nyitott Világ* 2, no. 4 (1996): 2. Countess Báthory, largely because of her (controversial) infamy of sadism and bloodthirstiness, is a major figure in the Satanist and Black Metal subculture in Scandinavia. A tribute album of the Swedish death metal group, *Bathory*, was published in 1998 with the title *No Conspiracy with Satan: A Tribute to Bathory*. Historical research has, however, been able to discredit most of the charges against Countess Báthory, for which she had to spend her final years in jail. See also the discussion in Moynihan and Soderlind.

[68] *Nyitott Világ, A Biopajzs Gondolkodók Egyesületének lapja, idõszaki kiadvány*, 4, no. 3 (1998).

[69] An earlier alternative theory associated ancient Hungarians with the Sumerians; such ideas resulted in a paradigmatic debate about the Sumerian hypothesis mostly supported by Hungarian emigrés living in South America. See, for example, Ferencz Jós Badiny, "Mágusok nyomában" ("Tracing the Magi"), *Kelet Népe* 2 (1968): 1-111. The current worldview, however, offers an even more far-fetched understanding of Hungarian ancient history: MU, the lost continent, is the original homeland, Zeus the founder, Pallas Athene the Hungarian "Father-Mother" God, Buddha the Hungarian princess Buda and so on *ad nauseam*. See A. Kovács and S. Molnár, *Tanítás: Az Isten által megdicsõített Világ üzen a jelen és a jövö kor emberének (Teaching: The Blessed-by-God-World Sends a Message to the Man of the Present and Future)* (Kecskemét: Pro Humanitate, 1996); and Oláh, 34-35.

[70] The magazine *Túlvilág (Other World*, or *Nether World)* is published in Budapest by a group of individuals committed to the psychic and the supernatural world and mainly concerns itself with otherworldliness. Articles and interviews are printed about near-death experiences, time travel, reincarnation, and other occult subjects.

[71] The retired opera diva Ibolya Duba, for example, discovered the Enoch cult and can be credited with bringing the American mystic J. Hurtak, whose book *The Key of Enokh* has just been translated into Hungarian, to Hungary several times. "Az emberiség célja nem lehet más mint ISTENEMBERRÉ válni" ("The Purpose of Man Is to Become GODMAN"), *Túlvilág* (July 1997): 18.

[72] For example, Margit Bojta and István Báró are well known for the political horoscopes printed in the pages of the alternative magazine, *Túlvilág*. In volume 3, no. 2 (1997) the horoscopes concerned all major political parties.

[73] In fact, every time I read this journal *(Open World)* or have to translate it into English, I always remember another, rather similar expression, "open society," used by the philosopher Karl Popper. It is left to one's intellect to make sense of the spiritual and philosophical dimensions (connection?) between the two.

[74] János Szabó, "A választott nemzet" ("The Chosen Nation"), *Nyitott Világ* 2, no. 2 (1977): 4.

[75] Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu, and Secularization," 124.

[76] C. Campbell, "Half-Belief and the Paradox of Ritual Instrumental Activism: A Theory of Modern Superstition," *British Journal of Sociology* 47, no. 1 (1996): 151-66. Campbell explains on page 158 that "half-belief" is when individuals "intellectually reject a superstition [but] nevertheless allow it to influence their thinking and actions."

[77] On Baltic and East European neopaganism, see the homepage <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/2810>.

[78] As one observer noted earlier, "This phenomenon signaled that people on the margins of society have given up on the hope of progress and positive development of their plight, thus abandoning all hopes for changing the current state of affairs. People joining these sects waited for a miracle, the coming of the new Christ, and trusted the Messiah to change the hellish country into the world of God. Instead of acting to their benefit, they opted for withdrawal and escape; the withdrawal from the everyday situation—both intellectual and political—and the acceptance of a dream world in which truth and justice will rule." Gy. Borbándi, *A magyar népi mozgalom (The Hungarian Populist Movement)* (New York: Püski, 1983), 69. The Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, arrived in Hungary in 1908.

[79] John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 174.

[80] See the Baltic neopagan website cited above in note 77.

[81] Robert A. White, "Religion and Media in the Construction of Cultures," in *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, ed. S. M. Hoover and K. Lundby (London: Sage, 1997), 53.

[82] Richard K. Fenn, *The End of Time: Religion, Ritual, and the Forging of the Soul* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 3.

