

NOVA

RELIGIO



*The Journal of Alternative
and Emergent Religions*

VOLUME 7

NUMBER 2

NOVEMBER 2003

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Book Reviews

PUBLISHED BY UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

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Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions (ISSN 1092-6690; online ISSN 1541-8480) is published three times a year in March, July, and November by University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 94704. Postage paid at Berkeley and at additional mailing offices. Canadian GST #89626 2698 RT0001.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to *Nova Religio*, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, #303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223

Subscriptions rates are \$45 per year for individuals, \$100 per year for institutions, \$90 per year for institutions electronic-only access, \$23 per year for students and retirees. Single issues are \$18 for individuals. Subscribers outside North America, add \$20. Domestic claims for nonreceipt of issue should be made within 90 days of the month of publication, overseas claims within 180 days.

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The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1994. Manufactured in the United States of America. Printed on recycled paper.

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Enfants Terribles

The Challenge of Sectarian Converts to Ethnic Orthodox Churches in the United States

Phillip Charles Lucas

ABSTRACT: This article considers two case studies of collective conversions to Eastern Orthodoxy to illustrate the most pressing challenges faced by ethnic Orthodox congregations who attempt to assimilate sectarian groups into their midst. I argue that these challenges include: 1) the different understandings of ecclesiology held by former Protestant sectarians and by “cradle” Orthodox believers; 2) the pan-Orthodox aspirations of sectarian converts versus the factionalism found in ethnically-based American Orthodox jurisdictions; 3) the differing pastoral styles of former sectarian ministers and Orthodox priests; 4) the tendency of sectarian converts to embrace a very strict reading of Orthodoxy and to adopt a critical and reformist attitude in relations with cradle Orthodox communities; and 5) the covert and overt racism that sometimes exists in ethnic Orthodox parishes. I suggest that the increasing numbers of non-ethnic converts to ethnic Orthodox parishes may result in increased pressure to break down ethnic barriers between Orthodox communities and to form a unified American Orthodox Church. These conversions may also lead to the growth of hybrid Orthodox churches such as the Charismatic Episcopal Church.

A significant trend in recent American religious history has been the growing number of non-ethnic converts to Eastern Orthodox Churches.¹ These conversions include both individuals and whole religious communities drawn to the rich liturgies, firm moral theology, mystical spirituality, and claims to apostolic continuity offered by Orthodoxy. Noteworthy examples of such conversions over

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the past twenty years include an entire congregation of the charismatic Vineyard movement that was received into the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese in northern California; Father Ken Dunlop, pastor of Christ the Saviour Church in Anderson, South Carolina, who brought his entire parish into the Antiochian Archdiocese; Father John Kress and Father Samuel Sebring, who brought their respective parishes of conservative Episcopalians in South Carolina into the Antiochian Archdiocese; Christ the Saviour Brotherhood (formerly the Holy Order of MANS), a new religious movement headquartered in Indiana whose far-flung communities joined the Orthodox Church in America; and the Evangelical Orthodox Church, an independent evangelical alliance that brought its nationwide parishes into the Antiochian Archdiocese.²

In a paper presented at the American Academy of Religion's annual meeting, I interpreted individual Orthodox conversion narratives as a variation on the enduring theme of primitivism in American religious history.³ These narratives all had a recurring theme: converts saw themselves returning to the Age of the Apostles, to the primitive Christian community depicted in the New Testament. This return was experienced as the recovery of a lost connection with an uncorrupted deposit of original Christian doctrine, practice, and ecclesiastical organization. The primitivist impulse has been an important part of such diverse American religious communities as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Churches of Christ, Pentecostals, Primitive Baptists, and early Puritans; it appears to be a significant motivating factor for many American converts to Eastern Orthodoxy.

In its classic formulation by scholars such as Richard Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, primitivism is understood as an attempt to transcend chronological history—a history that is seen as a declension from a pristine form of Christianity.⁴ Taken in this sense, it is not surprising that those who are reared within the Orthodox Church are not drawn to the primitivist enterprise. These “cradle Orthodox” Christians grow up understanding that their church has a history, not of corruption or declension, but of careful refinement of Christian doctrine and practice. One of its main virtues, in their eyes, is that it has retained—through the heroic efforts of its many saints and martyrs—the traditions of the Apostles across the vicissitudes of history. However, while cradle Orthodox do not perceive a historical break in the apostolic tradition, converts do. In existential terms, this break has occurred in their personal religious journeys, and the discovery of Orthodoxy is experienced as a return to something pure and sacred, something that had been lost.

My earlier study of converts to Eastern Orthodoxy led me to reflect on the challenges and tensions faced by ethnic Orthodox Churches in America when sectarian communities of various stripes convert and join their ranks. These communities bring with them distinct norms, expectations, and attitudes that are not always congruent with those of their

new, cradle Orthodox families. The present study thus moves beyond individual conversion narratives and considers two case studies of collective conversions to Orthodoxy in order to illustrate the most pressing challenges faced by ethnic Orthodox congregations who attempt to assimilate “outsider” groups into their midst. I argue that these challenges include: 1) the different understandings of ecclesiology held by former Protestant sectarians and by cradle Eastern Orthodox believers, a difference that can be traced to the democratic mind of the West versus the traditional episcopal structure of Eastern Orthodox Churches; 2) the pan-Orthodox aspirations of sectarian converts versus the fierce rivalries and factionalism that exist between ethnically-based American Orthodox jurisdictions; 3) the differing pastoral styles of sectarian Protestant ministers and Eastern Orthodox priests; 4) the tendency of sectarian converts to embrace a very conservative, “over-correct” brand of Orthodoxy and to adopt a critical and reformist attitude in their relations with cradle Orthodox communities; and 5) the covert and overt racism that sometimes exists in ethnic Orthodox parishes. This study also suggests that in the future, the growing numbers of non-ethnic converts to ethnic Orthodox parishes may result in increased pressure to break down ethnic barriers between Orthodox communities and to form a unified American Orthodox Church. These conversions may also lead to the growth of hybrid Orthodox Churches such as the Charismatic Episcopal Church, which seeks to attract Americans from charismatic, Pentecostal, and evangelical backgrounds into its traditionally Orthodox liturgical and doctrinal communities.

THE EVANGELICAL ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE BEN LOMOND CRISIS

In early 1987, some 2,000 members of the Evangelical Orthodox Church were received into the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of North America, the largest mass conversion to Orthodoxy in North American history. The leaders of the convert community were former Protestant ministers with backgrounds in Young Life, Campus Crusade for Christ, and Youth for Christ, and degrees from such evangelical institutions as Fuller Seminary, Oral Roberts University, and Wheaton College. In 1973, these campus evangelists joined together to investigate what had happened to the historical church of the New Testament. Through a careful examination of church history, they realized that their understanding of the Christian tradition had a huge gap—from roughly 95 to 1517 C.E. They also came to believe that Christian worship had been liturgical from the earliest period of documented Christian history, that the early church fathers had accepted the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic gifts, and that episcopal orders of clergy dated back to the first century C.E. From 1976-79, this small community of

evangelicals established churches around the country under the name, New Covenant Apostolic Order, and began incorporating Orthodox liturgies and sacraments into their worship. In February 1979 the group changed its name to the Evangelical Orthodox Church (EOC) and instituted an episcopal form of governance with ordained presbyters and deacons. Female deacons were part of this system, although they were not allowed to play a liturgical role in the church. The church's largest centers were in Indianapolis, Memphis, Santa Cruz County and Santa Barbara, California, and Anchorage. Beginning in the early 1980s, the EOC began to negotiate with canonical Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States for eventual full communion. After a number of false starts, the group's 33 parishes were accepted into the Antiochian Archdiocese by Metropolitan Philip on 15 February 1987. Most of the 71 priests and 19 bishops of the EOC received canonical ordination as part of the agreement with Philip.⁵

The EOC's congregation in Ben Lomond, California, Ss. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, ran into difficulties with Auxiliary Bishop Joseph of the Antiochian West Coast Chancery in Los Angeles beginning in September 1996. At that time, Bishop Joseph expressed his desire to reduce the number of clergy at Ben Lomond (which at the time was 29) through transfers and laicization. This attempt to bring the Ben Lomond congregation into line with normative Antiochian clerical practice caused a great deal of confusion among members, since the church was a tight-knit community that had collectively undergone its journey to Orthodoxy over a number of years. Bishop Joseph also removed Ben Lomond's founding pastor, Father John Hardenbrook, from his position as dean of the Northern California Deanery during this period, a move that was widely viewed as retaliation against Hardenbrook for his article, "Phyletism or Freedom!" which was published in the parish's weekly newsletter. This article criticized tribalism and ethnocentrism in the Eastern Orthodox churches in North America and made it clear that Hardenbrook supported his parish's right to choose rites and music from "the great banquet of Orthodox traditions in the world."⁶

In May 1997, Bishop Joseph issued a liturgical directive ordering all former EOC parishes to begin using the official service books and liturgical music of the archdiocese, rather than those that had been approved for the EOC's usage when the church was first received into the Antiochian communion. The change was to occur within two years and reflected Bishop Joseph's intention to bring the former EOC churches into line with accepted Antiochian liturgical practice. Because of its unusual journey to Orthodoxy, the EOC had drawn from other Orthodox traditions, including Russian and Greek, in developing its own versions of Orthodox liturgies and music.⁷

This second directive was hugely unpopular with much of the clergy and laity in Ben Lomond and compounded the unease that had arisen

following the earlier directive concerning transfers and laicization. In communications with Metropolitan Philip, the disgruntled clergy quoted Bishop Joseph's words to them in 1991 stating that he did not want their church to become like any traditional Orthodox parish—whether Russian, Antiochian, Serbian, Bulgarian, or Greek. The local presbytery finally issued a statement to its parishioners declaring that it did not intend to make additional changes in the church's liturgical life. A small group of parishioners, angered by this response, accused the parish priests of disloyalty in private communications with Bishop Joseph. Although a truce was called between the contending factions in September 1997, unresolved tensions erupted in full on 6 February 1998, when one of Ben Lomond's most popular priests, David Anderson, received word from the auxiliary bishop in charge of parish assignments that he was being reassigned to an Antiochian mission in Chicago. This attempted reassignment was seen by many parishioners as a direct attack on the parish and its liturgical life. It was also viewed as a cold-hearted act because Anderson was caring for his invalid mother with the help of other parishioners. Anderson appealed the decision and was told by auxiliary Bishop Antoun that he was putting the care of his mother above the service of God. At this point, Anderson requested a release from his affiliation with the Antiochians so that he could begin working as a priest within the Orthodox Church in America (OCA).⁸

On 12 February 1998, ten of the church's twelve priests and eleven of its seventeen deacons fired off an angry letter to Metropolitan Philip detailing the many actions taken by Bishops Joseph and Antoun that had caused them to lose their trust in the jurisdiction's ecclesiastical leadership. The letter also stated what the pastors saw as the underlying cause of the problems between Ss. Peter and Paul and the Antiochian Archdiocese:

The outward expressions of our church's life, whether liturgical, social, musical, or governmental, reflect a vision that has never attempted to exactly reproduce any one of the prevailing systems normative in contemporary Orthodoxy in North America. We were encouraged in 1987 to presume that there was room for this approach within the Antiochian Archdiocese. We fear this is no longer the case. Pressure has been placed on us for some years now to make our liturgical services conform to the prevailing practice of North American Antiochian Orthodoxy. We have developed a liturgical life over many years now that is truly the heart and soul of our parish . . . it has been the catalyst for many . . . to embrace the Orthodox faith.⁹

The letter concluded by asking Philip to grant the ten priests and eleven deacons a release from the Antiochian Archdiocese so that they might be received into the Orthodox Church in America. About 60 percent of the laity signed a petition in support of this request.

Metropolitan Philip responded by announcing the immediate laicization of John Hardenbrook and David Anderson for inciting rebellion against their bishops. He also suspended the other twenty clergy who had signed the letter. A priest who had not signed the petition was ordered to change the locks on the doors to the church, effectively closing the church for the immediate future. The defrocked and suspended clergy and their loyal parishioners—who numbered about 300—began attending St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in America (OCA) parish in nearby Saratoga and petitioned to be officially received into the OCA archdiocese. Because of the increase in attendees at St. Nicholas' Sunday Divine Liturgy, an earlier service was added to accommodate the former Ben Lomond parishioners.¹⁰

In the meantime, the Antiochian Archdiocese sued the Ben Lomond parish corporation, which held title to the church property, and on 20 August 1998, the archdiocese was awarded control of all the church's property and bank accounts. The minority group who remained loyal to the Antiochian Archdiocese was given control of the property. The court decision resulted in the closure of the seven-year-old parish school after the reconstituted parish council rejected a request from the splinter group to use the school facilities until a suitable replacement building could be found.¹¹

When it became clear that the suspended Ben Lomond priests would not be accepted as priests by the OCA, the group sought out a priest from the Jerusalem Patriarchate for assistance. This priest began celebrating the Divine Liturgy for the splinter group at a private chapel in Felton, California, in February 1999. Over the past three years, two priests from the splinter community have been ordained by the Jerusalem Patriarchate. They serve the splinter group's new church, Saint Lawrence Chapel, and its school, located in Felton. The suspended and defrocked clergy from Ss. Peter and Paul remain in ecclesiastical limbo, with the Antiochian hierarchs unwilling to release the renegade priests from their jurisdictional authority. Some of these clergy have continued their struggle for independence under the auspices of the Brotherhood of St. Nektarios.¹²

THE BEN LOMOND INCIDENT: ANALYSIS

The Ben Lomond incident highlights several significant dimensions of tension and challenge that face sectarian communities who convert to Eastern Orthodoxy. The first has to do with the collision of subcultures that inevitably occurs when a tight-knit sectarian community such as the EOC attempts to merge with an ethnically-based community such as the Antiochian Orthodox Church. During the development over time of any sectarian community, emotional bonds are formed between members, beliefs are elaborated, and rituals of worship are created that

in time become trusted pathways for spiritual experience. The difficulty this presents for converts to an ethnic Orthodox communion is more subtle than at first may seem to be the case. In the case of the EOC, an idiosyncratic blend of liturgical practices and sacred music had been developed during a long religious journey. This unique blend of liturgy and music gave the community a profound sense of common identity and spiritual cohesion. The assurances the EOC received from the Antiochian bishops—that there was room for these liturgies and music within the Antiochian communion—was a linchpin of the group's decision to join the jurisdiction. When these practices were proscribed by Bishop Joseph in an attempt to enforce uniformity with normative Antiochian practice, it precipitated a crisis of spiritual identity for the group, and a majority closed ranks behind their clergy to defend the community's integrity. Significantly, the loyalty of a majority of these new converts was to their own community's leadership, not to the ethnic hierarchs of their new jurisdiction. This development does not bode well for future conflicts between groups of American sectarian converts and their jurisdictional leadership.

The sectarian foundation and tendencies of the Ben Lomond community appeared again as the splinter group attempted to merge with the OCA parish in Saratoga. The splinter group attended its own services at the church, celebrated its own liturgies, and was unresponsive to requests to fill out the church's membership forms and pledge cards. In a letter to the group, presiding OCA Bishop Tikhon insisted that former Ben Lomond members discontinue their practice of regarding themselves as a separate community distinct from the St. Nicholas parish and that all members of the church celebrate the same liturgy. Faced with this threat to their communal liturgical identity and unable to find a secure ecclesiastical standing for their priests within the OCA communion, the splinter community maintained its integrity by creating a separate church under the auspices of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. This independent-minded trajectory betrays the group's Protestant and congregational roots.¹³

A second aspect of this collision of subcultures has to do with ecclesiastical authority. Persons reared in the Protestant tradition are often deeply inculcated with the principle of freedom of individual religious conscience. Whereas the default mode for cradle Orthodox is to submit to the authority of their bishops, the default mode for evangelical Protestants is to make up their own minds in religious matters. In the Ben Lomond incident, this deep Protestant conditioning came to the fore, allowing a majority of the clergy to follow their consciences and to oppose openly the directives of their ruling bishop. When matters came to a head, they exercised their belief in individual religious freedom and chose to disaffiliate themselves from the Antiochians. This is not to say that cradle Orthodox always agree with their bishops, only that their dis-

agreements are likely to result at most in a transfer of a priest to another church or of a bishop to another diocese—or perhaps in the choice to attend another church within the same jurisdiction. One of the principle reasons for this measured response to conflict is that a cradle Orthodox's ethnic jurisdiction is the community with whose customs, practices, language, and culture they are most strongly identified. A move away from this community would leave the congregant without a familiar and secure social support network—too high a price to pay for most cradle Orthodox.

Orthodox converts from Protestant backgrounds are not influenced by these larger ethnic considerations. For them, the authority issue is paramount. As one parishioner told me, blind obedience to bishops leads to a tyrannical style of leadership and arbitrary exercises of authority. Orthodoxy needed to reconsider the role of bishops, who, in his view, had become earthly administrators more than spiritual pastors. The echoes of the Reformation could still be heard in this former Protestant.¹⁴

Another area of tension highlighted in the Ben Lomond incident is the difficulty sectarian converts to Orthodoxy have with the *realpolitik* of ethnically-based American Orthodoxy. The tendency of many converts is to adopt a more pan-Orthodox attitude that seeks an authentic Orthodox “essence” that transcends jurisdictional customs and infighting. The Ben Lomond community's attempt to adopt what they judged to be the best that the various Orthodox liturgical traditions had to offer—rather than copying one particular expression of Orthodox worship—illustrates this tendency. Converts are also likely to view many ethnic Orthodox customs and practices as culturally idiosyncratic, peripheral, and easily separated from the “transcendent” treasures of Orthodoxy, such as its theology and dogma, its festal calendar, its mystical spirituality, and its ancient liturgical forms. Converts are especially repulsed by jurisdictional bickering and politicking and are profoundly discouraged when they perceive their bishops acting out of political expediency rather than spiritual principle. After all, another important motivation for sectarian conversions to Orthodoxy is the perception that the Orthodox Church is whole and undivided, in contradistinction to the fragmented state of contemporary Protestantism. The convert's primary loyalty is not to an ethnic group, but to Orthodoxy as a seamless, universal religious community.