[83] Fenn, 2. Fenn continues, "Ritual combines both the realistic and the unrealistic apprehension of time in significant, and occasionally potent, symbolic gestures. . . . One function of ritual is precisely to obscure the distinction between reality and myth in the social construction of time" (10).

Field Notes from Waco:
Isabel Andrade et al v. U.S.

Stuart A. Wright

During the week of 25-30 June 2000, I observed the trial of the wrongful death suit brought by Davidian survivors and family members against the federal government. The plaintiffs' suit charged that federal law enforcement agencies acted recklessly and with negligence, using unnecessary and excessive force that led to the deaths in 1993 of eighty-two sect members at Mount Carmel, the Davidians' residence near Waco, Texas. Attorneys Michael Caddell and Cynthia Chapman represented approximately fifty plaintiffs. Ramsey Clark represented two of the surviving Davidians, Clive Doyle and Sheila Martin. James Brannon represented the three deceased children of David Koresh.

The government was represented by a full complement of attorneys, legal assistants, and technicians, filling one entire side of the courtroom. The lead cocounsels were Mike Bradford, the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas, and Marie Hagan, a veteran prosecutor with the Justice Department. Bradford was assigned to the case after the Assistant United States Attorney of the Western District of Texas, Bill Johnston, was recused for being a whistleblower. Johnston was instrumental in the discovery of pyrotechnic devices by plaintiffs' investigators, much to the chagrin of Justice Department officials.[1] The pyrotechnic devices in question were utilized by FBI agents on 19 April 1993 to deliver tear gas into the Davidians' residence. For six years, the FBI had denied using pyrotechnic devices that could have caused the fire in the CS gas assault.[2] When two shell casings from pyrotechnic grenades were found in the evidence storage room, Johnston passed the information up the chain of command. However, Attorney General Reno continued to deny the use of pyrotechnics leading Johnston to believe that senior personnel in the Justice Department were withholding information from her. Johnston then broke rank and wrote to Reno directly. His reward for this effort was a sharp rebuke by Hagan and a subsequent indictment handed down by special prosecutor John Danforth accusing Johnston of obstructing justice and lying to a grand jury.[3] Bradford was a logical replacement for Johnston on the case, preserving continuity with the regional culture for the small town Texas jury. No doubt, Jus-

tice Department officials were worried that Marie Hagan would be perceived by jurors as an "outsider" and Washington bureaucrat.

While the final ruling in Judge Walter Smith's court—essentially finding no fault with the government's actions—was disappointing, it should not have come as a surprise. I have argued elsewhere that the most important aspects of this trial were the evidentiary and procedural rulings that prevented the jury from hearing all the evidence.[4] It is not my intention to restate those arguments here. Rather I want to briefly address two disturbing but recurrent problems that surfaced during the trial which should have given the jury reason to question the credibility of the government's case. These concerns are: 1. the mishandling of evidence, and 2. false or misleading statements by federal officials.

MISHANDLING OF EVIDENCE

On 25 June, plaintiffs' attorney Michael Caddell called Department of Public Safety (DPS) officer David Keys to the stand. Keys was present at Mount Carmel on 19 April 1993, the day of the FBI tank and CS gas assault. He testified that around 3:00 P.M., after the fire which erupted around noon had subsided, he saw agents load what looked like a door into a U-Haul truck. Indeed, during the demolition by tanks of the Davidians' residence that led up to the fire, television crews filmed a Combat Engineering Vehicle (CEV)[5] dragging the doors away, but subsequently the FBI reported that the right front door was missing. Government attorneys interrupted Keys' testimony with an objection, and there was a bench conference. Judge Smith disallowed the testimony about the door, ruling that it was speculative. The right front door was important evidence, because it would have shown whether the bullet holes were caused by mostly incoming or outgoing rounds. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) agents maintained that on the occasion of the 28 February 1993 raid on Mount Carmel, Davidians shot first through the door, initiating the gun battle that killed four ATF agents and five Davidians. The Davidians denied they shot first, saying that the door would prove their innocence. During the 51-day siege, sect member Steve Schneider told FBI agents that "the evidence from the front door will clearly show how many bullets and what happened."[6] Mysteriously, the right door disappeared. In a videotaped deposition, which was not shown in court, Keys testified that the U-Haul truck remained at Mount Carmel for approximately one-half hour. A photograph of Keys shows the truck in the background at the site on 19 April, and the time on his analog wristwatch is 3:55 P.M. Keys said that when the truck departed, it did not turn south on Double E Ranch Road—the direction from which it had arrived—past the media checkpoint

where hordes of cameras and reporters were waiting. Instead, the truck turned north. Asked if he gave any thought to the truck taking a more circuitous route, Keys replied, "To me, it was like they didn't want to bring any attention to something that had come from where the remains were."[7]

On 27 June, a videotaped deposition of Joey Gordon, a Texas Ranger, was shown in court. Gordon inventoried the federal evidence compiled and stored in a secure Department of Public Safety facility in Austin, Texas. Gordon found proof that at least one of the military rounds had been photographed by crime scene photographers after the CS gas assault on 19 April. However, he acknowledged that the round later disappeared and was never logged into evidence records. In addition, he found some items mislabeled and other items entered into the log but missing. Four or five pyrotechnic flashbang grenades were misidentified as "silencers" by the FBI Crime Lab. These included Q1237 projectiles. Also, Q379 and Q380 prototypes were found, and they had been fired, thus raising further questions about how the conflagration could have been started. The FBI also misidentified "cooked off" rounds of ammunition. Ranger Gordon said he found "very few expended rounds" attributed to the Davidians, even though ATF agents alleged that they were "out-gunned" on 28 February 1993.

At best, it would appear that the handling of evidence was sloppy and riddled with error. At worst, one might conclude that government agents tampered with the evidence, a problem that has plagued the FBI Crime Lab and federal investigations in recent years.[8]

On 29 June, Colonel William Petit was called by government attorneys to testify. Petit was commander on board a Blackhawk helicopter that circled Mount Carmel during the 28 February 1993 ATF raid. He testified that the three National Guard helicopters received fire from the ground by Davidians, but that he never saw any gunfire from the helicopters. During cross-examination, the question of a FLIR (infrared) tape arose, which would have recorded gunfire. Colonel Petit acknowledged that a FLIR was operating on board the Blackhawk. Petit was asked if he had seen the tape. He replied that he had not and did not know what happened to the tape. The FLIR tape, like the right front door and the pyrotechnic military rounds, had disappeared.

Add these items of mishandled evidence to the already lengthy list of government miscues and mishaps—the blank videotape of the ATF raid, the FBI's bulldozing of the crime scene after the fire, the missing or lost photos taken by the coroner's office, the missing page from the Justice report to congressional subcommittees mentioning the military rounds, alteration of the transcripts of listening devices,[9] the FBI's refusal to allow independent inspection of Davidian weapons to determine if they had been altered,[10] records of telephone logs between top officials blackened out on the pretext they were "classified," the lost

(and later found) audiotapes recording the authorization of the use of pyrotechnic devices on 19 April 1993, and the failure of the refrigeration unit storing Davidian corpses preventing investigation of controversial autopsy findings, among others.

FALSE OR MISLEADING STATEMENT BY FEDERAL OFFICIALS

On 27 June, plaintiffs' attorneys played portions of a video deposition of FBI agent Monty Jett. Jett had been a weapons and explosives training technician at the FBI Academy, Quantico, Virginia, since 1978. He was responsible for ordering the chemical agents for the CS gas assault. Jett claimed that he only ordered ferret rounds, which are not pyrotechnic, to deliver the CS gas. He was not aware of any pyrotechnic military rounds (M651). He said he did not know where the Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) operative at Mount Carmel would obtain M651s. However, he testified that he had seen some old military rounds stored in a tunnel at Quantico. They disappeared at some point, and he assumed that they had been destroyed. Caddell pointed out that on 19 April 1993 the HRT ran out of ferret rounds during the insertion of CS gas and requested more from Fort Hood. Were some of these military rounds? Jett said he did not order any military rounds, even though FBI agent David Corderman, who served as a tank gunner at Mount Carmel, testified that on 19 April 1993 he fired three pyrotechnic military rounds at the residence.[11] Curiously, none of the agents in the HRT chain-of-command knew where the military rounds came from.

Later the same day, Caddell introduced into evidence a memo from FBI negotiator, Gary Noesner, who coordinated the negotiation team. The memo stated that he had reservations about the chief negotiator, Byron Sage, and the on scene commander, Jeffrey Jamar. He wrote, "Sage is very religious," and suggested that Sage might prejudice the negotiations. Noesner also wrote that "Jamar's style exhibited hostility."[12] Finally, Noesner thought that using CEVs to punch holes in the residence to insert CS gas was a dangerous idea and complained to officials that he was not consulted about this plan.