The Orthodox Church in America, which has ethnic Russian roots, has gone further than other Orthodox communities in welcoming Americans from diverse ethnic backgrounds into its ranks and in seeking unity between Orthodox jurisdictions. In his primatial address to the thirteenth All-America Council in July 2002, Metropolitan Theodosius reminded OCA members of how much their church has changed in his lifetime. In 1967 he was the only American-born member of the epis-

copate. In 2002 most of the OCA's bishops were American-born, and fully half of the bishops were converts who entered the church as adults out of theological conviction. The Metropolitan also boldly proclaimed:

the Orthodox Church is not confined or limited by factors of ethnicity, or culture, or language. This means that Orthodoxy in America is not restricted to Russians, or Greeks, or Rumanians, or Albanians, or Bulgarians, but is for all people. . . . The only fully canonical and fully traditional way of ordering the Orthodox Church's life in North America will be the full unity of all Orthodox in one Church, with one hierarchy meeting in one Holy Synod.¹⁵

In some OCA parishes in the western United States, as much as 75 percent of the membership is non-Russian. OCA parishes in California make explicit their desire to transcend ethnic boundaries. St. Nicholas OCA parish in San Anselmo, to cite one instance, acknowledges on its website the "unique challenges" it faces bringing its different constituencies together. These include "second wave" Russian emigrés from Western Europe and the Far East, transplants from ethnic parishes in the eastern and midwestern United States, recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and "committed Christians of various non-Orthodox denominations" who are among "the most active members of the parish." The church proclaims that "every local church is called to be Orthodox in faith and truly 'catholic' in the sense of being capable of embracing everyone who seeks Christ." The Protection of the Holy Virgin OCA parish in Santa Rosa projects a similarly pan-Orthodox attitude. It describes itself as a "'microcosm' of Orthodoxy in America" which has been "enriched by the customs of Greek, Arabic, Rumanian, and Eritrean" members, as well as those of "other diverse backgrounds," including Protestant American converts. The church sees its special vocation as "grafting all these twigs" onto the Orthodox branch. Whether the OCA's outreach has been successful in building the church is another matter. In a Chancellor's Report delivered by Father Robert Kondratik to OCA bishops in 1997, it was revealed that church membership had been decreasing since 1989—in spite of increased missionary outreach.¹⁶

The pan-Orthodox tendency of sectarian converts can be seen in one other aspect of the Ben Lomond incident. Both clergy and laity from Ben Lomond were in the practice of seeking counsel from spiritual directors who were members of other Orthodox jurisdictions. In certain cases, these spiritual directors were counseling the Ben Lomond parishioners to defy the stated directives of the Antiochian bishops. In one of their directives, the Antiochian bishops specifically instructed the Ben Lomond clergy and laity to avoid placing themselves under the influence of any spiritual director who was not a member of the Antiochian

archdiocese. Such episcopal directives contradict the tendency of sectarian converts to see Orthodoxy as a transcendent unity and to follow their consciences when seeking spiritual counsel.¹⁷

A final aspect of the Ben Lomond incident that illustrates tensions between converts and cradle Orthodox is the role that Orthodox priests serve when compared with Protestant ministers. The primary role of the Orthodox priest is to serve the sacraments and conduct the traditional liturgies. Pastoral counseling on an ongoing basis for church members is often a hit or miss proposition. In contrast, the priests at Ben Lomond and in other convert Orthodox congregations adopt a more Protestant style of ministry. This includes entering into a dynamic relationship of spiritual counseling with each member of the community and making a concerted effort to consider the recommendations and criticisms of the parish membership on all aspects of corporate life. Church members used to this quality of ministerial attention and relationship may be loath to leave their long-standing pastors for the unfamiliar ministerial style of an ethnic Orthodox clergyman. The traditional distance maintained between Orthodox clergy and their parishioners may also be uncomfortable to Protestant converts used to a more familiar and egalitarian relationship with their minister.

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR BROTHERHOOD

A second case study illustrates several more important points of tension between sectarian converts and ethnic Orthodox jurisdictions. In 1988, 750 members of Christ the Saviour Brotherhood (CSB) were baptized and accepted into the independent Orthodox Archdiocese of Queens, New York. The brotherhood began its institutional life in 1968 as the Holy Order of MANS (HOOM), a nondenominational “Christian mystery school” that looked at first glance like a Roman Catholic suborder. Order members took lifetime vows of humility, service, poverty, chastity, and obedience, lived in common, dressed in clerical garb, and espoused teachings that were an eclectic mix of esoteric Christianity, Eastern mysticism, and Western occultism. The order’s mission was to prepare humanity for a coming Golden Age of spiritual enlightenment through a rigorous program of initiatory spiritual unfoldment. Part of the brotherhood’s millennial ethos included a commitment to social service ministries, the most prominent of which were shelters for the homeless and for victims of domestic violence that were established throughout the United States. The group’s worldview—which combined esoteric wisdom, personal revelation, and progressive millennialism—would come to be labeled as “New Age” during the 1980s. By the time its founder, Earl Blighton, died in 1974, the order had about 3,000 members divided into both renunciate and lay branches. The group’s teaching stations, homeless shelters, youth hostels and seminaries were

located in 48 states and in countries including Holland, Germany, Argentina, Spain, and Japan.¹⁸

Blighton's death began a four-year leadership struggle that ended when Vincent Rossi became the group's director general in 1978. Following the Jonestown mass suicide in November 1978, the order was labeled a "dangerous cult" by the anticult movement. It immediately began building stronger ties to mainstream Christian denominations, a move consistent with the more modest ecumenical outreach of the early order. Between 1978-88, the group undertook a painstaking search for its roots in the historical Christian tradition. After brief flirtations with evangelical Protestantism and Roman Catholic traditionalism, the brotherhood discovered Eastern Orthodoxy and believed it had found the historical heart of authentic Christian spirituality. When the order's leadership tried to find a jurisdictional home within the mainstream Orthodox Churches, they discovered that these churches were suspicious of the brotherhood's heterodox roots. In several instances, Orthodox bishops demanded that members renounce their past beliefs and join ethnic parishes as separate individuals. Having become a tight-knit community of families over the years, the brotherhood was not willing to take this radical step. The order's leadership was also not willing to relinquish control of the considerable assets they had accumulated during the group's 20-year life span.¹⁹

The order solved this quandary by coming to terms with an independent Orthodox jurisdiction led by Metropolitan Pangratos Vrionis, a defrocked Greek Orthodox priest who had managed to gain episcopal ordination in the early 1970s from three Orthodox bishops—an exiled Russian, an Albanian, and a Romanian who was the purported confessor to the Romanian royal family. Pangratos was willing to receive the order into his church and to give its priests Orthodox ordinations, without requiring that the group dissolve its communities or give up its assets. The union between Pangratos and the newly renamed Christ the Saviour Brotherhood took place in 1988. The immediate problem was that Pangratos' church was not recognized by the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) and thus not in communion with most ethnic Orthodox parishes.²⁰

Moreover, the most influential figure in the order's conversion was Abbott Herman Podmoshensky, a maverick monk who had been suspended by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) in 1984 and defrocked in 1988 for insubordination. In spite of his differences with its bishops, ROCOR—known for its uncompromising anti-Communism and its rejection of Christian ecumenism and other modernist tendencies within the larger Orthodox communion—had a profound influence on Father Herman's style of Orthodoxy. Another significant influence on Podmoshensky was the piety and austerity of the Russian monastic tradition. The monk practiced this traditional

asceticism at the St. Herman of Alaska monastery he and Father Seraphim Rose founded in Platina, California, in 1968. Because Podmoshensky owned the monastery's property, he successfully avoided appearing for trial before his bishops throughout the period that he was under suspension by ROCOR.²¹

CSB's ecclesiastical relationship with two defrocked priests led to a rocky relationship with the larger Orthodox world during the 1990s. The brotherhood's priests were not recognized by mainstream Orthodox Churches, and its members were not allowed to receive communion in most Orthodox congregations in the United States. Many ethnic Orthodox believers and clergy went on record with their belief that CSB was a fraudulent organization and that it remained secretly committed to its former esoteric worldview.²² Father Nikolai Soraich, chancellor of the OCA's Diocese of the West, declared that his church did not recognize either Pangratos or Podmoshensky as priests, citing their defrocking by their respective churches. With regard to CSB, he said, "We don't consider that any kind of Orthodox church." Bishop Tikhon of the OCA's Diocese of the West disavowed any relationship with CSB and stated, "I believe that the former Abbot Herman and those with him have developed a prejudice against episcopal authority. . . . This prejudice and its fruits are tragedies." CBS's website did not help matters when it declared, "Administrative and organizational structures may serve Christ's Church, but do not alone comprise her. . . . This is especially true of the Orthodox Church in the New World, which suffers presently from the canonical irregularity of multi-jurisdictionalism and from the strong attack of anti-Christian forces."²³

CSB's continued affiliation with Podmoshensky caused a flare of controversy in the late 1990s with ROCOR. In a 1998 issue of the St. Herman of Alaska Monastery's serial publication, *The Orthodox Word*, Monk Damascene Christenson charged that, in the wake of the Ben Lomond incident, Satan was using "legitimate Orthodox hierarchs and clergy to destroy pockets of believers who are truly practicing their Orthodox faith."²⁴ These hierarchs, he contended, were being used by Satan to quote Orthodox saints and church canons to carry out his destructive work. When the canons were used as weapons with which to amass property, money, and power in jurisdictional warfare, Damascene concluded, they became a travesty. These polemical pyrotechnics caused an uproar in ROCOR circles and further problematized CSB's affiliation with Podmoshensky. The abbot's long-standing contention that all ecclesiastical organizations would ultimately bow down to the Antichrist, that during the Antichrist's reign all true Orthodox Christians in America would be considered uncanonical by church hierarchs and persecuted like the catacomb Christians of old, and that CSB had a mission to save Orthodoxy from its worldliness and internecine warfare, also caused difficulties for CSB converts in the wider American Orthodox community.²⁵

CSB's extra-canonical difficulties stemming from its association with Pangratos and Podmoshensky appear to have been largely resolved over the past seven years. CSB left Pangratos' jurisdiction when it received documented proof of his indictment and conviction for sodomy with minors in 1968 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.²⁶ Beginning in September 1995, individual parishes in the CSB orbit negotiated acceptance into the OCA, with re-baptisms and re-ordinations for members and priests. The largest number of parishes, six, was received into the OCA Western Diocese in November 2000. Monks and nuns associated with both CSB and the St. Herman of Alaska and St. Paisius monasteries joined the Serbian Orthodox Western Diocese in Spring 2001. However, brotherhood members who have joined mainstream Orthodox Churches such as the OCA are sometimes regarded with suspicion by ethnic parishioners because of their heterodox past.²⁷ Incidents of sexual impropriety by ex-order members in mainstream Orthodox parishes have only heightened these suspicions and fears.

In one instance at Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco, a one-time Holy Order of MANS member and convicted pedophile joined the church and was discovered to have molested several children between 1989 and 1991. In the wake of this discovery, a church member who was deeply offended by the OCA hierarchy's handling of the problem started the Orthodox People for True Shepherds, whose mission is to bring about sweeping reforms in the training of Orthodox priests—especially with regard to general pastoral counseling and dealing with sexual abuse. This parishioner has also publicly questioned the acceptance into the church of former HOOM/CSB members as well as their rapid advancement into positions of authority at Holy Trinity Cathedral. She charges that order priests have had insufficient seminary training and that they may have failed to alert the church concerning the pedophile's background because they, too, were involved in the molestations. Clearly, this parishioner and many others consider former order members to be a foreign and possibly dangerous subset within their congregations.²⁸

A final area of tension encountered by CSB members has to do with the issue of racism. Several of the brotherhood's priests and nuns are African Americans. These clergypersons have organized the Brotherhood of Saint Moses the Black and sponsored conferences to relate the ancient values of African Orthodox Christianity to the problems that affect African American families and communities. A subtext of these conferences is the desire to attract African Americans to Eastern Orthodoxy and to create a congenial place for African American converts in the larger American Orthodox community.²⁹ The jury is still out on how these efforts will be received by ethnic Orthodox Churches, but in at least several instances, ethnic Orthodox parishioners have voiced strong opposition to groups of Caribbean immigrants joining their

congregations. In one example, in Danbury, Connecticut, an evangelical-turned-Antiochian priest converted a group of Caribbean immigrants and was subsequently sent packing by powerful parishioners who told him, "We don't want those niggers."³⁰

THE CSB SAGA: ANALYSIS

The CSB saga illustrates three additional challenges that face ethnic Orthodox churches when sectarian converts join their ranks. The first of these is the tendency of some converts to embrace a very conservative, "over-correct" brand of Orthodoxy, and to become zealots with regard to such issues as fasting, the length and frequency of liturgies, and opposition to ecumenism. In some instances, converts to groups such as ROCOR, the Old Calendar Greek Church, or Abbot Herman's St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood become stern critics of ethnic Orthodox church life. In various forums they rail against these churches' worldliness, laxity of spiritual practice, and parochial obsessions with purely cultural elements of worship or custom. To cite one prominent example, the former evangelical anti-abortion activist Franky Schaeffer, in his 1996 commencement address at ROCOR's seminary in Jordanville, New York, declared, "If Orthodoxy is the hidden treasure in the Western world, then monasticism is surely the heart of that hidden treasure, hidden from even the busyness of so much supposed and so-called Orthodoxy around us that is really nothing more than a social club these days in this country."³¹ Bishop Auxentios, a Protestant convert to the Old Calendar Greek Church, issued a similar indictment in his personal conversion narrative:

One of the most paradoxical things that I have encountered is the lack of knowledge among many Orthodox of their own religion. . . . It is a lamentable fact . . . [that] many Orthodox have capitulated to the world and indeed have the greatest rancor for those traditionalist Orthodox who, by the contrast they present in their practice of the Faith, convict these modernists of breaking with the fullness of Holy Tradition.³²

This critical and reformist attitude does not endear these converts to ethnic parishioners, who are offended by the seeming arrogance of newcomers standing in judgment of their elders. Cradle Orthodox are also sometimes threatened by the zeal of former sectarians, who bring a serious commitment to living the gospel in all aspects of their lives—including evangelizing those outside the local ethnic community and engaging in active social service ministries in the larger society. CSB's avowed mission, for example, is strongly evangelistic. The brotherhood dedicates itself to inspiring, training, and supporting "missionaries and missionary activity, with the goal of bringing souls to Christ."³³ Such

active Protestant-style evangelization of non-ethnic Christians has historically had a very low priority in the Greek, ROCOR, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Romanian Orthodox Churches in America, whose more pressing mission has been to preserve the cultural and ethnic integrity of their own communities.

A second problem illustrated by the CSB experience is the naïveté of sectarian converts with regard to the welter of conflicting ethnic factions within the American Orthodox community. The situation of American Orthodoxy is unique in the world, and most non-ethnic converts to Orthodoxy have little idea when they join an Orthodox jurisdiction of the deep historical animosities and agendas that motivate cradle Orthodox. Certainly, CSB was naïve in thinking that it would be accepted by other jurisdictions when its official connection with the Orthodox communion was through two defrocked priests with questionable ecclesiastical credentials.

In many cases, converts become disillusioned with the Byzantine complexity of American Orthodox ecclesiastical life and are tempted to join splinter groups that claim to transcend the discouraging realpolitik of Orthodox internecine warfare. Monk Damascene articulates this disillusionment:

We American Orthodox Christians are now coming of age. Previously we had looked around in wonder, idealistically. Having found the true Church of Christ we had thought to find it embodied in the respected, accepted, canonical . . . figures who claim to represent the Church. But now the moment of shock is upon us. Now we begin to see what goes on behind the scenes. Now we come face to face with the prince of this world hiding behind the mask of canonical righteousness, with the power and wealth of this world at his disposal.³⁴

The danger is that in their disillusionment, converts will carry their sectarian tendencies into the heart of the Orthodox Church, demanding sweeping reforms and risking a further fragmentation of the American Orthodox community.

CSB tried to deal with the fragmentation of American Orthodoxy by remaining self-governing and distancing itself from the administrative and organizational structures of ethnic jurisdictions. It proclaimed that in the face of canonical irregularity and multi-jurisdictionalism, “we cannot as a group limit the scope of our activity or membership to any one jurisdiction of the Orthodox faithful.”³⁵ The brotherhood’s intent was not to form separate congregations but to encourage the spiritual striving of its members. In its evangelical and service outreaches, it asked the blessings of all Orthodox patriarchs, bishops, and righteous ones. This independent and anti-hierarchical stance clearly reflected the sectarian roots of its members.

A final challenge illustrated by the CSB saga is the problem of racism. It is a sad fact that many ethnic subcultures in the United States harbor either overtly or covertly racist attitudes with regard to other ethnic subcultures. Although the roots of these attitudes may be entwined with legitimate concerns about maintaining a distinct ethnic identity in America's homogenizing cultural environment, the fact remains that attempts to integrate ethnically-based Orthodox churches are likely to meet with strong resistance from parishioners. American converts from Protestant or sectarian communities that are multi-ethnic may boldly confront the racist attitudes they encounter in their new churches, exacerbating the other tensions this article has addressed.