Caddell then submitted a written deposition from Frederick Lanceley, a veteran HRT negotiator who was critical of the FBI decision to insert CS gas into Mount Carmel. Lanceley stated that he agreed with the assessment by Gary Noesner. A 1993 government report of an interview with Noesner after the Mount Carmel fire was then read. It stated: "Noesner . . . determined that no one asked the negotiators and behavioral scientists what the response would be if the tanks punched holes in the building. Noesner sees this as a fundamental flaw in the implemen-

tation of the operation. He believes that is what triggered the starting of the fires and the shooting of the children."[13]

Caddell also introduced into evidence an internal memo by former FBI Deputy Assistant Director, Danny Coulson. The memo ridiculed the on-site commanders' contention that inserting CS gas would confuse the Davidians and prompt the women to rush out of the building with their children. "I am pretty disappointed with this approach. Everything is moving toward a gas attack. . . . I have stated that I believe it is unwise. We have more to negotiate. . . . HRT needs to be told that we are not going to assault that compound in any fashion, including gas. If he (Rogers) can't accommodate this objective, he should be brought back to Washington."[14] Richard Rogers was the commander of the Hostage Rescue Team during the operation at Mount Carmel.

Caddell then introduced statements made by Clint Van Zandt, another veteran negotiator and behavioral science specialist for the HRT. Asked about Richard Rogers, Van Zandt said, "I think he believed very strongly in himself; in his ability in the use of force. *He saw negotiations as getting in the way. He is a strong proponent and advocate of tactical resolutions to situations.*"[15] A key argument by plaintiffs' lawyers was that Rogers and Jamar violated an approved plan and prematurely began demolishing the building only two hours after the CS insertion began. The written plan approved by Justice Department officials called for waiting forty-eight hours after the introduction of CS gas before tanks began dismantling the building.

The significance of this evidence can hardly be overstated. It documents the internal discord in the FBI over strategy, and records criticism by key HRT personnel (Noesner, Lanceley, Coulson, and Van Zandt) of Rogers and Jamar as being hostile, aggressive, and predisposed to tactical resolutions. Similar allegations made by scholars and critical observers were repeatedly denied for years by the FBI. As one of the chief critics of the HRT's actions at Waco, these revelations proved to be especially galling.[16] It is nothing short of criminal conduct that the memos corroborating these allegations were withheld in previous discovery motions in the 1994 criminal trial of Branch Davidians and in three rounds of congressional hearings.

Taken together, the withholding of evidence, the alteration and mishandling of evidence, and the numerous false statements made to the court, defense attorneys, congressional committees, and the public, should have stripped the government of any credibility in the Waco civil trial. I can only speculate that the disturbing record of official malfeasance was offset by the manipulative evidentiary and procedural rulings of Judge Smith and the successful demonization of the Davidians by federal prosecutors, who painted them as cultists, terrorists, and crazed killers.

ENDNOTES

[1] The operation of a pyrotechnic device produces a spark that can possibly ignite a fire. Pyrotechnic devices are distinct from incendiary devices, which are designed to set a fire.

[2] CS gas is chlorobenzylidene malononitrile.

[3] Johnston is accused of withholding notes made during the government review of the 1993 Waco incident which may have shown that "military rounds" (i.e., pyrotechnic projectiles) were fired by the FBI. Johnston denies the charge and says he does not recall any discussion of the rounds. He admits withholding notes because he believed that Justice Department officials were trying to set him up.

[4] Stuart A. Wright, "What the Waco Jury Never Heard," *Houston Chronicle*, 23 July 2000; idem, "Waco Redux: Trial and Error," *Religion in the News* 3, no. 3 (Fall 2000):16-18; and idem, "Justice Denied: The Waco Civil Trial," *Nova Religio* (forthcoming).

[5] A CEV is a tank that is not equipped with destructive weapons. The five CEVs at Mount Carmel were converted M-60A1 tanks equipped with bulldozer blades and battering rams. Additionally, two Abrams (M1A1) tanks were operative at Mount Carmel. Carol Moore, *The Davidian Massacre: Disturbing Questions about Waco that Must Be Answered* (Franklin, Tenn., and Springfield, Va.: Legacy Communications and Gun Owners Foundation, 1995), 223.

[6] Robert Bryce, "Prying Open the Case of the Missing Door," *Austin Chronicle*, 18 August 2000.

[7] Ibid.

[8] The FBI was fined by Judge Edward Lodge in the Randy Weaver case for altering and removing evidence for photographs at the crime scene at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, in 1992. See Kenneth L. Stern, *A Force Upon the Plain* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996). See also John F. Kelly and Phillip K. Wearne, *Tainting Evidence: Inside the Scandals at the FBI Crime Lab* (New York: Free Press, 1998).

[9] David P. Kopel and Paul H. Blackman, *No More Wacos: What's Wrong With Federal Law Enforcement and How to Fix It* (New York: Prometheus, 1997), 239.

[10] In the final joint report by the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight and the Senate Judiciary Committee, it was noted that during the House hearings, committee members asked the FBI to turn over the weapons for independent analysis because they were concerned that the weapons may have been altered *after* the 19 April 1993 fire. The Justice Department refused to turn over the weapons to the congressional committees. See 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* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 9.

[11] Dick J. Reavis, "Agent Tells of Pyrotechnics' Use at Waco," *San Antonio Express*, 12 July 2000; John Danforth, *Interim Report to the Deputy Attorney General Concerning the 1993 Confrontation at the Mt. Carmel Complex, Waco, Texas*, 21 July 2000, 49.

[12] From personal trial notes. On file with author.

[13] Mark England, "Woman Burned in Mount Carmel Fire Testifies for Davidians," *Waco Tribune-Herald*, 28 June 2000.

[14] Lee Hancock, "Sect Could Have Been Coaxed Out, FBI Figure Told Officials," *Dallas Morning News*, 23 June 2000.

[15] Jim Henderson, "Woman Says Tanks Prevented Escape," *Houston Chronicle*, 27 June 2000 (emphasis mine).

[16] Stuart A. Wright, "Anatomy of a Government Massacre: Abuses of Hostage-Barricade Protocols during the Waco Standoff," *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no. 2 (1999):39-68.

Book Reviews

The Channeling Zone: American Spirituality in an Anxious Age. By Michael F. Brown. Harvard University Press, 1997. 236 pages. $30.95 cloth.

In *Coming Back*, Raymond Moody's foray into the ever-changing menu of New Age instrumental spiritualities, the author is quite clear about his assessment of the nature and value of past-life regression. Moody, arguably the godfather of modern interest in near-death experience, is interested in its therapeutic merit, not its ontological reality. He is willing to explore past-life regression on the basis of what it can do for his clients, not on the grounds of what it is in itself or what it reveals about the nature of human life. Always carefully equivocal though, Moody writes, "speaking as a psychotherapist, I would have to say that it doesn't matter if these experiences in past-life regressions represent real past lives or not. What matters is that they are being recognized as effective tools in psychotherapy." Now, that is fine, as far as it goes, but Moody's research would be of greater interest to religion scholars if it addressed the ontological status of these phenomena.

Michael Brown's research into the phenomenon of channeling follows a vector comparable to Moody's research into past-life regression. He is not at all sure what channeling is, ontologically, but he is certain that many thousands of people are involved in North America alone. Channeling is the practice of a person—the channel—functioning as a vessel through which a noncorporeal entity, either suitably ancient or decidedly otherworldly, might interact and communicate with the material world. These communications are sometimes pedagogical, sometimes pastoral, and sometimes prophetic, depending on the context, the channel, and the entity involved. But what matters is not essence so much as effect. "When asked how they determine the validity of what they're doing once they've jettisoned the standards of science," Brown writes, "they reply that the only standard worth upholding is whether clients heal" (p. 171). While channelers and their conservative Christian detractors may disagree as to the relative benevolence of these noncorporeal beings, it is the utilitarian nature of channeling that is of ultimate interest to people. Channeling is another flavor of instrumental spirituality offered up on the dessert cart of the modern North American religious restaurant. One of the aspects of channeling which particularly interests Brown is that a "prominent scholar of religious studies"—J. Gordon Melton, although Brown identifies him only in the

endnotes—"has identified channeling as the New Age practice with the best prospects of long-term survival. In his view, channels with large followings will seek greater stability by forming groups that resemble traditional churches" (p. 187).