CONCLUSION

I want to suggest two future trends that we may expect with regard to sectarian American converts and their relationship to ethnic Orthodox jurisdictions. First, it is likely that many Americans who are attracted to a liturgical tradition may simply avoid the murky world of Orthodox jurisdictional and ethnic politics altogether and join independent church movements such as the Charismatic Episcopal Church. This church was founded in 1992 by a group of former Pentecostals and charismatics who wanted a more direct connection with the liturgical and theological tradition of the Christian church. The new denomination has over 1,100 parishes under its auspices in 23 countries around the world and is attracting a wide spectrum of former Protestant congregations into its ranks. Although the church is indistinguishable theologically from mainstream Orthodox churches, it rejects Orthodoxy's exclusivist ecclesiology and continues to value its evangelical and charismatic roots, seeing them as authentic aspects of the early apostolic church that have been largely forgotten within Eastern Orthodoxy. The church makes its broad appeal explicit in its mission statement: "The Charismatic Episcopal Church exists to make visible the Kingdom of God to the nations of the world; to bring the rich sacramental and liturgical life of the early church to searching evangelicals and charismatics; to carry the power of Pentecost to our brothers and sisters in the historic churches; and finally, to provide a home for all Christians who seek a liturgical-sacramental, evangelical, charismatic church and a foundation for their lives and gifts of ministry."³⁶ Because of its appeal to a broad spectrum of American Christians, churches of this type are the most likely way that sectarians and Protestants will be drawn to the Orthodox tradition in any significant numbers. The number of these churches is growing, as is the number of independent Orthodox churches that are splinters from the more recognized Orthodox jurisdictions.³⁷

A second likely trend is that non-ethnic converts, lacking the ethno-

centric attitudes and motivations of their fellow parishioners, will begin to exert pressure on their churches to join with other Orthodox churches in a kind of pan-Orthodoxy in America. The number of converts in the OCA already makes them a strong voice in future church direction, and both the OCA and the Antiochians have taken the lead in inter-Orthodox and interdenominational ecumenism. This trend, though likely successful in the long term, will be challenged in the short term by the new waves of Russian, Albanian, and Romanian immigrants that are creating new ethnic enclaves in such urban areas as Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, and Brooklyn. Although these immigrants appear to have rather weak religious commitments, they may follow past waves of American immigrants and embrace their traditional churches as strongholds of ethnic solidarity. To the extent that they do so, they will come into conflict with the pan-Orthodox aspirations of sectarian converts. In spite of these short-term problems, however, it is likely that the progressive assimilation of second- and third-generation ethnic Orthodox into American culture will gradually dissolve the most powerful barriers between ethnic Orthodox churches and the American sectarian converts who join them.

ENDNOTES

¹ Eastern Orthodox Churches are typically national churches in Europe: e.g., the Russian Orthodox Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Antiochian Orthodox Church. When members of these churches immigrated to the United States, they tended to create enclaves where, for example, Russians lived and worshiped together. Thus, I term these churches “ethnic” Orthodox churches. Non-ethnic converts encompass Americans from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds who are not descendants of Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Serb, Greek, or Syrian immigrants.

² For a fuller investigation of Baby Boomers and Generation X-ers who have chosen more traditional religious communities, see Richard Cimino, *Against the Stream: The Adoption of Traditional Christian Faiths by Young Adults* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1996); Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Colleen Carroll, *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002); and Frederica Mathewes-Green, *Facing East: A Pilgrim’s Journey into the Mysteries of Orthodoxy* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997).

³ Phillip Charles Lucas, “Protestant Christians Who Become Eastern Orthodoxy Converts: Variations on a Primitivist Theme,” paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Francisco, California, November 1997.

⁴ See Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

⁵ Jon E. Braun, “Historical Sketch of the Evangelical Orthodox Church,” unpublished article, n.d.; Charles W. Moore, “The Strange Case of How 2,000 Protestant Evangelicals

- Ended Up Joining the Orthodox Church," <<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/3071/toc.html>>, accessed February 1999.
- ⁶ Letter from John Hardenbrook and his fellow priests to Metropolitan Philip, 12 February 1998; Father John Hardenbrook, "Phyletism or Freedom!" *The Grapevine*, the weekly newsletter of Ss. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, 29 August 1997.
- ⁷ Hardenbrook, "Phyletism or Freedom!"
- ⁸ Hardenbrook, "Phyletism or Freedom!" The OCA has its roots in the Russian Patriarchate and its early missions to Alaska. The OCA gained recognition as an autocephalous church in 1970. Today the church includes American descendants of various Russian, Ukrainian, Aleut, Eskimo, and Tlingit communities as well as some members of Albanian, Bulgarian, and Romanian episcopates in the United States.
- ⁹ Hardenbrook, letter to Metropolitan Philip.
- ¹⁰ Metropolitan Philip, Archpastoral Directive to Clergy and Laity of Ss. Peter and Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church, 14 February 1998; Mark Swearingen, "Anatomy of a Church Split," <<http://www.BenLomondArchives.org>>, accessed 29 March 1998; Mark Swearingen, interview with author, Watsonville, California, 19 September 1999.
- ¹¹ Email dated 28 August 1998 from Mark Swearingen to academy@ephesus.com (St. Theophan Academy).
- ¹² Respondent who wishes to remain anonymous, interview with author, Ben Lomond, California, 8 July 2002. The Brotherhood of St. Nektarios' website address is <<http://www.nektarios.org/sys-tmpl/door/>>, accessed 12 November 2002. According to this website, the St. Nektarios Brotherhood is a "trans-jurisdictional, Eastern Orthodox Christian organization of laity, clergy, and monastics with worldwide representation. The goal of the Brotherhood is to present, dispassionately, accurate information regarding critical situations within American Orthodoxy which must be made known in order to be healed."
- ¹³ Email dated 26 August 1998 from Mark Swearingen to SsPPCrisis@ephesus.com (Saints Peter and Paul Crisis).
- ¹⁴ Mark Swearingen, interview with author, Watsonville, California, 19 September 1999.
- ¹⁵ Primatial Address of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius, at Thirteenth All-American Council, Orlando, Florida, 22 July 2002. published on the Orthodox Church in America website, <<http://www.orthodoxnews.com/doodad.fcgi?tcode=10&story=oca7282002204958.shtml>>.
- ¹⁶ St. Nicholas OCA parish website, <<http://www.stnicholasmarin.org>>, accessed September 1999; Protection of the Holy Virgin Church website, <<http://www.oca.org/pages/directory/listing.asp?KEY=OCA-WE-STSPHV>>, accessed September 1999; "Holy Synod Declares 1998 Year of Church Growth and Missionary Outreach," <<http://www.oca.org/OCA/Press-Releases/OCA-HolySynod-1997-Fall.html>>, accessed 24 October 1997; Father Matthew Tate, interview with author, 12 February 1999, Milwaukee, Oregon.
- ¹⁷ "Notes from the 7 May 1997 Meeting of the Antiochian Bishops," <<http://www.BenLomondArchives.org>>, accessed 29 March 1998.
- ¹⁸ Phillip Charles Lucas, *The Odyssey of a New Religion: The Holy Order of MANS from New Age to Orthodoxy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 1-3.
- ¹⁹ Lucas, *Odyssey of a New Religion*, 213-16.
- ²⁰ Lucas, *Odyssey of a New Religion*, 214-15.
- ²¹ Lucas, *Odyssey of a New Religion*, 195-231.
- ²² Don Lattin, "Suddenly Orthodox," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 31 May 1992, 1-11, This World; Hieromonk Jonah Paffhausen, "The Doors of Repentance: The Journey of the Holy Order of MANS/Christ the Savior Brotherhood and the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood into the Canonical Orthodox Church," *Again*, 23, no. 1 (January-March 2001) at <<http://www.orthodoxnews.com/doodad.fcgi?tcode=98&story=features6032001010219>>.

html>; Melanie Jula Sakoda, "Behind the Doors of Repentance," <<http://www.orthodoxnews.com/doodad.fcgi?tcode=10&story=features7072001221745.html>>, accessed 30 July 2002; Mark Athitakis, "Awkward Christian Soldiers," *San Francisco Weekly*, 22 December 1999.

²³ "Organization and Governance," Christ the Saviour Brotherhood Website, accessed September 1999. Website is no longer online. Printed copy of site contents exists in author's private archive.

²⁴ Hieromonk Damascene, "Orthodoxy Comes of Age in America," *The Orthodox Word* 200, no. 1 (May-August 1998): 120.

²⁵ Damascene, "Orthodoxy Comes of Age," 120-32.

²⁶ Athitakis, "Awkward Christian Soldiers"; Father Eric Tosi, "Six Communities Received into Diocese of the West," *The Orthodox Church* (January/February 2001) at <<http://www.orthodoxnews.com/doodad.fcgi?tcode=98&story=usnews3182001233629.html>>; "New Nuns and Monks in our Diocese," *Voice of Holy Trinity* (Spring 2001) at <<http://www.orthodoxnews.com/doodad.fcgi?tcode=98&story=usnews3182001084118.html>>. Pangratios was recently charged with third-degree sexual assault and attempted sexual assault in Queens, New York. His status is pending; see "Bishop's Unholy Act," *New York Post*, 19 April 2002.

²⁷ Sakoda, "Behind the Doors of Repentance."

²⁸ Melanie Jula Sakoda, "Where Have All the Shepherds Gone?" privately distributed report, July 1995.

²⁹ Email dated 4 January 1998, from Mark Pearson to Ocnet, announcing fifth annual Ancient Christianity and Afro-American Conference at Saint Mary of Egypt Orthodox Church, Kansas City, Missouri; brochure announcing Ancient Christianity Afro-American Conference, 25-28 May 1995.

³⁰ Mary Gregory, interview with author, 12 February 1999, Pleasantville, New York.

³¹ Franky Schaeffer, "Commencement Address," *Orthodox Life* 3 (1996): 11-12.

³² Bishop Auxentios, "The Old Calendar Greek Church: A Personal Testimony," at <http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/auxentios_testimony.htm>, accessed 21 March 2003.

³³ "Corporate Purposes," Christ the Saviour Brotherhood Website, accessed September 1999. Website is no longer online. Printed copy of site contents exists in author's private archive.

³⁴ Damascene, "Orthodoxy Comes of Age," 120.

³⁵ "Organization and Governance," Christ the Saviour Brotherhood Website, accessed September 1999. Website is no longer online. Printed copy of site contents exists in author's private archive.

³⁶ Charismatic Episcopal Church, <<http://www.iccec.org/index1.html>>, accessed 11 November 2002.

³⁷ Email dated 14 August 1997 from Kenneth Tanner, communications director, Charismatic Episcopal Church, to Steve Hayes.

Betwixt Identity and Security

African New Religious Movements and the Politics of Religious Networking in Europe

Afe Adogame

ABSTRACT: African New Religious Movements (ANRMs) are creating local-global religious networks to further their self-insertion (self-assertion) in the European religious landscape. Intrareligious engagement of ANRM members derives not so much from doctrinal affinities or leadership preferences, but from the quest for spiritual satisfaction, religious identity, and a place to feel at home. The complexity of the motives for participating in networks is due to religious, socio-cultural, and economic considerations. While religious communities identify this networking as a vital strategy for global mission and evangelism (“mission reversed”), such networks serve also as conduits for maintaining *identity* and ensuring *security*, as well as facilitating status improvement and legitimacy in Europe.

The discourse on immigration often privileges political and socio-economic considerations in a way that glosses over the religious factors that stimulate, impact and impugn transmigration processes. Contemporary immigration trends are increasingly exhibiting the crucial role and import of religious symbolic systems in new geo-cultural contexts. Religion is largely at the pivot of immigrants’ sense of individual and collective identities, and immigrant communities serve as focal points for religious and social networks. The growing religious sensibilities that impinge on the nature of immigration, and the religious dynamics that affect immigrants, immigrant communities, their host contexts, and their home countries need to be appraised and located within a broader context of related institutions and patterns.

The increasing presence of Africans in Europe has occasioned the

Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Volume 7, Issue 2, pages 24–41, ISSN 1092-6690 (print), 1541-8480 (electronic). © 2003 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

establishment of religious communities in a way that has diversified the European religious landscape. This presence can be traced as far back to pre-colonial, mercantile history. The influx of immigrants grew in the post-World War II era, especially from the 1960s onwards. Most African immigrants to Europe and elsewhere carried their religions with them. African New Religious Movements (ANRMs) have burgeoned in Europe owing greatly to increasing immigration, improved transportation systems, and new forms of global communications networks. This article examines the proliferation of these religious communities, their roles in the adaptation of African immigrants to new cultural environments, and their function in stimulating, supporting and impacting change both in their home and host contexts.¹

At the dawn of the new millennium, ANRMs have renewed vigor in their task of charting and appropriating religious space outside the cultural contexts from which they emerged. In the face of contemporary religious, political and socio-cultural realities, ANRMs are increasingly engaged in charting local-global religious networks to further their self-insertion and self-assertion in host religious landscapes. This article argues that such networks function as conduits for maintaining *identity* and ensuring *security*. It shows how and to what extent attempts have been made through such intrareligious networks to articulate and respond to varied religious, economic, cultural, political, and social issues. Contrary to the argument advanced by some social scientists, which portrays secularization and the demise of religion as consequences of modernity in Western societies,² this article shows that the assumed ephemeral nature of the social significance of religion is unfounded. ANRM networks not only continue to exert an enduring impact by way of engendering a sense of unity and security in these communities, they also facilitate African immigrants' quest for legitimatization within European society.

From a historical-descriptive point of view, ANRMs refer to the various religious initiatives that have emerged both within and outside Africa, especially since the dawn of the twentieth century. The groups in this category are mainly African-led, and Africans largely dominate their membership. ANRMs cut across Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religions, and include spiritual science movements now making their impact felt on African religious landscapes. The movements under this umbrella may not be entirely new in terms of their doctrines and ideology. However, these indigenous religious initiatives are considered new in the sense that they are historically unprecedented within the African religious contexts and beyond (i.e., Europe, United States, Asia). For instance, within Christianity, ANRMs include newer forms of Christianity succeeding mainline Christianity, which have reshaped and revitalized contemporary Christianity. Christian ANRMs include the so-called African Initiated Churches (AICs),³ and the African Pentecostal and Charismatic move-

ments. Many other ANRMs have emerged from Islam and the traditional indigenous African religions, but for the purposes of this article, examples will be drawn mainly from the Christian new religious movements.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN EUROPE

African New Religious Movements, especially African Initiated Churches and Pentecostals/Charismatics, have come to represent a very significant factor in the contemporary life of the African diaspora in Europe and elsewhere. Beginning in the 1920s when they first appeared in Britain, ANRMs have increasingly made their presence known on European religious landscapes. These movements have existed in various forms on European soil—the Ghanaian and Nigerian Christian initiatives represent two of the largest, most widespread African immigrant religious communities.

One of the earliest initiatives was the African Churches Mission (ACM)⁴ established in the south end of Liverpool in 1922. G. Daniels Ekarte, from the Scottish Mission in Calabar, Nigeria, was the driving force behind the movement, and he received early financial support from churches in West Africa. Influenced by Mary Slessor (1848-1915), who engaged in pioneer missionary work in Calabar, Ekarte had carried out extensive mission work with riverboats along the creeks of Calabar. From its inception, the nucleus group established a bond with British Christians, who provided Ekarte with a church building in Liverpool to hold meetings. In 1938, the mission worked with about 1,000 men and women and approximately 3,000 children.⁵

One inevitable feature of the post-World War II years throughout Europe in general and Britain in particular was the presence of what came to be called “GI Babies,”⁶ “Brown Babies,”⁷ “illegitimate babies,” or “foundlings,” the result of intimate relationships between black American GIs stationed in England and British girls. Official restrictions imposed by United States Army authorities prohibited intermarriages, but these failed to discourage such relationships, or to reduce the number of Anglo-American babies in England. After the war, a majority of the soldiers had to return home without their new babies and their mothers.⁸ Some of the mothers lost face in their communities and had to leave home. Others saw their black babies as a social stigma and gave them up for adoption or had them placed in orphanages. Such a situation no doubt had adverse social, cultural, political, and economic consequences for the foundlings, their families, and the host British society. This development attracted newspaper headlines such as “Fatherless children test racial liberation of Britons” and “Foundlings of Two Wars.”⁹ As a story headlined “Britain’s Brown Babies: Illegitimate Tots a Tough Problem for England” reported:

Many of the GI fathers of the newly born babies in England wanted to marry their mothers but Army officials blocked thousands of such marriages by their refusal to grant permission. The results have been babies without names. British adoption societies balked at accepting the colored youngsters and they became a problem for the government. To date Laborite officials have ducked the situation. The problem is being partly solved by the tiny church missions such as the home run by a bearded African Minister, the Rev. G. Daniels Ekarte, in Liverpool. He hopes to establish a Booker T. Washington Children's Home and is seeking government aid for the project.¹⁰

Brian Joseph Lawrenson, born to a black American soldier and a white English woman, was one of the children raised under the pastoral guardianship of the ACM.¹¹ Brian's mother left him to the care of the church in September 1944, barely three months after his birth. He lived under the tutelage of Daniels Ekarte until the age of five years, when Social Services in Liverpool forcibly removed him to Olive Mount Children's Hospital on 3 June 1949.¹² According to Lawrenson, the mission was

a fitting situation to raise "Brown Babies" who were the offspring of white English women and black American General Infantry Soldiers (GIs). . . . In God's own providence he did provide for me, not through his ordered means of providing for children, that is with the care and love of one's biological family, but under the protection of the African Churches Mission, Liverpool Fazakerley Cottage Homes and foster parents.¹³

Apart from the single case of one white child named Gladys Cooper,¹⁴ all the children at the mission home were the so-called "brown babies."

In 1948, following the inauguration of the National Health Service in England, the Liverpool City Council ordered the mission home to close, and all children were relocated to other orphanages in the city. Heartbroken by the treatment meted to him by the Council, Daniels Ekarte died on 12 July 1964, barely two weeks after he was relocated from the mission to a Liverpool Council house.¹⁵

Lawrenson described Ekarte as

a very articulate man, and from what I could remember knew every black person in the city. Elizabeth Roberts was his housekeeper, and she along with some of her own family fed, clothed, washed and generally cared for we children. . . . The Pastor was a man who was devoid of any material consideration for himself. He never owned a car or a bicycle, and although he was dressed acceptably you would need a vivid and weird imagination to call him "Flash." If there was ever a man who was innocent of the crime and sin of "filthy lucre" it was Pastor G. Daniel[s] Ekarte.¹⁶

Ekarte was very popular locally because of his mission work. Writing from Hoylake on the Wirral, Nella Armah said:

I first went to his African Churches Mission the day it opened, when I was a schoolgirl. Even then I realized here was a man prepared to devote his whole life to the welfare of others. . . . He has been described as “the African Saint” and I can truly say that to a great many coloured people in Liverpool he was just that. Words can never describe the loss the coloured people have suffered by his death. He will never be forgotten among us.¹⁷

The successors of Ekarte’s pioneering African mission were the African Initiated Churches (AICs). The planting in Europe of a brand of Christianity genuinely influenced by African culture can be traced to the 1960s, first in the United Kingdom and afterwards in continental Europe. For example, Nigerians represent one of the largest African immigrant groups in the United Kingdom, and the Aladura movement was the most visible indigenous religious initiative to characterize their community.¹⁸ Its presence has grown from the establishment in London of the first branch of the Church of the Lord—Aladura (CLA) in 1964, the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) in 1965, and the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) in 1967. Other Aladura churches, such as the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and the Evangelical Church of Yahweh (ECY), followed. Today, branches as well as offshoots from these churches abound in different parts of Europe.

The planting of Aladura churches in Europe in the early 1960s was essentially the work of Nigerian students abroad, and of people on business and official assignments who had no intention of permanently living away from their homeland. The original composition of African religious communities in diaspora has altered with the arrival of families and the birth of children (first and second generation), thus resulting in a major shift to long-term immigrants or settlers. The new membership development has far-reaching implications for these communities, and facilitates the religious networking process that became expedient for these groups.

When a few members of each group found themselves in one city or community, they began to meet and worship together. As their numbers increased, the groups became inter-ethnic and international in outlook. The nucleus groups of the respective churches met for fellowship and Bible studies in private homes and later grew into several branches scattered all over Europe today. Thus, branches of these churches have been established in the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Italy, France, Belgium, and Spain, to mention just some of the countries. It must be noted that some of these churches had already experienced schisms in their histories prior to their establishment in Europe. Thus, various factions exist on the European religious scene.

A second category of Aladura churches in diaspora includes those that have emerged in Europe, either by severing from a previously existing church or from the charisma of a founder. One example is the Aladura International Church in London led by the Nigerian-born Olu Abiola.

The third and most recent entry of African Christian movements in Europe is the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, including the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Church of Pentecost International with headquarters in Nigeria and Ghana. African-led Pentecostal churches, such as the Christian Church Outreach Mission in Hamburg, Germany and the Kingsway International Christian Centre in London, have also emerged. There are also interdenominational, prayer/fellowship, and other para-church organizations characterized by somewhat loose, flexible and non-formalized organizational hierarchies and administrative structures.

Two basic categories can be distinguished among the African-led churches and organizations proliferating in Europe: 1) those that are indigenously African; and 2) those that rely substantially on external input and assistance.¹⁹ Another distinction is that some congregations exist as branches or parishes of mother churches headquartered in Africa, while others began and have their headquarters in Europe, although with the intention of establishing churches in Africa and elsewhere. These latter groups emerged and are operating in the new European environment while adhering to a particular African religious worldview. Most of these churches or church-related organizations in Europe were the result of the initiative of an individual or small group. It was not until the last two decades that the mother churches in Africa articulated conscious strategies for missionary expansion into Europe. In earlier times, when a nucleus group emerged in Europe, they applied for official affiliation with headquarters in Africa.

PHASES OF RELIGIOUS NETWORKING IN EUROPE

This section examines the nature and scope of intrareligious networking among ANRMs in the earlier and later phases of their development in Europe, and highlights the factors enhancing the quest for and importance of contemporary intrareligious networking. In earlier decades of African Christian movements in different parts of Europe, many were localized, with their activities resulting in part from the hostile attitude of the host society. As previously discussed, the activities of Daniels Ekarte seem to have been localized and limited to his mission. On occasions when he demonstrated a critical stance about some form of institutional racism toward him and his work, he did so mainly through sermons from his pulpit. Lawrenson remarks:

Rev. Ekarte conducted worship at the Mission for the very large Negro population in the area, and I for one would always go along to hear him preach. We sang Christian hymns and used Christian prayer books, but it has to be said that the sermons were political rather than Christian, outlining the perceived injustices that he received from the Liverpool City Council, rather than edifying his congregation on the person and work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I would never condone Pastor Ekarte's practice, but I can understand it, as the pulpit was the only tool he had to get over his message, which was that there were serious strained relations between him and the Council, built only upon racism.²⁰

There were other African church leaders like Ekarte involved in pastoral and evangelistic ministries, who had created models of interracial and intercultural worshipping communities at the time. However, they were limited in the size of their networks, denominations, and relationships. Also, they failed to tackle the structural injustice of the societies within which they lived.

The increasing efforts of ANRMs directed toward charting and maintaining intrareligious networks, especially in the new European Union, is linked to religious, social, political, and economic concerns. Many African Christians who come to Europe often try to find and identify with mainstream churches or denominations similar or related to their churches back home. As soon as they discover these churches, then the feeling of spiritual tepidity or the experience of being undesired confronts them. Many African Christians abandon the historic churches due to the disaffection they experience, establish their own churches, or turn to a number of new churches that are the products of African initiatives and under African leadership.

Olu Abiola, who later founded the Aladura International Church, described his experience in this way:

As an ordained minister of the Church Missionary Society of Nigeria (Anglican), I attended and worshipped at one of the Church of England near my home the very first Sunday after my arrival in London. But to my surprise, I was told at the end of the service by the officiating minister that I will be much at home with my own kind and he directed me to a Black Pentecostal Church.²¹

In the same vein, John Adegoke, the Spiritual Leader of the Cherubim and Seraphim in Birmingham, was a member of the Anglican Church in Nigeria when he came to London in 1964. He had attended Church of England services for about a year. When the first meetings of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church were held, he experienced this as a "break-through." He remarked:

Any Nigerian will find the church here different from what he expected. The missionaries came to Nigeria, faking people to live like Christians. But here in England people do not live like Christians, many things are contrary to Christian principles. Sunday is not literally taken as the Christian Sabbath. Nobody has time for the Sunday service, whereas in Nigeria the services are long. You begin to wonder. After suffering for one year, I found people who were interested. I found myself there.²²

One consequence of this development was a greater identity of African Christians with churches that were more likely to express their interests and sentiments. Many Africans, including ordained priests of mainline churches, changed religious affiliation, usually from a mainline church to an AIC or Pentecostal church. Practitioners of African indigenous religions often converted into one of these Christian churches. Churches such as the AICs, and more recently the African Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, have come to fill this spiritual vacuum and offer “a home away from home” for many disenchanting Africans.

This process has engendered a kind of religious and ethnic identity. What has led to this intrareligious engagement is not so much doctrinal similarities or leadership preferences, but the quest for spiritual satisfaction, religious identity, a place where Africans can feel at home and not as aliens, foreigners and strangers.²³

Europe witnessed a remarkable surge in immigration from Africa in the 1960s. The steadily growing influx of people from sub-Saharan Africa to the European continent swelled in the 1980s and 1990s partly due to the flow of refugees and asylum seekers from war-stricken countries. Upon arrival, the new immigrants faced problems of homelessness and social integration, a situation compounded by host societies that appeared hostile and uncooperative. The facts of racial prejudice and discrimination are clearly recognized by Africans.²⁴ Coupled with these endemic xenophobic characteristics are recent developments in the European political scene such as the attitude of a “fortress Europe.”²⁵ The cutback on aid by various European governments and the failing welfare systems, the introduction of new, uniform restrictive regulations on immigration within states of the European Union, the transposition of the entry of refugees and asylum seekers into an electoral issue, the economic recession *vis-à-vis* the unemployment rate and new poverty in Europe, and the constant political and economic instability, exploitation and deprivation in Africa, all have dire consequences and implications for the well-being of ANRMs in Europe.

The motivations for joining or engaging in intrareligious networks are complex and vary from one individual or group to another. Essentially, most African Christian communities will locate this phenomenon as a vital strategy for global mission and evangelism, or what

they popularly refer to as “mission reversed” or the “remissionization of heathen Europe.”²⁶ Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that not all groups are equally enthusiastic about such formalized local, national and continental networks that are being put in place. My informants expressed their interest in networking and carried out such processes as a way of acquiring status legitimacy within European societies. The public denigration—including by the host European churches—of these African religious communities as sects, cults, and exotic religions have generated fear of exclusion, ostracism, and further “demonization” within the European spiritual marketplace and society at large.²⁷ Thus, while some of the relatively “young” religious groups may see their involvement in such networks as a means of status enhancement in Europe, there are some institutionally and financially well-established groups that exercise restraint in such networking endeavors on the grounds that “we are already secure and well established.”

The United Evangelical Mission (UEM) program,²⁸ coordinated by Claudia Währisch-Oblau for cooperation between German and immigrant congregations, is a case in point. The program’s aim is to

assist immigrant churches to establish a visible presence within the context of German churches and society; help German churches to understand and appreciate the movement of reverse mission that is taking place through the presence of immigrant congregations; and develop projects of common mission/intercultural evangelism.²⁹

The UEM initiative has attracted the interest of several immigrant churches, including English- and French-speaking African churches in Germany. Although some well-established African religious groups in Germany are interested in such networks, more participation seems to have come from the less established ones. There are small groups in Germany that exist as branches of well-established churches with headquarters in Africa. Some of these groups are interested in these formal religious networks in the German context partly as a way of acquiring in Europe the status and prestige they enjoyed in their countries of origin.

While what I have described in this article is mainly networking patterns within official frameworks, it must also be recognized that there are several types of religious networking going on informally. There are extrareligious networks as well, which are beyond the scope of this essay. Informal networks are significant in their own right, although they may not really be interested in ecumenical networking with host German churches or other immigrant churches as much as interacting with other African churches. Religious events and programs of these African churches often serve as avenues for engendering new socio-economic and cultural relationships as well as maintaining and sustaining old ones.

Some of these immigrant churches from Africa experience ambiva-

lence about networking with dominant European churches (German). On the one hand, many are enthusiastic both about engaging in official networking and about attaining recognition and status as full-fledged churches by the host European society. On the other hand, they appear to be apprehensive about becoming too visible or too open in a religio-political context where they are obviously denied the status of *bona fide* churches. This ambivalence contributes to what I call “the politics of religious networking.”

Intrareligious networking among African communities has been further stimulated and enhanced through access to and appropriation of new forms of communications technology, including websites, email, television, fax, audio- and videotapes, in addition to print media.

In the last decade, one remarkable feature of the ANRMs in Europe, with particular reference to the African Christian communities, was their renewed efforts toward networking within and outside Europe. Referring to African Initiated Churches, Gerrie Ter Haar noted that, “their spread overseas has involved these churches in international networks of relations to which they did not have access until the late twentieth century.”³⁰ My contention is that communities of the African religious diaspora organize themselves in such a way as to validate their sense of ethnic and religious identity, ensure and maintain security, and seek solidarity; they develop survival strategies to negotiate the hazards of European societies.

As Roswith Gerloff noted, “this interconnecting has happened on three fronts: between churches; across language divisions (mainly French and English); and between African communities and the academy—such as the University of Leeds in 1997.”³¹ To this description I add two points: first, that such relationships are not only intra- but also interreligious; second, that such networks have transcended religious boundaries into social, economic and political spheres. The Leeds Conference was informed, among other factors, by

increased immigration of people of African descent into the European political and monetary union; the growing importance of issues such as human rights, religious freedom, racial equality and social justice; the deficit in partnership models between African independent groups and European religious and secular institutions; and most of all, the lack of knowledge and research in African religious communities as mainstays for their survival in indifferent or even hostile environments.³²

Among the stated objectives of the conference were:

to facilitate dialogue between African (religious) communities and the (European) historic churches . . . to help networking between scholars and African religious communities from different countries . . . to help European institutions to perceive peoples’ religion and spirituality as

central to their survival in dignity and affirmation of life . . . and to contribute to policy-making in terms of mutual support and empowerment across national borders.³³

The 1997 Leeds conference on “The Significance of the African Religious Diaspora in Europe” was largely the spark that ignited the zeal toward religious networking among the African Christian communities and other subsequent initiatives that characterized the consultations in Västerås, Sweden (1998), Glay/Doubs, France (1998), Hamburg (1998), Cambridge (1999), and Belgium/Switzerland (1999). The 1997 Leeds meeting, which brought together African and European Christians and African and European scholars, was unique in that, as Gerloff enthused, “it served as a forum for the beginning of creating a Europe-wide African identity—in dialogue with, not in enmity to, the European populations.”³⁴ One remarkable result of this was the birth of the Council of African Christian Communities in Europe (CACCE). The 1999 Millennial Conference on “Partnership of African Christian Communities in Europe” culminated in the inauguration of this organization, and was born out of the desire of members and participants to facilitate such meetings, to affirm a sense of belonging, and to encourage networking in order to enhance further cooperation and build supportive relationships across the continents.³⁵

PATTERNS OF NETWORKING

One practice becoming popular among African congregations in Europe is the exchanging of pulpits. A leader of a particular church will be invited to preach in another church, irrespective of doctrinal emphasis. This development is not restricted to African communities alone, but also between them and their host European churches, which in most cases provide space for the African congregations through rent, lease, or mutual agreement. It must be noted that such collaborations are not devoid of restraints on both sides, given their tendency to erode members’ loyalty to a particular leadership or group.

A German newspaper reported on 11 October 1998 that the Melanchthonkirche in Frankfurt-Fechenheim “opened its doors to a wider worshipping space and a multi-cultural togetherness” on the occasion of the inauguration service of the Church of the Lord—Aladura. Several Christian denominations participated in this ceremony and “the atmosphere showed an admirable understanding between German, Syrian and African Christian communities, a kind of unity in fellowship.”³⁶ Speeches presented by delegates of these churches stressed the importance of Christians reaching out to one another without regard to national origins.

Another characteristic of most of these movements is their adoption of such labels as “international,” “worldwide,” “global,” and “world” in their nomenclatures, indicating their religiously inspired transnationalism and their wide variety of linkages. Thus, we have names such as the Celestial Church of Christ Worldwide, Aladura Church International, and the Global Revival Outreach. Some of these groups already have branches and parishes in different parts of Europe and elsewhere, while others are seeking to establish branches. However, there abound some groups with only a single church, but which already attach these terms to their names. To a great extent, these labels portray an intention to transcend local boundaries to achieve global scope. This noticeable global dispersal perhaps led to Ter Haar’s suggestion to re-christen these churches “African International Churches,” retaining the old initials AIC but assuming a new meaning. She writes: “Most churches in fact label themselves as ‘international churches,’ expressing their aspiration to be part of the international world in which they believe themselves to have a universal task.”³⁷

A new feature of some of these churches is the symbolic display of global operational frameworks through the hoisting of flags and banners near the pulpits and within the church vicinity. In a typical church, you can count scores of colorful national flags, each representing a country to which the church has branched out or where there is some form of religious affiliation, or with which they have established an ecumenical relationship. This is seen as being a feature that adds credibility and boosts the image and strength of the local church.

The initiative of the African religious communities in creating and joining new ecumenical networks at the local, national, and transcontinental levels is noteworthy. Examples of such existing intrareligious networks include the African Christian Council, Hamburg,³⁸ West Yorkshire African Caribbean Council of Churches,³⁹ Council of African Churches in Germany, Council of African and Caribbean Churches—United Kingdom, Churches Together in Britain & Ireland, British Council of Churches, Council of African Christian Communities in Europe, and World Council of Churches.

The Council of African Christian Communities in Europe was formally inaugurated in December 1999. Delegates from five countries—Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom—met at Notre Dame de Justice, Rhode Saint Genese in Belgium following the Cambridge conference that had provided the groundwork three months earlier. Their legitimacy seemed to hinge on the claim that since “there are over three million Christians of African origin in Europe . . . it is our responsibility to network, share ideas and join in common activities for the spiritual, social, cultural and political development of these communities.”⁴⁰ Their objectives were summarized as follows:

Create strategic partnership for spiritual and social transformation in Europe; provide a platform for Africans to share common problems and find solutions in different African countries; work for peace, social, human and economic development in Africa.⁴¹

At a continental level, the council⁴² strives to represent the needs, wishes and aspirations of its members who live and operate in various European states. It also claims to be inclusive of all those who would have sympathy with its aims and *raison d'être*.

In the United Kingdom, African churches have essentially been worshipping communities until being drawn into areas of social and political concern. It took some time before these communities started to act on the society at the political level. The initiative toward mapping out strategies against racism, injustice and marginalization emerged only following the creation of umbrella religious organizations such as the Council of African and Caribbean Churches. In 1979 Olu Abiola, leader of the Aladura Church International, called together ministers from different churches to consider the necessity of creating a formal association of African churches. The outcome was the formation of the Council of African and Allied Churches, later known as the Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches. Its current title is the Council of African and Caribbean Churches. The council has a membership of some forty denominations.⁴³ Its aims and priorities are

to educate and inform members and the general public of any religious, social and spiritual matters as may be necessary. The Council works for the unity, dignity and brotherhood of man, expresses concern for human need everywhere, decries injustice, oppression, apartheid, racism and exploitation, and cooperates with efforts to establish peace, freedom and justice in the world, to bring relief to poverty and deprivation.⁴⁴

To achieve these objectives, the council holds public meetings and seminars on wide-ranging topics, and embarks on programs aimed at creating a more just society. As Oshun has shown, "these bodies provided the vital links between the Black-led churches (including the Aladura churches) and the mainstream churches as represented by the British Council of Churches, on the one hand, and the British government, the British institutions and the British society on the other."⁴⁵

The social dimension is also significant for African Christian communities as measured by the wide range of activities in which they are involved. Some of the extrareligious functions they have emphasized are social welfare programs, social work, and self-help. The African Churches' Council on Immigration and Social Justice was formed in May 1990 to tackle specific issues of immigration and social justice.⁴⁶ Sharing e.V.,⁴⁷ a non-governmental organization (NGO) affiliated with the United

Nations, was established by George Owusu, the overseeing pastor of the Grace Fellowship in Wuppertal, Germany. Its objectives include:

First, helping Africans with problems of migration by regularly visiting those in detention without a crime but for lack of papers; encouraging them in their faith with a view to freeing them as far as possible; and making sure that those who have been in prison here are not sent to prison again when they eventually get deported back to Africa—as this is often the case. Second, caring for the sick in the areas of providing medicine. Visiting Africans with mental problems in hospital. Third, providing temporary accommodation and support to newly arrived Africans and helping Germans with problems such as alcoholism through the “Mission House” project. Fourth, supporting international, intercultural and intercontinental exchange between Africa and Europe.⁴⁸

Thus, for more than a decade, Sharing e.V has been actively involved in religious, humanitarian, educational, health care, immigration, communication, and cross-cultural activities in Europe and Africa.