Divided into eight chapters, Brown's book begins with an entry into what he calls "the channeling zone," that hinterland of spirituality where the esoteric meets the mainline. A brief tour through the shallows of nineteenth-century Spiritualism brings the reader to a chapter on "Channeled Theology" (p. 38–69), which, along with "Spiritual Commerce" (p. 142–73), is one of the most engaging chapters in the book. This chapter posits that "The first and most important theological postulate of channeling is that human beings are in essence gods" (p. 47). In addition, Brown states that "[despite] occasional lapses of neutrality . . . the consensus among channels and their clients is that truth is ultimately personal and situational" (p. 43).

Holism, the belief that all elements of life exist as integral parts of a consistent whole—a whole from which we are fragmented and separated—is "another sacred postulate of channeling" (p. 48). Prefacing a rather interesting discussion of the problem of suffering in the context of channeled theology, Brown writes that "[among] channels, separation carries the emotional resonance that sin holds for evangelical Christians. Separation causes us to lose sight of our oneness with the divine, thus furthering a destructive alienation" (p. 58). Channels handle the problem of theodicy by borrowing concepts from Hinduism, Buddhism, and New Thought philosophy. "Poverty exists," for example, "because poor people think impoverished thoughts" (p. 65). That is, we choose what we will experience—good and bad—as a way of balancing past karma and resolving issues which are preventing us from evolving onto a higher spiritual plane. Of this, Brown writes, "[what] is notable about this explanatory logic is its absolute denial of the social nature of human experience. The human actor faces the world alone and must assert control over his or her life as a solitary agent. The possibility that social forces affect one's health, safety, or economic well-being never enters into the picture" (p. 68). It appears that, while lip service is paid to the oneness of all, there is an ultimate solipsism built into the system—we each have to clean up our own messes, despite the fact that those messes are often made in our lives by others.

This understanding carries over into Brown's best chapter, "Spiritual Commerce," an examination of the commodification of spirituality and the utilitarian nature of the channeling phenomenon. "Among channels," he writes, "and, for that matter, among the majority of people attracted to New Age spirituality, money's sinister face is ignored in favor of a more benevolent one. Money is viewed simply as energy" (p. 145). Since Brown notes that the majority of participants in channeling come from a middle or upper-middle class income bracket, this is, per-

haps, an easy assertion to make. As with theodicy, Brown distances himself from the incipient victim blaming inherent in the political economy of channeling: "By denying that abundance and scarcity are caused by specific social and political arrangements, advocates of prosperity consciousness [very similar to evangelical Christianity's "prosperity gospel"] appear to blame poverty on the failings of the poor" (p. 148). The chapter concludes with a very interesting discussion of "intellectual property" as it relates to channeled material. Did *you* know that "the Library of Congress recognizes spirits as independent authors" (p. 161)?

While a very entertaining read, two specific problems come to mind with respect to Brown's treatment of his topic. First, quite frustrating, is his very uneven use of supporting documentation. At one point, for example, he refers to the autobiography of Rev. Anna Swenson, a New Thought (Unity) minister and channel on whom he spends four-and-a-half pages. Yet there is no reference to her either in the endnotes or the bibliography. This documentation is especially important in the case of Swenson, since Brown uses her as his primary example of a channel whose work "preserves Christian idioms originally articulated by American spiritualists" (p. 57).

While recognizing that he is an anthropologist and not a religious studies specialist, another concern is his apparent lack of familiarity with relevant secondary literature. He states that "academic studies of alternative spirituality, especially ones based on first-hand experience are surprisingly scarce" (p. 8), indicating unfamiliarity with works by M.D. Faber, Wouter Hanegraaff, Paul Heelas, Chrissie Steyn, Mark Woodhouse, or Michael York. Yet all of these had published works relevant to his topic prior to *The Channeling Zone*'s 1997 publication.

Despite all this, *The Channeling Zone* is an accessible book. It will not become a classic in the genre, but the chapters "Channeled Theology" and "Spiritual Commerce" are well worth the time they take to read. Ultimately, like Moody, Brown tells us little of what channeling *is*, though that was not his task. He does, however, provide a very interesting glimpse into the ways the channeling phenomenon operates in modern North American culture.

Douglas Edward Cowan, The University of Calgary

Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces. Edited by Patricia Spyer. Routledge, 1998. 262 pages. $22.99 paper.