CONCLUSION

The African Christian communities in Europe are not inclusive in their orientation. Despite targeting both Africans and Europeans in their membership drives, the social composition of these churches is still dominated largely by Africans, with white converts forming a negligible percentage. Research shows that many members have joined one group or another as a result of various networking efforts. Intrareligious engagement has arisen not so much out of doctrinal or leadership affinities, but from the quest for spiritual satisfaction, religious identity, and a place where people can feel at home rather than as strangers.

Thus, the African Christian churches in Europe remain the focus of identity, community, and security primarily for African immigrants. The complexity of the motives for engaging in intrareligious networks varies according to religious, social, cultural, economic, and political considerations. Although most of the African Christian communities will locate this phenomenon as a vital strategy for global mission and evangelism (“mission reversed”), I have argued that a number of African immigrant churches are involved in networking as a means to gain legitimacy within host European societies.

ENDNOTES

¹ This paper was originally presented at the International Conference on “The Spiritual Supermarket. Religious Pluralism and Globalization in the 21st Century: The Expanding European Union and Beyond,” London School of Economics, 19-22 April 2001.

² There has been much fascination with the phenomenon of secularization since the classical era of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Karl Marx. Although many contemporary sociologists dealing with religion no longer adhere to the equation of modernity and secularization, yet one of the few who had continued to push a variant of this thesis is the British sociologist Byran Wilson. According to Wilson, “the secularization thesis implies the privatization of religion; its continuing operation in the public domain becomes confined to a lingering rhetorical invocation in support of conventional morality and human decency and dignity—as a cry of despair in the face of moral panic.” See Byran Wilson, “Secularization: The Inherited Model,” in *The Sacred in a Secular Age*, ed. Philip E. Hammond (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 9-20. See also Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). There is abundant literature questioning secularization as a direct, inevitable consequence of modernity or modernization. See for instance, Peter Berger, “Secularization and De-secularization,” in *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations*, ed. Linda Woodhead, Paul Fletcher, Hiroko Kawanami, and David Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 291-98; Peter Berger, *Facing up to Modernity: Excursions in Society, Politics and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); William Swatos, ed., *The Secularization Debate* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); Steve Bruce, ed., *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, eds., *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), to mention only a few.

³ The acronym “AICs” is used variously by scholars of African religions to refer to “African Initiated Churches,” “African Indigenous Churches,” “African Independent Churches,” and “African Instituted Churches.” There is no consensus as to which of these phrases is most appropriate. This classification in its narrow sense refers to the indigenous churches that emerged and succeeded the mission churches in different parts of Africa especially from the dawn of the twentieth century. The explanations offered by scholars for their emergence vary from religious to cultural, political to economic, and social to psychological factors. Examples of pioneering work carried out by scholars in this field include Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948); Christian Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some “Spiritual” Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1962); Victor Hayward, ed., *African Independent Church Movements* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1963); Harold Turner, *African Independent Church: The Church of the Lord—Aladura*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967); John Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), David Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); and Gerard Oosthuizen, *The Theology of a South African Messiah: An Analysis of the Hymnal of “the Church of the Nazarites”* (Leiden: Brill, 1967). There is, in fact, a tremendous amount of literature available on this topic, including works of a more recent nature that space does not permit to be listed here.

⁴ Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission, Liverpool, 1932-1964* (London: Savannah Press, 1994).

⁵ Frieder Ludwig, “Nigerian Christian Initiatives in Great Britain: The African Churches Mission in Liverpool and the Aladura Churches in London Compared,” paper read at “The Significance of the African Religious Diaspora in Europe” conference, University of Leeds, 8-11 September 1997. The mission house was located at 122/124 Hill Street, Liverpool 8, in the heart of the town’s “coloured” community.

⁶ A newspaper caption for an article entitled “GI Babies,” read: “During the Second

World War, some 100,000 black American GIs were stationed in the UK and love affairs blossomed with British girls. But many of the children born as a result were abandoned—forgotten victims of war and racism.” See full-text of story by Anne Moore in *Daily Express Magazine*, 2 October 1999, at <http://www.muskogee007.com/brown_babies.htm>.

⁷ See stories on “Brown Babies” by Martin Bright, *London Observer*, 10 October 1999, <<http://www.muskogee007.com/wpeA.jpg>>; and Peter Paterson, “People Like Us: Solicitors (BBC2); Untold: Brown Babies (C4)” (name of newspaper and date of publication not specified) <<http://www.muskogee007.com/papers1.TIF>>, accessed 2 November 2001. Also available is a documentary on Brown Babies produced by Touch Productions for Channel 4 in England. This film, which tells the story of four Brown Babies as they search to find their missing history, was screened on 11 October 1999. See <<http://www.channel4.com/untold>>, accessed 2 November 2001.

⁸ Only a small number of mothers married the fathers of their babies.

⁹ These articles and accompanying photos located on Brian Lawrenson’s website at <<http://www.muskogee007.com/acm2.JPG>>; <<http://www.muskogee007.com/acm4.JPG>>; and <<http://www.muskogee007.com/acm5.JPG>>, accessed 2 November 2001, first appeared in the United States in *Ebony Magazine* (November 1946). My thanks and gratitude go to Brian Lawrenson for the series of emails we exchanged on this issue, and particularly for granting me permission to use the newspaper extracts, stories and other invaluable information available on his website.

¹⁰ “Britain’s Brown Babies: Illegitimate Tots a Tough Problem for England,” <<http://www.muskogee007.com/afrkids.jpg>>, accessed 2 November 2001. This story appeared in *Ebony Magazine*, November 1946, in the United States.

¹¹ This information was personally disclosed by Brian Lawrenson through email correspondence, 8 October 2001. The children who lived at the Mission were abandoned by their English families and were supported by gifts of the church members.

¹² See a short history of Lawrenson’s stay at the Mission and his appreciation of Pastor Daniels Ekarte in Brian Lawrenson, “Ancestors of Lawrenson Brian Joseph,” 16 January 2001, <http://www.muskogee007.com/my_clan.htm>; and in Brian Lawrenson, “African Mission” at <http://www.muskogee007.com/african_churches_mission.htm>, accessed 2 November 2001. Lawrenson stayed first at Mayfields in Leeds, Yorkshire (part of the ACM), then moved to the ACM in Liverpool where at the age of five he experienced the enforced move to Olive Mount Children’s Hospital and then to Fazakerly Cottage Homes.

¹³ Brian Lawrenson, “Childhood,” <<http://www.muskogee007.com/interest.htm>>, accessed 2 November 2001.

¹⁴ Gladys Cooper was the daughter of an English girl and a white United States Army officer. Lawrenson documents that he, Gladys and other children, including Roger Rice, Peter Lawson, Adrian Gouth, James Howard, and Sylvia Brown, were evicted from the mission and finally relocated in the Fazakerly Cottage Homes in the Liverpool 10 area. The matrons who looked after the children were white.

¹⁵ Ekarte continued to live in the building that once housed the Mission until the Council ordered its demolition in 1964. Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte*, 111.

¹⁶ Lawrenson, “African Mission.”

¹⁷ Lawrenson, “African Mission,” quotation from the *Liverpool Echo*, 23 July 1964.

¹⁸ Aladura movement refers to a group of indigenous Christian movements that emerged mainly from western Nigeria during the 1920s. Aladura literally translates as “the praying people” or “owners of prayers.” They are so called due to their penchant for prayer, prophecy, visions and dreams, and other charismatic features. Churches that fall under this umbrella are the Christ Apostolic Church, the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Church of the Lord—Aladura, the Celestial Church of Christ, and the Evangelical Church of Yahweh, as well as their various appendages and offshoots.

¹⁹ These categories are not mutually exclusive.

²⁰ See Lawrenson, "African Mission," for details on the Mission's involvement in political and social activities, and its relationship with other organizations; see Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte*, 83-97.

²¹ Olu Abiola, "The History of the Aladura International Church," *An Introduction to Aladuraism* (London: O.J, n.d), 2, cited in Frieder Ludwig, "Die Entdeckung der schwarzen Kirchen. Afrikanische und Afro-karibische Gemeinden in England während der Nachkriegszeit," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 32 (1992): 136.

²² John Adegoke, interview by Frieder Ludwig, 18 October 1991, in Ludwig, "Die Entdeckung der schwarzen Kirchen," 136.

²³ A favorite biblical passage that helps them to express this feeling is Ephesians 2: 19-20: "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone."

²⁴ Christopher Oshun, "Encountering Aladura Spirituality in Britain," paper read at "The Significance of African Religious Diaspora in Europe Conference," University of Leeds, 8-11 September 1997.

²⁵ See for instance Dov S. Zakheim with Sharon Weinberger, *Toward a Fortress Europe?* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2000), available at <http://www.csis.org/europe/toward_europe.pdf>; Jesper Markward Olsen, "Fleeing Fortress Europe," *Euroviews: International News Magazine* (2002), <<http://manila.djh.dk/immigrants02/>>; and "Fortress Europe? Circular Letter," <<http://www.fecl.org/>>, accessed 7 June 2002.

²⁶ Communication with Rev. Dr. Rufus Ositelu, Primate of the Church of the Lord—Aladura Worldwide, 15 June 2001. See Rufus Ositelu, "Missio Africana! The Role of an African Instituted Church in the Mission Debate," *International Review of Mission*, 89, no. 354 (July 2000): 384-86.

²⁷ Roswith Gerloff, "Editorial," *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (July 2000): 276-77.

²⁸ Claudia Währisch-Oblau, "From Reverse Mission to Common Mission . . . We Hope: Immigrant Protestant Churches and the 'Programme for Cooperation between German and Immigrant Congregations' of the United Evangelical Mission," *International Review of Mission*, 89, no. 354 (July 2000): 467-83.

²⁹ Währisch-Oblau, "From Reverse Mission to Common Mission," 467.

³⁰ Gerrie Ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), 23.

³¹ "African Christian Communities in Europe: Creating an Identity," *Newsletter of a Process* (December 1998): 1. The Leeds Conference was organized by Jersidan Jehu-Appiah and Henry Kontor (British African Community) in conjunction with Roswith Gerloff and Kevin Ward (Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Leeds).

³² Roswith Gerloff, "The Significance of the African Christian Diaspora in Europe: A Report on Four Events in 1997/98," *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (July 2000): 281.

³³ Gerloff, "The Significance of the African Christian Diaspora," 281.

³⁴ "African Christian Communities," 1.

³⁵ Afe Adogame, "Partnership of African Christian Communities in Europe," *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (July 2000): 291-303.

³⁶ Larry Bello, "The Church of the Lord: A Wider Multi-Cultural Christian Fellowship," *African Courier* 12/13 (December/January 1998): 13.

³⁷ Ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise*, 24.

³⁸ ACC has a membership of 22 churches, and most worship under the roofs of German congregations. The council seeks to promote cordial relations with German churches and to work with other Christian bodies in and outside Germany. See Alex Afram, "African Christian Council, Hamburg," *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (July 2000): 434-45.

³⁹ WYACC is a collection of nineteen congregations from the inner city areas of the country, viz. Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield and Halifax, covering ten different denominations. See Tony Parry, "West Yorkshire African Caribbean Council of Churches, England," *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (July 2000): 436-37.

⁴⁰ Council of African Christian Communities in Europe (CACCE) Press Release, "Africans Unite," *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (July 2000): 304.

⁴¹ Council of African Christian Communities in Europe (CACCE) Press Release, "Africans Unite," 304; see Ronald Nathan, "African Christians United in a Unified Europe!" *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (July 2000): 299-303.

⁴² The membership can be categorized into three types: Organization (led by Africans and consisting of people of African origin); Associate (non-African organizations, agencies and ministries); and Individual (individual persons with an interest in the aims of the organization). As this organization is still in its infancy, time is needed to see how it grows and develops.

⁴³ Jerisdan Jehu-Appiah, "Models of Mission and Ministry: The Council of African and Caribbean Churches (UK)," *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (July 2000): 442. The CACC is a member of Churches Together in England; Churches Together in Britain and Ireland; and the Conference of European Churches.

⁴⁴ Fidelia Onyuku-Opukiri, "The Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches UK," *Church and Race* 6, no. 1 (January 1991): 2.

⁴⁵ Oshun, "Encountering Aladura Spirituality in Britain."

⁴⁶ Oshun, "Encountering Aladura Spirituality in Britain."

⁴⁷ Sharing e.V is a department or ministry within the Grace Fellowship, Wuppertal. The name "Sharing" symbolizes the vision of the church not only to "share" and disseminate the "Word of God," but also to be actively engaged in extrareligious activities within society.

⁴⁸ Henry Ogbomo, "Caring for Africa," *African Courier* 10/11 (October/November 2000): 9.

Ijun in Hawaii

The Political Economic Dimension of an Okinawan New Religion Overseas

Christopher A. Reichl

ABSTRACT: With reference to an Okinawan new religion called Ijun and its branch on the island of Hawaii, this article analyzes the international expansion of new religious organizations from the perspective of political economy. I develop questions concerning the flow of capital and the relationship between central church and branch by the application of a center-periphery model. I argue that the development of an international organization allows the Okinawan group to become a center with respect to its overseas branches, replicating the center-periphery relation between Japan and Okinawa.

In this article I introduce a new religion founded in Okinawa and test the proposition that political economy is a useful tool to analyze the expansion of an Okinawan new religion overseas.¹ The political economic approach calls for analysis of patterns in the flow of capital and develops hypotheses concerning the effects of those patterns on the political interrelation between those who donated and those who collected the capital. In the overseas expansion of religious organizations we have an interesting opportunity for political economic analysis, because the groups themselves are organized to channel the flow of capital and ideology. The founding of new branches requires an investment (i.e., support from the center) and the branches are, at first, dependent on the center. As they grow in their host nations, contributing capital to the center, the branches gradually lose this dependency. Ultimately, they can gain the strength to sever relations with the center and keep capital at home in the periphery. This dynamic in the rela-

Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Volume 7, Issue 2, pages 42–54, ISSN 1092-6690 (print), 1541-8480 (electronic). © 2003 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

tionship between central church and branch resembles the relationship between colonial power and possession.

There has been little attention to the political economic dimension of East Asian new religions overseas. However, the data are available for an analysis of the international activities of some of the larger new religions. A study by Mori outlines the structural principle by which the Japanese new religion Tenri-kyô expands internationally, detailing the vertical organization by which parent and child churches maintain a formal hierarchical system.² Tenri-kyô has held together an organization estimated to have two million members worldwide, mostly in Japan and among large immigrant populations of Japanese in Brazil and the western United States. Tenri-kyô branches in Brazil have sometimes contested the way they are registered by the central organization in Japan, but decision-making by the center has prevailed.³ Studies by Nakamaki of the Japanese new religion PL Kyôdan (Perfect Liberty) in Brazil add to this picture.⁴

The connection between Japanese new religions and colonial expansion is significant, if little appreciated. It is clear that new religions followed closely behind the military in areas of imperial domination, with aims at propagation among Japanese and their descendants overseas. The "missionary efforts being promoted at that time by various Japanese religions" were "operating chiefly within the range of influence of Japanese militarism and imperialism."⁵ Those included Ômoto-kyô and Tenri-kyô. Tenri-kyô had revived a prophecy of the foundress that it would become a world religion, although propagation "was in reality limited to the overseas Japanese, especially in Asia."⁶ Tenri-kyô first came to Taiwan in 1896, just one year after the island was occupied by Japan, and has established 40 churches there.

A number of groups that had formerly employed doctrines of Japanese nationalism rephrased them "in strongly cosmopolitan terms and incorporated substantial elements of Christianity" after the Second World War.⁷ Not all had been pro-nationalist, although recognition of the emperor as a living deity was mandated before 1945 by the Japanese government, and all of them developed doctrines that were at least ethnocentric.⁸ Seichô no Ie, for example, actively supported Japan's war effort.⁹ Others defied the government with their doctrine or practice and their members were jailed. Beginning in the 1960s, many new religions went on to gain significant numbers of non-Japanese adherents overseas. The new religions with the most non-Japanese adherents are Sôka Gakkai, Sûkyô Mahikari, PL Kyôdan (Perfect Liberty), Seikai Kyûseikyô, Tenri-kyô and Seichô no Ie.¹⁰

As the colonial age evolved into the neo-colonial age, Japanese new religions became the attendants of economic, not military, expansion. In Brazil, large numbers of non-ethnic (and ethnic) adherents came into the Japanese new religions as Japan gained the status of economic

superpower.¹¹ Implicit in much of the growth of Japanese new religions in South America, and probably in North America as well, is the idea that Japanese deities must be powerful because their country is so wealthy. This is analogous to “the inference by subjugated peoples that Europeans were rich and powerful because of the supernatural support” they appeared to enjoy in the colonial era.¹² In the 1970s and 1980s, Japanese new religious groups tended to expand more rapidly overseas than they did at home.

Wallerstein’s model of the world system remains a useful tool for the study of international expansion, because it directs our attention to relations between center and periphery as we look at the branches of an international organization.¹³ “In the periphery . . . the economically more powerful group is able to reinforce its position by cultural domination.”¹⁴ Religion is one element of cultural dominance that European centers brought to bear on peripheral areas. In the age of neo-colonialism, we can expect an analogous pattern to develop.

Many Okinawans view their own historical development as a process of oppression by greater powers and resistance to it. That is, they see Okinawa as a satellite, formerly of China, then Japan, then the United States, and now of Japan again. On the other hand, in the overseas expansion of a religious organization, Okinawa redefines itself as a center on another level. This recalls the era in which “the independent kingdom was in full control of its own far-ranging commerce overseas and could supplement, unchecked, the meager resources available to the governing elite,” an era that ended when Japan “laid hands on Okinawan trade in 1609.”¹⁵

The questions raised by a political economic analysis of East Asian new religions’ overseas expansion include the following: To what extent are the new religions looking to overseas expansion for reasons motivated by economic self-interest? What kinds of flow of capital and ideology are set up and how significant are they? How does the flow of capital and ideology affect the relations between the center and its branch churches? I attempt to clarify some of these questions as I describe the Okinawan new religion, Ijun, to understand the expansion of the organization from a political economic perspective while also addressing issues of cultural and theological syncretism.

This research is based on two years of participant-observation (1990-92) in the Hawaiian island branch, fieldwork on the islands of Okinawa and Miyako in the summer of 1992 and in Taiwan in 1993. I participated in services at the central church in Ginowan City, Okinawa, and translated theological text and lectures by the group’s founder, becoming acquainted with the central staff, branch staff and adherents. Over the last decade I have kept in contact with Ijun adherents in Hawaii, attending services at both branches on the Big Island, where a second branch appeared due to fission in the late 1990s.

THE OKINAWAN NEW RELIGION IJUN

Ijun was founded in Okinawa in 1972 where it has grown to include about 10,000 adherents. It bears a family resemblance to Japanese new religions because Okinawa is a part of Japan, but it aims at Okinawan ethnic revival. As a new religion, it borrows elements from both traditions. The name is the Okinawan pronunciation of the Japanese word *izumi*, meaning freshwater spring, and refers to the welling forth of spiritual power. Ijun has been practiced on the island of Hawaii since the early 1980s by about 100 adherents. The charismatic nature of the religion is expressed in its emphasis on spiritual healing, a central focus of belief and practice. Also notable is the social syncretism practiced by the founder, Takayasu Rokurô,¹⁶ who introduces into the overseas branches spirit healers from other traditions in line with his universalist theology.

The main deity of Ijun is Kinmanmon, who appeared to Takayasu as a voice in 1973 and identified itself as the primary deity of Okinawa and the universe. Kinmanmon had not appeared to humans for 360 years. Takayasu thinks this period is when Okinawa came under the control of Japan and lost its own religious tradition.

Kinmanmon instructed Takayasu to obtain a book by Taichû Ryôtei (1552-1639) called *Ryûkyû Shintô-ki*, (way of the gods in Ryûkyû). Taichû was a learned priest of the Jôdô sect of Buddhism who spent three years in Okinawa beginning in 1603.¹⁷ Takayasu was astounded to learn that the book contained a section devoted to Kinmanmon, a traditional deity whose existence he had not suspected despite his own research.¹⁸

The Okinawan deities (*kami*) are described as indifferent spiritual forces in the cosmos.¹⁹ At times Takayasu equates Kinmanmon with the universe itself and at other times with true enlightenment. Thus, it is difficult to describe Kinmanmon as a personified spirit or as an amorphous supernatural power; it is more accurate to say that Kinmanmon is both.

In the Ijun faith, Takayasu is a *kami* person, called *kaminchû* in Ryukyuan, the language of Okinawa. This means he has a close relation with one or more *kami*. In Okinawa, one becomes a shaman or religious leader as a result of divine calling, *kamidaari*.²⁰ The names of deities are often revealed through the mouths of spiritual leaders.²¹ Takayasu speaks of his affinity to the spiritual since childhood. He saw an air raid on Naha through the eyes of the *kami* one year before it occurred.²² His mother saw in him the signs of a spiritual calling in childhood and he was identified as spiritual power holder by a leader in Seichô no Ie.²³ Thus, Takayasu's vision and the revelation of Kinmanmon are consistent with the image of the religious leader.²⁴

Ijun prayer in Hawaii also recognizes Pele and Lono, both thought to be Hawaiian incarnations of Kinmanmon. This theological strategy makes possible incorporation of Hawaiian priests (*kahuna*) who become

Ijun adherents and leaders without any loss of their own belief system. Ijun is not the first Japan-related new religion to appeal to Hawaiians. Earlier success in attracting Hawaiians was experienced by the group Tenshō Kōtai Jingōkyō, also called the Dancing Religion, on the island of Hawaii.²⁵

In the Okinawan tradition all natural phenomena correspond to supernatural spirits, an idea shared by Shintō. Types of Okinawan *kami* include those of natural phenomena, those associated with certain locations including the *kami* of the hearth, those connected to certain occupations, and ancestral spirits.²⁶ Finally, there are *kaminchū*, living people who have *kami* spirit and live up to obligations imposed by the *kami*. Members of the Hawaiian branch recognize all of these.

On a 1991 lecture tour, Takayasu visited Yokohama, Japan, Honolulu and Hilo, Hawaii, and Los Angeles, California. He said later that 8,000 *kami* had accompanied him from Okinawa. Five thousand left him in Yokohama, 300 in Honolulu, 700 in Hilo, and 2,000 in Los Angeles. Takayasu explained that spiritual growth is expected in the places where *kami* remained. His explanation reveals his hope to begin new branches in Honolulu and Los Angeles. Note that his reason for expansion is a theological one (i.e., expansion will take place in those places because the *kami* alighted there). The business office in his organization, however, thinks of a new branch in business terms because it must provide the ritual objects sold in overseas branches.

The Ijun Service at the Hilo Ashagi

The word *ashagi* means a place where Ijun services are conducted. There is no visual representation of any deity on the altar at the Hilo Ashagi. The center of the altar is a crystal ball behind a small round mirror. Both sit on the veranda of a wooden model of a building that resembles a Shinto shrine.

Services are held twice a month and last about an hour, with half given to recitation of prayer and the remainder to healing. The only distinction among participants is the holding of the power symbol, a locket given by Takayasu worn on a necklace. In 1992, eleven power symbol holders, none full-time specialists, led the Hilo Ashagi. Five Okinawan women were so designated two years earlier and had larger roles. Of the others, two were Okinawan females, three Caucasian females, and one Hawaiian male. Services were led by female power symbol holders with Okinawan ethnicity.²⁷

By 2000, Ijun had undergone change. In Hawaii, the Caucasian and Hawaiian power symbol holders had dropped out or died, membership had declined slightly, and the group had split into two smaller factions, both of which now send capital to the central organization. Takayasu

puts more time into grooming his oldest son to assume leadership of *Ijun* and less time into his lecture tours in Hawaii. Membership in Okinawa has remained constant.

Ijun is unique in meeting on the first and fifteenth of every month. Ancestral offerings in household shrines in Okinawa take place on the first and fifteenth of each lunar month,²⁸ as do offerings to the hearth *kami*.²⁹ Glacken explains that many Okinawan ceremonies are performed in relation to the tides, giving them religious significance. Glacken's informants were able to calculate the tides in their heads.³⁰ Takayasu also has this ability.

Calculation of auspicious days is a topic of the Hilo Ashagi's study group and a regular item in the monthly journal. The system predicts auspicious days for wedding ceremonies and new projects. In the monthly journal, *Ijun*, birth years are grouped in nine columns, giving the year's fortune, the month's fortune and a list of that month's dates that should be handled with care. Many Hilo Ashagi adherents say that they do not understand the system. Those who do not read Japanese must rely on others to interpret the table. As a result, those who have Japanese reading ability are elevated in social importance, analogous to the creation of local elites in center-periphery models. Those with Okinawan ethnicity are elevated to a greater extent because, in addition to reading ability, they can explain esoteric concepts of Okinawan origin.

Offerings and Prayer Registration

Each Hilo Ashagi member fills out a card each month, stamping it with a seal on the first and the fifteenth. On the card the adherent writes a prayer request, such as good health, success in business, and help with an illness. The cards are submitted with a cash offering. Each month the cards and cash are sent to the main church in Okinawa where the objects of prayer on each card are reported to the *kami* by incineration via the hearth *kami*. This is of interest in a political economic analysis because the symbolism of the center and periphery are set up in ritual. Proper prayer is done in the center, which justifies sending capital there.

The cards instruct adherents to pray to the hearth *kami* on the first and fifteenth of each month, and to accompany such prayer with incense.³¹ Adherents also buy some vessels for a kitchen ritual called *o-toshidai* and protective amulets on paper cards to defend against malevolent forces and spirits. Adherents are instructed to hang the amulets in their alcoves and to pray there each day for a week, then to send them to *Ijun* headquarters. These cards are manufactured and supplied by the central church and sold throughout the organization.

Power Cards and Power Play

A feature of the Ijun service is the power card and the power play in which it is used. Each adherent brings one to the services at the Hilo Ashagi and to lectures by Takayasu. Power cards are sold to members with the understanding that the cards will be returned and new ones purchased each year.³²

The power card, the size of a business card, is also called a power antenna. Members understand that during the power play it functions as an antenna to pick up universal energy. Adherents believe that reception of the power has healing and revitalizing qualities. What is gained is not the help of a deity but an infusion of universal power. This shows continuity with Okinawan ideas of the cosmos in which impersonal force is a central element.³³

Takayasu explains that the power can be used to heal another person, that it works regardless of one's religious affiliation, and that it is best to maintain one's power level by regular participation in the bi-monthly service. Lack of harmony in marital or filial relations, physical or psychological illnesses of all sorts, traffic accidents and other misfortunes are said to result from insufficient power. Regular use of the power card erases bad karma, but adherents must depend upon the central organization to supply the cards.

The prayers are understandable to those who speak and read some Japanese, about half of the congregation. The rest of the prayer recited in the service is more esoteric due to the use of archaic Okinawan language, Okinawan words, and Okinawan pronunciations of Japanese words. Nonetheless, within this esoteric prayer are a number of concepts, including the Okinawan creation myth, which are understood by members. These concepts from the Okinawan folk tradition are cornerstones of Ijun theology.³⁴ Their use by Takayasu shows that one aim of Ijun is Okinawan ethnic revival.

Healing

Spirit healing at the Hilo Ashagi is based on four assumptions that are part of Ijun faith: 1) All serious misfortune has a supernatural cause; 2) Conduct of ancestors affects the destinies of descendants due to transmigratory rebirth and karma; 3) A universal energy exists that has unlimited powers of healing and revitalization; 4) Takayasu Rokurô and some others have developed, based on their progress toward spiritual enlightenment and their relations with the *kami*, the ability to heal the root causes of illness by manipulating this universal power.

Adherents tell of healing and clairvoyance by Takayasu. During lectures he refers to his accomplishments in healing physical illness. In addition, he has constructed a philosophy in which insentience result-

ing from meditation leads to enlightenment, health, and the ability to heal others. This is a universalist philosophy because Takayasu argues that all religious leaders have reached enlightenment. In this way Takayasu puts himself on an equal footing with Jesus, Buddha and modern religious leaders such as the foundress of Tenri-kyô, Nakayama Miki.

The services of the Hilo Ashagi devote more than half their time to spiritual healing. The recitation of prayer takes only about 25 minutes, but the spiritual healing of each individual with the attention of all present requires at least an hour, counting about two minutes per adherent. A local woman of Okinawan ethnicity or a visiting healer from Okinawa serves as spirit healer. Members understand that during the spiritual healing there is a flow of universal energy through the healer, other holders of the power symbol, and power card antennae of the congregation, and that this energy is used by those with ailments to heal and revitalize.

POLITICAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF IJUN

Ijun leaders and adherents give theological explanations for their actions, explaining every activity in a rhetoric of enlightenment, world peace, and the deities. Nonetheless, some data pertinent to a political economic analysis are in hand. The growth of Ijun has been due in part to a resurgence of Okinawan ethnic pride. The use of Okinawan words and concepts in prayer encourages ethnic expression, and it sets up a local elite in Hawaii of those raised in Okinawa who have the ability to read and translate the pronouncements of the central church. This replicates the local elite predicted by the center-periphery approach to understanding world systems. Although many Japanese religions, both old and new, have branches in Okinawa, Ijun is the only Okinawan religion that reverses this trend by putting a branch in Japan.

Ijun has the legal status of a religious corporation and is backed by the wealthy and politically connected, at home and at branches surveyed, including Miyako island in Okinawa, Yokohama in Japan, Hilo in Hawaii, and Chang Hua in Taiwan. My interviews with Ijun business office staff made clear that the financial health of the organization is a constant consideration, leading to cost benefit analysis of all Ijun activities, including overseas branches.

If there is a developmental progression that influences the relation between center and satellite, Ijun in Hawaii is still at the earliest stage. It has not yet acquired land or a church building, and looks to the center for help. However, there is some evidence that the relationship is exploitative. In at least one case, Takayasu promised financial support for a Hawaii branch activity, then withdrew support after commitments had been made, leaving the local branch no choice but to raise the money, forcing some members to take on unexpected loans.

There is a flow of capital from Hawaii to Okinawa set up by the

organization, in amounts of perhaps two to four hundred dollars per adherent per year. The flow of ideology, primarily religious, goes in the other direction. However, adherents expect that capital will move from Okinawa to Hawaii when it becomes necessary to acquire the land on which to build the first church. And, one element of the healing ritual (holding hands in a circle), first done in Hawaii at the suggestion of a Hawaiian priest, was later practiced in the central church in a sort of reverse diffusion. Thus, some capital and ideology flows in both directions, but in the basic pattern Okinawan religious ideology is exchanged for capital. Ijun has promoted its overseas branch in Hawaii only by providing ritual objects for the altar. In 2002, it still has not provided funds for a church building, which continues to be an obstacle to growth. All Hawaii branches meet in the homes of members.

This resembles the situation in which the central Tenri-kyô organization in Japan provides no financial aid to facilitate the founding of overseas branches, and the ability to raise a church in Brazil is taken as proof of the local branch's vitality.³⁵

Interviews with the founder have made clear that Takayasu views the establishment of a new branch in Yokohama, Japan, as the reversal of a pattern in which Japanese institutions dominate Okinawa. One element of Takayasu's political agenda is Okinawan nationalism. He hopes that the overseas expansion of Ijun's organization will call back the days in which the independent kingdom of Ryûkyû carried out successful trade on the world scene, armed only with indomitable spirit. Thus, the founder is aware of the political economic dimension of his international organization.

Ijun members are characterized by good standing in society. Members in Hawaii tend to be successful businesspeople who are well integrated in civic organizations. There is no evidence of social isolation from Japanese Americans or from the larger society. In Japan, the chief supporters of Ijun branches (who provide facilities for services) in Yokohama and on Miyako island are wealthy, including the owner of a medium-size manufacturing facility and a developer. Ijun's image in Okinawa is carefully orchestrated by Takayasu, and is free of controversial features.

The international organization of Ijun generates the movement of people. Notable are the yearly visits to Hawaii by the founder and his attendants, the dispatch of ritual leaders from the central church to branches, and pilgrimages of branch adherents to the central church. The founding of new branches overseas also leads to the international migration of ritual specialists from the center to countries in which branches are located.

In Hawaii, about half of the adherents speak Japanese as their first or second language, in addition to Hawaiian Creole English. Those with Japanese language ability translate for the founder when he visits Hawaii and they interpret in the study group. Nevertheless, the transmission of

doctrine from Okinawa to Hawaii remains a problem and might be a critical one if the group did not emphasize simple ritual rather than complex doctrine. Lebra writes that Okinawan religious philosophy is characterized by an "absence of complexity in the system of belief."³⁶ This characteristic has been used by Takayasu to construct a theology that facilitates incorporation of adherents from other traditions. The absence of philosophical complexity is more striking in Hawaii, where doctrine is imperfectly understood by adherents. This creates an informal hierarchy headed by those with insider knowledge of Okinawan culture, followed by those with knowledge of Japanese reading and writing, and finally by those without any such knowledge.

CONCLUSION

There are many questions yet to be answered concerning the political economy of international new religious organizations. For this reason, few nomothetic statements can be made. Rather, more studies are needed of the relations between branches and centers in particular new religions. I expect that the attitudes and behaviors of centers will range from altruistic to exploitative, and the next step will be to understand how and why those forms take place.

The financial office of each Japanese new religion views the opening of an overseas branch in business terms, an initial investment that will be followed by a steady and growing return of capital. We have seen in Ijun that many of the objects used in worship are distributed for sale by the central organization. The exchange is symbolized by the practice of bringing an object from the altar of the central place of worship to the branch's altar on the occasion of its founding. Centrality is symbolized by ritual that can be performed nowhere else, and by the pilgrimages of those in branches to Okinawa.

In the psychological sense, the overseas branch has importance out of proportion to the number of its members. This is because expansion overseas is regarded in Japan as proof that a new religion is a viable organization. Thus, gaining new members at home depends upon gaining them abroad. Given the trends of new religions using electronic media and publishing, the monthly journal of a new religion is of considerable importance. Many new religions estimate their strength, and sometimes even the number of households of adherents, by the number of journals they distribute.³⁷ Such journals are able to paint a picture of vitality and charisma by news and photos of the organization overseas, and the multi-ethnic photograph is taken as evidence of universal appeal. Thus, the central organization gains prestige at home when it adds branches overseas, and this gives the branches disproportionate importance.

In the case of Ijun, dozens of branches on the island of Okinawa and several overseas branches contribute capital to the center. Ijun in Hawaii

is still at an early, dependent stage in terms of the developmental relation between center and satellite. While the home organization could easily do without any one of the branches, to lose all of them would seriously hurt the organization. Sending capital to the center emphasizes its centrality, which is also symbolized by the practice of sending written prayers to the central church in Okinawa. Okinawans have historical experience as a peripheral branch of a larger center, including not just China and Japan, but also the United States, an occupier from 1945 to 1972 and a continuing presence. This understanding of the disadvantages of marginality, and by extension the benefits of centrality, has shaped Ijun's desire for overseas expansion.

ENDNOTES

¹ I presented a paper on this topic at the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Hawaii Sociological Association, Honolulu, March 1994. My gratitude is extended to the adherents of Ijun on the islands of Hawaii and Okinawa for their cooperation with my research and their patience in answering my questions. I am especially grateful to Mrs. Yoshiko Miyashiro, president of the Big Island Branch of Ijun.

² Kôichi Mori, "Desenvolvimento de Propagação de Tenri-kyo e sua Característica da Organização no Brasil" ["Growth and Organizational Characteristics of Tenri-kyô in Brazil"], *Anuario* 9 (1985): 8-56.

³ Takashi Maeyama, "Japanese Religions in Southern Brazil: Change and Syncretism," *Latin American Studies* 6 (1983): 201.

⁴ Hirochika Nakamaki, "Burajiru ni okeru nikkei takokuseki shûkyô no genchika to takokusekika: Perfect Liberty Kyôdan no baai" ["Local Adaptation and Internationalization of Japanese Religions in Brazil: The Case of Perfect Liberty"], *Kenkyu Repooto* 9 (1985): 57-98. See also Hirochika Nakamaki and Susumu Miyao, "Burajiru no nikkei shûkyô" ["Japanese Religions in Brazil"], *Kenkyu Repooto* 9 (1985): 1-7.