In December 1995, a conference was held at the University of Amsterdam to consider the "border fetish." The nine essays in this collection were selected from papers presented at the conference. The word fetish is a naming term used by observers from another culture for the unfamil-

iar, the exotic, the secret, the titillating, the tantalizing, and always the *other*. The fetish itself is an object from a material culture other than one's own. It invariably belongs to someone else, someone who occupies a lower social status, and is a "composite, border phenomenon" (p.1) that is valuable. It is a commodity having a particular exchange value known by persons inside the culture. The insider knows exactly what to do with the fetish and what it is good for. The fetish, the editor argues, is a necessary feature of capitalism and, therefore, the underlying theme of this collection of essays is "capitalism as a form of fetishism" (p. 248).

Four essays consider objects and associated ritual practices from faraway places. Each essay frames the contextual account of the fetish theoretically and, sometimes, complexly. Webb Keane's essay describes the familiar confusions of the ill prepared Protestant missionary who has no understanding of iconic and aniconic depictions of deities. In this particular example, the story told is that of the people of Sumba in the former Dutch East Indies and their Marapu ritual. Susan Legene gives us the story of the making of a Haarlem ethnographic museum object by the display of two *obeahs* from Surinam. *Obeahs* are small, ornamented hand brooms used ritually by Winti priests. Robert Foster's essay recounts the adaptation of "government money" (paper and coin currency) by the indigenous peoples of Papua New Guinea. They use this official currency as an augmentation to their traditional barter economy. Similarly, Annelies Moors discusses a local adaptation of the Palestinian Muslim woman's traditional bridal gift of gold to reflect changing forms of betrothal and marriage.

Four other essays suggest theoretical frameworks for European or Western instances of fetishizing. Peter Pels traces the history of the fetish in European intellectual thought to the seventeenth-century practice of assembling collections of "rarities" housed in curiosity cabinets or theaters of wonder. Adela Pinch researches the practice of shoplifting in nineteenth-century England, which she curiously defines as a "fetishist's crime" (p. 122). Spyer examines the nineteenth-century European fad for hats trimmed with the feathers of exotic, tropical birds. Finally, Michael Taussig ponders the possibility that the human face is itself fetish and source of fetishizing, "either-in-your-face exotic *or* hidden in the everyday" (p. 231).

On the whole, this collection should be of interest to area specialists and postmodern metatheorists. It suffers from two failings: the economic orientation of each essay within the whole needs to be made clearer at the outset; and other interpretations of the fetish—such as psychological or aesthetic interpretations, for example—should be mentioned even if they are not going to be considered in the stated scope of the project.

Maureen Korp, University of Ottawa

Destroying the World to Save It: Aum Shinrikyo, Apocalyptic Violence, and the New Global Terrorism. By Robert J. Lifton. Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Co., 1999. 374 pages. $16.00 paper.

To say that if Asahara and Aum Shinrikyo didn't exist Robert J. Lifton would have had to invent them would probably be terribly unfair. Nevertheless, through his study of this murderous sect, the eminent psychiatrist has been able to combine two persistent preoccupations of his prior work: 1. World-threatening technology and its sinister adulation (e.g., "nuclearism"), and 2. The dangerous "psychology of totalism." For Lifton, Aum embodies an emerging sinister convergence of relatively accessible technologies of mass mayhem such as chemical and biological warfare with fanatical groups and maniacal leaders eager to "force the end," e.g., actualizing apocalyptic religious vision through palpable mass murder.

For more than a decade, anxiety has existed over the possibility of "terrorists" employing nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons against large populations. In 1997, Mark Juergensmeyer, in an essay in *Terrorism and Political Violence* (9/2), attempted to assimilate Aum to a category of militant religious (e.g., Islamic) terrorists who attack symbols of the modern secular state such as the New York World Trade Towers. This category does not adequately describe Aum, however. Lifton affirms that Asahara definitely had an idea of eventually using chemical or biological weapons to create a setting of chaos in Japan for his own ascent to power. However, his Buddhist-Hindu-Christian syncretism notwithstanding, Asahara really had no cause beyond himself and self-deification. It is almost as if we have returned to the fictional world of the turn of the last century in which the leading nation states had to share power with an "evil genius." "Contemporary ultimate weapons," notes Lifton, "can hold a special lure for the megalomaniac guru because they enable him to feel that he alone . . . is capable of destroying the world."

But no other "megalomaniac gurus"—not Jim Jones, Charles Manson, Joseph DiMambro, Marshall Herff Applewhite, or David Koresh—took this route. The reader of *Destroying the World to Save It* will get the impression that Asahara and Aum are appallingly unique, but that key elements of their combustible mix can be seen in other recent violent "cults" including the Manson Family, the Peoples Temple, Heavens Gate, and some American racist-paramilitarist groups. The most dangerous groups, in Lifton's view, are those which combine a number of traits. These include a conception of altruistic killing-as-healing, a vision of total world or societal destruction as essential to ultimate purification and renewal, a preoccupation with weapons—particularly advanced weapons of mass destruction, and a "totalized guruism" in which devotees totally identify with the leader and seek to become his "clones."