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⁷ Maeyama, "Japanese Religions," 193.

⁸ Michihito Tsushima, "Emperor and World Renewal in the New Religions: The Case of Shinsei Ryujinkai," in *New Religions: Contemporary Papers in Japanese Religion*, ed. Nobutaka Inoue, trans. Norman Havens (Tokyo: Kokugakuin University, 1991), 84.

⁹ H. Neill McFarland, *The Rush Hour of the Gods: A Study of New Religious Movements in Japan* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 152-58.

¹⁰ Nobutaka Inoue, "Recent Trends in the Study of Japanese New Religions," in Inoue, *New Religions*, 20.

¹¹ In an ethnographic example, a firm in São Paulo is owned by a Japanese immigrant family of Tenri-kyô adherents. Eleven of their 14 employees are also adherents, because the owner believes they are more trustworthy. The point is that membership in a Japanese new religion helps Brazilians and Japanese Brazilians gain employment in Japanese Brazilian firms. See Christopher A. Reichl, "Japanese Newcomers in Brazil: A Social Model of Migration," Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1988. See also Christopher A. Reichl, "Japan-

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- ¹² Roger M. Keesing, *Cultural Anthropology: A Contemporary Perspective*, 2d ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), 403.
- ¹³ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, Inc., 1974).
- ¹⁴ Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, 339.
- ¹⁵ George H. Kerr, *Okinawa: The History of an Island People* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1958), 16.
- ¹⁶ In the text of this essay, East Asian names are given in the Asian order of the family name first. In the endnotes, the East Asian names of authors are given in Western order.
- ¹⁷ Shunzo Sakamaki, *Ryukyu: A Bibliographical Guide to Okinawan Studies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1963), 23.
- ¹⁸ Sakamaki, *Ryukyu*, 23-27. See also Shigô Ginoza, *Zenyaku: Ryûkyû Shintô-ki* [*Notes on the Way of the Kami in Ryukyu*] (Tokyo: Toyo Tosho Shuppan, 1955), 137-44, 222-24.
- ¹⁹ Michael Saso, "Okinawan Religion," in *Uchinaa: Okinawan History and Culture*, ed. Joyce N. Chinen and Ruth Adaniya (Honolulu: Okinawan Celebration Education Committee, 1990), 18-22. See also Kokan Sasaki, "Spirit Possession as an Indigenous Religion in Japan and Okinawa," in *Religion and the Family in East Asia*, ed. George A. De Vos and Takao Sofue (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1984), 75-84.
- ²⁰ Susan Starr Sered, *Women of the Sacred Groves: Divine Priestesses of Okinawa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 147-60.
- ²¹ Sasaki, "Spirit Possession," 76-77.
- ²² Rokurô Takayasu, *Kuon no Kanata: Ryûkyû no Seishin Sekai, Nirai-Kanai o Kataru* [*Beyond Eternity: Nirai-Kanai and the Spiritual World of Ryukyu*] (Ginowan: Ijun Hojin, 1991), 24-25.
- ²³ This Japanese new religion, founded in 1930 by Taniguchi Masaharu is described in McFarland, *The Rush Hour of the Gods*, 145-72; also in Edward Norbeck, *Religion and Society in Modern Japan: Continuity and Change* (Houston: Tourmaline Press, 1970), 210-17; and in Ichiro Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 244-46. Takayasu was head of Seichô no Ie in Okinawa before leaving that organization to found Ijun. See Christopher A. Reichl, "Ethnic Okinawan Interpretation of Seicho no Ie: The Lineal Descendant Ijun at Home and Overseas," *Japanese Society* 3 (1998/99): 120-38.
- ²⁴ Nobukatsu Okano, "Gendai Okinawa ni Okeru Bunkateki Identity no Kôchiku: Shûkô Saisei no Genshō o Megutte" ["Construction of Cultural Identity in Contemporary Okinawa: The Phenomenon of Religious Revival"], in *Prospects for Japanese Studies in the 21st Century* (Hong Kong: Himawari, 1999), 165-71. See also Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, 228-29.
- ²⁵ Shigeru Nishiyama and Takeshi Fujii, "The Propagation and Spread of Tensho Kotai Jingukyo within Japanese American Society on Hawaii Island," in Inoue, *New Religions*, 125-61.
- ²⁶ William P. Lebra, *Okinawan Religion: Belief, Ritual, and Social Structure* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1966), 21-22.
- ²⁷ One contradiction inherent in Ijun is the gender of the founder, who constructed his religion on the basis of the Okinawan folk tradition in which women are ritual leaders and shamanic healers. See Christopher A. Reichl, "The Okinawan New Religion Ijun: Innovation and Diversity in the Gender of the Ritual Specialist," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 20, no. 4 (1993): 311-30. Called *yuta*, female spiritual healers remain important in contemporary Okinawa, and are viewed as competitors by Ijun adherents because they also do spiritual healing. The formal hierarchical system of state priestesses in the Ryukyuan

kingdom is another example of female domination of religious life in Okinawa. See James C. Robinson, *Okinawa: A People and Their Gods* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1969), 27-32, for a description of the system of priestesses. See also Reichl, "Ethnic Okinawan Interpretation of Seicho no Ie," 120-38.

²⁸ Thomas W. Maretzki and Hatsumi Maretzki, *Taira: An Okinawan Village* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966), 69. See also Clarence J. Glacken, *The Great Loochoo: A Study of Okinawan Village Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 284.

²⁹ Lebra, *Okinawan Religion*, 68.

³⁰ Glacken, *The Great Loochoo*, 293.

³¹ Also on the cards, printed in Japanese script, is the statement, "Prayer of thanks to the ancestors and blessing for the family," with words of explanation specifying that the *kami* are contacted every Sunday in a rite called the *go-shuhô* at the central church. The offering requested on the cards is 3,000 yen, but Hilo Ashagi members do not give any set amount when they make offerings in United States currency, between two and ten dollars per month for most adherents.

³² Most Japanese religions sell protective amulets (called *o-mamori*) that must be purchased each year in order to be effective. The new religions all have various ways of raising money, including the sale by the central church of prayer books, incense, and amulets in the shape of arrows, dolls, etc.

³³ Sasaki, "Spirit Possession," 75-84. See also Saso, "Okinawan Religion," 18-22; and Lebra, *Okinawan Religion*.

³⁴ Takanori Shimamura, "Ryûkyû no Shinwa no Saisei: Shinshûkyô Ijun no Shinwa o Megutte," ["Revival of Ryukyuan Theology: The Theology of the New Religion Ijun"], *Amami Okinawa Minkan Bungei Kenkyu* 15 (1992): 1-16.

³⁵ Reichl, "Japanese Newcomers in Brazil," 228.

³⁶ Lebra, *Okinawan Religion*, 204.

³⁷ Inoue, "Recent Trends," 14.

Ecotheology and Environmental Praxis in Guatemala

Anne Hallum

ABSTRACT: One can argue that religious beliefs have more influence for changing societal behavior than does scientific knowledge. Thus, the rediscovery of ecological themes in a variety of religious texts (ecotheology) can be a step toward environmental activism and conservation behavior, where science alone has been relatively ineffective. The article presents this argument, reviewing relevant literature. Next, the article tests this argument for the potential influence of religion in promoting environmentalism through a comparative case study of three Guatemalan villages: one in which religious traditions are quickly disintegrating because the population was forced to move; one in which religious traditions remain largely intact; and one in which Guatemalans, Europeans, and North Americans practice environmental preservation in a pluralistic religious setting. Shared values and the common religious theme of caring for creation can be a motivational ethic even in “transnational” networks.

In much of the world, deforestation, species extinction, and use of fossil fuels continue practically unabated, despite repeated warnings by scientific panels of impending ecological disaster. Environmental scholars and activists urgently need to find keys to transform human behavior more potent than scientific research and predictive models.

The litany of environmental destruction is likely familiar to most readers. Throughout the world, at least 14 million hectares of forest are lost each year to logging, mining, and slash-and-burn farming. Over 90 percent of forest loss is occurring in the tropics, and nowhere more than in Latin America. In 1997 and 1998, more than 5.2 million hectares of Brazilian forest were burned for settlements along a new highway,¹ and

Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Volume 7, Issue 2, pages 55–70, ISSN 1092-6690 (print), 1541-8480 (electronic). © 2003 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

just before Enron declared bankruptcy in 2002, the corporation built a 390-mile pipeline straight through Bolivia's most endangered tropical forest.² The primary global consequences of deforestation are the exacerbation of climate change since estimates are that 25 to 30 percent of global warming is being caused by tropical deforestation. The destruction of these forests also leads to the dilution of the planet's biological gene pool, since thousands of tropical species are lost to extinction.³ The negative consequences are also local, because deforestation leads directly to soil erosion, sedimentation of waterways and flooding; yet the rainforest soil is so poor it maintains fertility for farming for only two or three years before the farmers expand their slash-and-burn clearing to new areas. Meanwhile, the United States government and the majority of its citizens demonstrate that we are just as persistent in ecological destruction, as we increase the burning of fossil fuels, apparently deaf to repeated warnings from thousands of scientists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, ever since its founding in 1988 by the United Nations Environment Programme.

Frustration with the limited impact of scientific research has led most environmentalists to call for an interdisciplinary approach to environmental studies, incorporating the social sciences as well as the natural sciences.⁴ In this article, I argue that environmentalists need to be interdisciplinary not only in regard to the social sciences, but also in regard to understanding the power of religious beliefs. Religious beliefs are especially important, because while exploitation of the natural environment often may be in the immediate interest of those using the resources, emphasizing or rediscovering belief in the sacredness of nature can act to override such short-term interests.

For scholars still operating from the view of religion as a root cause of environmental degradation, this argument may appear nonsensical. Environmental critics of religion have argued that the Jewish and Christian traditions, in particular, "placed humans, as the agents of an anthropocentric God, apart from and above nature and gave them dominion over and authority to exploit the natural world."⁵ However, in recent decades many theologians and ethicists are reexamining sacred texts in the growing subfield of "ecotheology." They are finding clear support for an environmental ethic in the majority of the world religions, including Jewish and Christian teachings. It is time to move beyond this particular debate.⁶

In this article, I seek to illuminate *the significance of religion for environmentalism* and to illustrate *how religion may motivate environmental praxis, even across cultures*. I will apply the approach of environmental philosopher and ethicist Max Oelschlaeger to a necessarily brief analysis of indigenous Maya in Guatemala, illustrating that his insights are transferable to a context beyond the United States. I agree with Oelschlaeger that sharing religious narratives builds community and motivation, but

add the observation that *working together* (praxis) is also central for pluralistic partnerships for the environment. As traditional religious communities confront outside pressures, such multicultural sharing becomes more important. First, I present Oelschlaeger's proposal, followed by an analysis of three contrasting rural areas of Guatemala.

THE PROPOSITION

In his book, *Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis*, Oelschlaeger makes the bold statement: "There are no solutions for the systemic causes of ecocrisis, at least in democratic societies, apart from religious narrative" (emphasis his).⁷ He then lays out his argument in careful and convincing prose. Along with countless other scholars and activists, Oelschlaeger is frustrated by an "environmental paradox" in that the indicators of global climate change and species extinction continue to move in the wrong direction despite the growing body of research data and pronouncements by environmental scientists about the dire consequences for life as we know it. The language of the scientific community is apparently not enough to inspire action, nor is the language of environmental ethicists and philosophers (as a few of them are admitting).⁸ Oelschlaeger acknowledges that "[r]eligious discourse, of course, helped forge the socioeconomic paradigm that rules the modern age,"⁹ but at this point in our history, religion has been moved to the margin of decision-making by the industrialized state, which ironically may give religious discourse more potency as a mobilizing agent because it can act in a prophetic mode, i.e., as a moral critic from outside the power structure.

Recognizing the realities of religious pluralism, Oelschlaeger suggests that a "sociolinguistic approach" may succeed in finding common ground among various religions and also in breaking down counterproductive barriers between religion and science. He explains that such an approach is respectful of all religious beliefs and does not require conversion at all, only listening with respect to stories. Thus he writes:

A merit of a sociolinguistic perspective (that the reading and rereading of texts, that the telling and retelling of stories, defines our specifically human beingness) is that no discourse is marginalized. Narratives are simply that, narratives, and not one enjoys a privileged position, not one is "totalizing." Not even scientific discourse, such as the theory of evolution, can escape its history, its social construction.¹⁰

Oelschlaeger argues that the common ground, the mobilizing symbol that is already at least implicit in most religions, will be "a new metaphor—caring for creation—[that] can engender a psychologically satisfying (emotionally evocative, powerful), religiously distinctive, and scientifically

plausible ethic for our time" (emphasis his).¹¹ Thus, he is demonstrating the outlines of the emerging North American ecotheology that goes beyond scholarship to activism.

Since the publication of Oelschlaeger's book in 1996, substantially more evidence exists of an ecumenical religious movement for the environment. Perhaps the earliest attempt to build a broad Christian ecology movement occurred in 1987, when the North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology was held in Indiana. Over 500 people represented every major Christian denomination in the continent.¹² In 1992, the Evangelical Environmental Network was formed at a conference at the Au Sable Institute in Michigan. Another Christian environmental organization called Target Earth, based in California, continues to expand its lobbying efforts and environmental projects. Similarly, a United States conference of religious leaders and professors formed the National Religious Partnership on the Environment (NRPE) in 1992. It is comprised of four umbrella organizations: the United States Catholic Conference, the National Council of Churches, Consultation on the Environment and Jewish Life, and the Evangelical Environmental Network. The NRPE has prepared a document entitled, "An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation," and has hundreds of signatories. Within individual denominations, so many environmental resolutions, proclamations and publications appeared in the 1990s that political scientist Robert Booth Fowler analyzed the phenomenon in his book, *The Greening of Protestant Thought*.¹³

Furthermore, theological scholarship uncovering an environmental ethic in world religions is so prolific it is an established subfield termed "ecotheology." A great deal of this scholarship deals with the Judeo-Christian texts, partially because the Bible has been the religious code most vehemently criticized by environmentalists. A description of this rich literature addressing the creation teachings of scripture is beyond the scope of this article, but an emerging consensus from biblical exegesis is that some of the later teachings of Protestantism distorted a strong "caring for creation" mandate present in the Old and New Testaments.¹⁴ The themes of the goodness of creation and the connectedness of humanity with the Earth begin in Genesis and continue through dozens of passages throughout the Bible. Repeatedly, for instance, sins of waste, greed, injustice, and idolatry are seen as hostile to God's created order, intruding on the harmony of creation and human relations (for example, see Genesis 1-8; Hosea 4: 1-3; Isaiah 24; Jeremiah 4: 23-26; and Psalm 104). Theologian Michael Northcott at the University of Edinburgh concludes from his review of this literature: "We have found in the Hebrew Bible evidence of an ecological world-view at least as 'earth friendly' as that which ecologists such as Edward Goldsmith find in Taoism or in other Eastern religions."¹⁵

It must be noted that the ecotheology literature that Oelschlaeger

examines provides examples from the United States, which is really the site for his argument, whereas many ecotheologians are much more pluralistic.¹⁶ Perhaps the greatest weakness of Oelschlaeger's excellent book is that at times it claims universality, but his illustrations and discussion are most applicable to the United States. Recall his overall proposition: "There are no solutions for the systemic causes of ecocrisis, at least in democratic societies, apart from religious narrative." So, is religious narrative also significant in newly democratic or non-democratic societies for finding solutions to the ecocrisis?

For insight on the dimension of an *international* environmental movement, we turn to a work by political scientists Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, and we find that Oelschlaeger's thesis still has applicability. Keck and Sikkink examine the power of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in six international campaigns: strengthening indigenous rights, labor rights, women's rights, human rights, regulating infant formula use, and protecting the environment. In the various campaigns, the authors uncover what they term "transnational advocacy networks," defined as "relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by *shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services*" (emphasis mine).¹⁷ From their research of various campaigns, Keck and Sikkink note: "religious belief has been one of the main sources of the idea that action outside the borders of one's home countries was not only licit, but necessary. . . . Activists were propelled by a belief in a higher law that trumps the laws of nation-states."¹⁸ Relative to environmental protection, one can point to the presence of transnational advocacy networks loudly demonstrating in Seattle at the 1999 meetings of the World Trade Organization, or to thousands of transnational NGOs working for the environment around the world, with participants from different religious or secular backgrounds, but perhaps with a common motivational ethic, in Oelschlaeger's terms, of caring for creation.

LESSONS FROM THREE COMMUNITIES IN GUATEMALA

I now turn to a glimpse of stories and themes from the Maya in Guatemala as they apply to an ethic of caring for creation. I will compare three regions: 1) the vast northern Department of the Petén, populated largely by *recent immigrants*; 2) Todos Santos, a largely *intact indigenous community* in the western highlands; and 3) rural villages of the south-central Department of Chimaltenango, which are *struggling to remain intact* while indigenous residents interact with nearby cities and tourist centers. The comparison of these three locales illustrates the significance of religion to an environmental ethic, and it allows us to examine the relevance of Oelschlaeger's proposition in these indigenous cultures. This discussion is based on published anthropological

research, and observations from my own environmental work in Chimaltenango, Guatemala during the summers of 1991-2001.

The Petén

The cutting of rain forests in Central America is partially the result of macro-economic forces, i.e., the loss of land title to transnational corporations that log and export tropical wood and drill for oil. However, the level of deforestation occurring from slash-and-burn farming and daily use of firewood has scarcely been examined. One provocative study from Honduras concluded that cutting trees for firewood, which makes up 70 percent of the country's energy source, was the most significant factor in forest destruction, followed by slash-and-burn farming, and by industrial logging.¹⁹ Guatemala is not exempt from these forces and, in fact, is losing its rain forest cover much faster than the Amazon Basin rain forest, at a rate of two percent or 40,000 hectares per year, primarily in the northern Department of the Petén.²⁰ The Petén covers approximately one-third of Guatemala and includes jungle that surrounds the spectacular ruins of the ancient Maya metropolis, Tikal.