There are also situational contingencies, although Lifton plays down external provocation by authorities and opponents (Koresh, who acted violently under extreme provocation, is excluded by Lifton from the list of hyper-sinister gurus such as Manson, Jones, and Applewhite). Lifton sees megalomaniac gurus as trying to "force the end" either by destroying the world or disrupting society, partly in response to increasing internal stresses. These stresses often entail an undermining of the guru's authority, traumatic defections (which undermine received truth claims), and other developments that suggest the possible extinction of the group and thus engender a collapse of the guru's system of "functional megalomania"—which in turn gives way to extreme paranoia.

One could quibble with some aspects of this important book. The systematic research base is slightly thin. The author tries very hard but has not entirely made this reader comprehend how intelligent and basically humane spiritual seekers could become soldiers in such a hellish army. Lifton barely mentions the Solar Temple killings, in which traumatic defections and weakening charisma clearly played a role. Indeed, although continental Western Europe was somewhat traumatized by the Temple's "transits," the order seems to be more or less off the radar screen of American writers such as Lifton or Marc Galanter in his expanded 1999 edition of *Cults: Faith, Healing, and Coercion* (Oxford). Finally, Lifton might have acknowledged more clearly that at least two components of the mass-murderous "World-Destroying Cult," absolute charismatic leadership and an apocalyptic vision of world destruction, are combined in many nonviolent sects. Lifton has a slightly annoying Afterward in which he identifies Asahara as "a caricature of present-day leaders of many countries . . . who deal with ultimate weaponry." The weapons projects of such national leaders possess merely "an illusion of sanity." Lifton here recycles from earlier writings a reductive argument which implies that those who accept some notion of nuclear "deterrence" as having kept the Cold War from exploding are enmeshed in totalistic "nuclearism" and stand only a rung or two below Aum on the ladder of madness. Crazed nuclearist I may be, but I don't see a likeness between Asahara and Henry Kissinger.

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Where Garden Meets Wilderness: Evangelical Entry into the Environmental Debate. By E. Calvin Beisner. William B. Eerdmans, 1997. 256 Pages. $18.00 paper.

The publisher's cover copy promises the reader a very different book than what one actually finds between the covers. The cover copy promises a history of the evangelical environmentalist movement—a history

"exploring both its strength and weaknesses." *Where Garden Meets Wilderness* is no history. It is a screed—repetitive and thin of content. Evidently the author has made enemies among his fellow evangelicals, antagonists who once awarded him, he tells us, the "Toxic Turkey Award of the Christian Environmental Association" (p. 82). In this book, Beisner intends to correct their misreading (he claims) of scripture with his own exegeses of key Biblical passages—and settle a few scores along the way. Less than half the book, 112 pages, is reserved for the author's text. There are five essays appended, sixty pages in all, of selections from speeches Beisner has given or reviews he has written. The bibliography is almost entirely secondary sources. Biblical citations are indexed separately from the subject index.

The primary points of the text are easily summarized. Beisner writes, "Christian faith and ethics offer the best solution to environmental problems" because the Bible prioritizes man's survival (p. 10). (The author does not use inclusive speech.) The earth itself is "cursed ground" which we are supposed to be transforming into something better (p. 20). The Bible is the "ultimate authority" for all environmental measures. The Bible does not talk about "sustainability" or a host of other matters dear to environmentalists. These are highly suspect endeavors for good "Biblical Christians." Good stewardship results in personal wealth. Beisner advises readers who doubt this to read the story of Joseph (p. 40) for proof. Ecological devastation is God's judgment on sinful people everywhere (p. 55). Global warming is good for plants (p. 82). No one ever died from carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (p. 79), nor from logging old-growth forests, nor from pesticide residues in fruits and vegetables, nor from the Exxon Valdez oil spill, and so forth.

Calvin Beisner's authority for all of the above claims is his own resolute reading of the Bible. *Where Garden Meets Wilderness* is at best a silly book, deeply flawed by circular logic, sarcasm, and ignorance. The reader is advised to pass this one by. Plant a tree instead.

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