The recent history of the Petén is reminiscent of Brazil's development. Seeking to tap into the land and resources of the vast northern department, the Guatemalan government began giving land grants to colonize the region in 1971, and by 1980 the government had constructed two roads into the region to accommodate the in-migration. However, within a few years, the government sought to reverse itself by creating "protected areas," because the pace of colonization was out of control and was leading to rapid destruction of the tropical forests. As in Brazil, the environmental movement has had only limited success in conserving the areas once opened by roads. A management plan for the protected areas currently exists that includes a "core zone" where any settlement is prohibited, plus orders for *sustainable* farming practices for the whole region. However, because of the cutting of roads by the government, plus the return of refugees to Guatemala after the 1996 peace treaty and the overall pressure of population growth, the protected Maya Biosphere Reserve largely exists only on paper.²¹

The population of the Petén has grown from roughly 20,000 in 1960 to almost half a million today. The people are largely farmers displaced from their homes during the 30-year civil war (approximately 1966-1996) or by lack of sufficient farmland or jobs in their native regions. Many of these refugees, having left their ancestral lands, have also left their ancestral religion. The newcomers often form evangelical churches or look for a Catholic priest or lay leader, or drop out of religious practice altogether.

Within the protected area, approximately 3,000 squatter families live illegally, and more than 200 live within the Tikal national park itself in

two settlements of thatched-roof homes. In the spring of 2000 during the dry season, so many fires burned in the park from slash-and-burn farming, helicopters and firefighters from the United States and Mexico were called in to assist in putting out flames. They reported that farmers would follow them and reset fires with fresh wood; others responded that police or park workers were routinely attacked and tortured by the *invasores*.²²

This discouraging story of conservation efforts in Guatemala—and similar stories elsewhere—calls for environmentalists to search for more comprehensive theories and responses to environmental degradation than the “command and control” legalistic approach. Indeed, Guatemala has the best environmental laws in Central America, and the United Nations and USAID also provide some funding for managing the reserve. But without a legal infrastructure of courts or respected enforcement officers—and especially, without a foundational environmental ethic—the laws are clearly inadequate.

Todos Santos

One might argue that population pressures and poverty alone will lead inevitably to destructive farming practices as farmers seek to feed their large families as rapidly as possible. However, we are able to contrast the harmful practices in the Petén with sustainable farming in Todos Santos, an indigenous town in northwest Guatemala, which also was victimized by the military in the 1980s, and is also poor and facing population growth. The major underlying difference between Todos Santos and villages in the Petén is that Todos Santos remains intact, as most residents never left or returned there after the war. In Todos Santos, one finds a reverence for the land and nature that is almost palpable. A large tree nursery has been managed near the center of town for years, and surrounding hillsides have been reforested so that there are actually more trees now than four decades ago.

Empirical research confirms the importance for the environment of not disrupting communities. In mapping the relationship between surviving forests and indigenous populations in Central America, researchers found in 1992 that “the densest, healthiest tropical forests remaining in Central America coincide with the most intact Indian [*sic*] communities.”²³ Another dramatic finding by the World Bank in 1991 estimated that immigrant farmers accounted for more forest clearing in the tropics than all other human land uses combined. Recall that only approximately 20,000 out of a half-million Petén residents were there in 1960; the vast majority are recent immigrants.

To understand why it is so vitally important for Maya communities to remain intact in their original homes, one must examine their religious teachings. Over 5.4 million indigenous Maya in 19 language groups live in Guatemala.²⁴ The Maya majority has experienced centuries of dis-

crimination and exclusion from positions of power by the *Ladinos* of Spanish descent. Currently, however, Guatemala is in the midst of an exciting and controversial indigenous movement, which involves reclaiming Maya religious ceremonies, teaching Maya languages in schools, presenting indigenous candidates for political office as representatives of Maya interests, and other assertions of ethnic pride and identity. Dozens of international conferences and publications have raised awareness of the richness and depth of Maya culture.²⁵ In Todos Santos, where Maya residents speak Mam, this culture is not only an academic curiosity or a socio-political movement, it is also a way of living and understanding. For the present discussion, we turn to themes in Maya spirituality relevant to an environmental ethic, beginning with the creation story from the sacred Maya text, the *Popul Vuh*.

In the creation story, the gods made the Earth before they made humans, as the *Popul Vuh* recounts:

First the land, the mountains, and the valleys were formed; they were divided by the waters, which ran freely through the hills and separated when the mountains appeared. This was how the earth was created when it was formed by the Heart of Heaven and the Heart of the Earth, and that is how they were named when they were first formed.²⁶

Second, the gods found that creating humans was problematic and required various attempts. Beings were made of mud, but they were unable to walk or keep their shape and were unable to reproduce, and they eventually dissolved into nothing. Next, beings made of wood could walk and talk and reproduce, but they were not orderly in their actions and forgot to visit shrines or call upon the gods. These beings were soon washed away by hurricane flooding and their only descendants are the monkeys who live in the jungle today (in other versions, they burned up in fires). Finally, one of the female gods, Xmucane, ground corn into a fine flour, mixed it with water and modeled four people from the corn dough (which explains the significance of making tortillas in the same fashion today with every meal). These people were called “mother-fathers,” and they now serve as symbolic androgynous parents to everyone who follows in their lineages.²⁷ Humans are to live in harmony and balance and to care for creation and understand its rhythms, but according to the teachings, two things often get in the way to make humanity perverse: riches and power. In the year 2012, the Maya calendar says that the era of the people of corn will end, and humans will enter into a fourth era, the Era of Light, which will be better.²⁸

Oelschlaeger contends that creation stories are the primordial myths of origin, and as such they have “culture-forming power,” not because they are taken literally (although they may be) but because of what they teach: creation is good and we have a responsibility not to impair the

Creation.²⁹ Thus, the *Popul Vuh* story emphasizes agriculture and the rhythms of nature; the separate but apparently egalitarian roles of men and women; the evolution of humans as part of nature, through eras of formation and destruction; and the desire of the gods for homage.

The famous text by Maya activist Rigoberta Menchú, winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize, includes a passage that describes the ten days of ritual before planting corn, which is the most sacred crop:

We make our vows for ten days so that you concede us permission, your permission, Mother Earth, who are sacred, to feed us and give our children what they need. We do not abuse you, we only beg your permission, you who are part of the natural world and part of the family of our parents and our grandparents. . . .

The sun, as the channel to the one God, receives the plea from his children that they should never violate the rights of all the other beings that surround them. This is how we renew our prayer which says that men, the children of the one God, must respect the life of the trees, the birds, the animals around us.³⁰

A significant point about Menchú's description is the common practice of asking permission of the Earth before it is cultivated, because the Maya consider themselves keepers of the land, but not *owners* of the Earth in the deepest sense.³¹

The indigenous people traditionally have not owned the land, but they are *tied* to it because a central tenet of Maya religion is that it is *place-based*. Anthropologist Richard Wilson concluded from his Guatemala field research with the Q'eqchi' Maya that their identity was based most strongly on religion rather than ethnicity or any other dimension of culture or class; and furthermore, their religion was based and had its meaning in a particular *place*. He notes, "Community identity is imagined in the relationship with the local sacred landscape."³² A major portion of Wilson's research describes the Q'eqchi rituals surrounding thirteen sacred mountains called the *tzuultaq'as*, again demonstrating the centrality of place:

[R]epresentations of the landscape are central to community and ethnic identities. Q'eqchi's call themselves "sons and daughters of the earth" (*ral ch'och'*), "people of the cornfield" (*aj k'aleb'aal*), or by the name of the important local mountain. The village's agricultural fertility and human well-being are dependent on this mountain, and major community rituals are directed at this local religious topography. These community identifications were traditionally more important than being ethnically 'Q'eqchi'.³³

Thus, the belief is that the Creator placed them and their ancestors on a particular piece of land, a particular mountain group that defines

their very identity. The spirits of ancestors remain on the land, and sacred burial mounds are a common sight throughout Guatemala.

Chimaltenango

The large department of Chimaltenango is in the south central highlands of Guatemala, and is densely populated, with a majority population of K'aqchikel Maya. Much of the population has a great deal of contact with *gringos* and *Ladinos* because the popular tourist town of Antigua and the capital city of Guatemala are both nearby, plus the large city of Chimaltenango is a frequent stop for travelers on the Pan-American Highway. However, the region remains largely agricultural and dozens of remote mountain communities have survived the war and the onslaught of agro-export commerce. Residents of these K'aqchikel communities are now facing severe environmental pressures in the forms of deforestation, soil erosion, sedimentation of water sources, unregulated use of chemical pesticides and herbicides, large families and shrinking farms. It is important to note that in the face of these problems, residents of this region and surrounding departments often immigrate to the sugar cane fields of the southern coast, to the streets of the capital, or to the forests of the Petén.

Harvard anthropologist Kay B. Warren has studied the K'aqchikel Maya and found many of the same themes that Wilson found with the Q'eqchi, particularly in regard to guardian divinities (*rajaw juyu*) that live inside particular sacred mountains for each community. If trees are to be cut from the mountain, or it is to be planted in crops, this is done with reverence and with permission, because the "master of the mountain" divinity may become angry. It is still common for K'aqchikel Maya to ask the permission of the tree and mountain guardians before the tree is cut for firewood. I have heard farmers in Chimaltenango give poems for trees that "make music for our ears," or say that "trees are our sentinels, our guardians, our friends on this pilgrimage," and "to kill a tree is to kill the presence of life here." On a day of reforesting a farmer's field, the owner told us how he had wept when he first cleared the hillside of trees for firewood and planting, because his father and grandfather had planted the trees.

Warren emphasizes that within many narrated ritual poems honoring creation and ancestors, there is also a great deal of anxiety, as in this example:

[O]ur mothers came,
our grandmothers,
our grandfathers,
in ancient times,
with ancient history.

They had good words.
Good words were in their thoughts.
They knelt before the Earth. . . .
Perhaps the word will continue,
perhaps the voice will continue.
But now we cannot express ourselves well
in the presence of the Earth.³⁴

This ominous poem offers a foreshadowing of what happens when younger generations become alienated from their ancestors and from their guardian mountain. One can argue that the residents of the immigrant communities in the Petén and other places in Guatemala apparently feel less reverence for the Earth because everything is so uncertain and because it is not the *place* of their ancestors who were left behind in burial mounds. When indigenous communities and generations are torn apart by war or forced migrations due to lack of land, the ethic of treating the *religious* topography with reverence also begins to unravel.

Given this analysis, what is an effective environmental response to keep the Maya communities intact in Chimaltenango, to increase land productivity, and to prevent immigration to the Petén? The large village of Todos Santos is remote and less susceptible to the strenuous outside pressure that much of Guatemala faces. Therefore, in areas like Chimaltenango, environmental programs will need to encourage and be sensitive to ancient Maya teachings, but also be open to partnerships with other religious groups, government agencies and non-governmental organizations, and even tourists.

The Alliance for International Reforestation, Inc. (AIR) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that works in Chimaltenango and provides a model of effective environmentalism in the Guatemalan context. The group works in reforestation and education in agroforestry and other techniques for sustainable farming. As we assess the reasons for the success of this organization, it quickly becomes clear that its greatest strengths are the staff members who are native to the region and who know and practice the same culture and religious beliefs of the people with whom they work. However, the staff members work not only with Guatemalans but also with supporters and long-term volunteers from Japan, England, and the United States, persons from different cultures and with different motivations. Thus, the AIR model is a working example of Oelschlaeger's proposal.

The work of AIR is to teach and offer materials for sustainable farming and reforestation so that families do not have to face the difficult prospect of leaving their ancestral homes. Thus, it is an indirect way of preserving the rainforest in the Petén. The approach of this NGO is an integrated one. Each of five field technicians, trained in agroforestry, is responsible for five or six communities scattered throughout the region.

When AIR begins work in a village, the first step is to get to know the local leaders who are committed to sustainable farming and reforestation. The staff has found that this is not as difficult as it may sound because of a long Maya tradition of designating certain community elders (not the same people as shamans), and this leadership is well known. The group provides all the materials for the nurseries (seedlings, seed bags, tools, chicken wire, watering pails, hoses), as well as expertise in planting native species of trees for different uses.

In addition to maintaining the tree nurseries, male and female farmers enroll in a three-year training program in which they learn soil conservation methods, terracing, production of organic fertilizer, intercropping with nitrogen-fixing trees, and organic pesticide use, among other techniques. Often the training involves a re-learning of ancient practices that had been lost, such as raising plants in medicinal gardens, or terracing cropland with homemade levels. Staff members have also worked with the Guatemalan government to provide an environmental education program in community schools, reaching over 10,000 children.

It is impossible to quantify the significance of a kinship between the staff and the villagers, who work closely together over a long period of time. However, the trust, communication skills, and mutual respect are quickly evident to anyone who visits a community with AIR staff. An obvious example is the ability of staff members to shift from Spanish to K'aqchikel during a site visit. A related aspect is the ease the villagers have in speaking of the religious motivation for their participation. When they are asked a benign question such as, "How long have you worked in the tree nurseries?" or "Why did you want AIR to come to your community?" they often give a spiritual response: "[b]ecause God wants us to care for creation," or "We wanted help to care for the trees because they are a gift from God."

Similarly, separate and private interviews with the eight staff members about why they accept modest salaries and long hours consistently brought religious responses: "Because I have discovered that my purpose, the reason God made me, is to teach children," or "God is part of this work every day, all day. We are never free from danger on these roads, but God protects us doing His work."

Don Eladio Iquique Socoy is a K'aqchikel Maya, a devout Catholic community leader who works with AIR in his home region. Knowing how articulate he is on the subject of an environmental ethic, I asked him in 2001 to write some thoughts explaining why he worked for the environment, which he chose to entitle, "The relation between natural resources and what it is to be human."

When we are in a forest and where we see and listen to the songs of the birds, the sound of the rivers, when we feel the fresh air, enjoy the beauty

of nature, then we ought to think that God is there because it is his creation and he desires that we are able to be happy.

But also, we have the responsibility to have a very tight relation with her, so he wants to say that we ought to care for her because our children and our grandchildren and all the generations that come after also have a right to enjoy these natural resources that God has created. . . . To love God then is to love nature. . . . When you work for nature, you are working for the people—directly. There is no separation between helping Nature and helping people. Do you understand? God manifests himself in nature. He shows himself to us in nature and also, he shows himself to us in every face.

The complex topic of syncretism in Guatemala is beyond the scope of this article, except to note that over centuries traditional Mayas have developed a sophisticated combination of Catholic liturgy and Maya spirituality, in which they easily bring offerings to Catholic saints as well as to the Heart of Heaven and the Heart of Earth. Both Rigoberta Menchú, quoted earlier, and Eladio Iquique Socoy, quoted above, are Roman Catholic as well as Maya and maintain elements from both belief systems. Eladio Iquique Socoy automatically refers to creation as female; the interconnection of God, humanity, and nature is clearly seamless for him. It is an attitude reminiscent of ancient beliefs that the sacred mountain, the sentinel trees, the ancestors and their descendants are all connected. The significance of this seamlessness cannot be overstated because it erases the dualism, the conflict over whether to serve God versus humans or God versus nature. They are all connected, and we waste our time and resources debating which has priority.

CONCLUSION

Persons concerned about tropical deforestation can take action in a variety of ways, such as organizing a boycott of retailers of tropical woods to cease their importation. Environmental groups regularly lobby governments to protect sensitive ecosystems and to prevent construction of roads. However, this article focuses on the destructive impact on the environment caused by the emigration of indigenous populations from their homes, an impact that has been documented by geographical studies. Legal systems and pressure from governments will not be sufficient for protecting the forests if the people who live there do not feel a responsibility for their care and preservation. Thus, a disrupted population, like the newcomers in the Petén, seems to have lost an environmental sensibility as surely as they have lost their ancestral homes and religious grounding.

Does this mean that protecting the Petén rainforest is a lost cause given the increasing influx of immigrants? No, because new residents of the Petén can be educated by other Guatemalans towards more envi-

ronmentally sustainable practices than slash-and-burn farming. However, this environmental ethic would not be as closely tied to the religion of a sacred, ancestral place and would need to be based on a different source than we have seen in communities like Todos Santos—the teachers would be starting from scratch, so to speak. This analysis thus suggests that we should recognize the value of religion for environmental sensitivity and focus on the goal of preventing deforestation by helping indigenous people remain in their ancestral homes.

What about indigenous residents of communities such as those in Chimaltenango who must coexist with tourists and foreign development workers and urban neighbors? Oelschlaeger offers suggestions here also building on the significance of religious beliefs. His approach is pluralistic, but he is not suggesting a deliberate, syncretic blending of various religions to come up with one that favors environmentalism. Instead, he calls for a socio-linguistic appreciation for a large variety of religions that uncovers and encourages the common ethic of “caring for creation.” We have seen how this works in practice in Chimaltenango when persons are called from different religious beliefs to work together for the environment.

Finally, we note that a particular *place* has a sacred calling for many cultures. Don Eladio and his son Luis, who also works in agro-forestry for AIR, are dedicated to working in their home region of Chimaltenango and to living in the village of Cerro Alto, where they literally know every resident and where their family has lived for centuries. They also work easily with volunteers from diverse cultures and religious backgrounds, planting trees one at a time. One could argue that deep-seated, religious rationale is especially important for such environmental work because it takes a long period of time to see the results of the labor. Belief in the sacredness of creation and the interconnectedness of humanity and nature provides the patience necessary for environmental action.

ENDNOTES

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- ⁵ Philip Shabecoff, *Earth Rising: American Environmentalism in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2000), 74.
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- ²⁷ Antonio Otzoy, Maya/Presbyterian theologian, interview with author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 22 June 1999; and *Popul Vuh*, 39-50.
- ²⁸ Gaspar Pedro Gonzalez, Maya author, lecture given at Stetson University, DeLand, Florida, October 2000.
- ²⁹ Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation*, 222.
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Confronting the Failed Failure

Y2K and Evangelical Eschatology in Light of the Passed Millennium

Douglas E. Cowan

ABSTRACT: If the Y2K “bug” entered the collective consciousness of evangelical Christians, two principal patterns of response emerged: either evangelicals acknowledged Y2K as a problem that required the readiness and reply of Christians, but rejected it as a component of prophetic fulfillment; or they interpreted it in some measure as a fulfillment of prophecy and a part of God’s plan to facilitate the endtime. For those who believed Y2K to be a part of the eschatological schema, its status as a non-event required a variety of dissonance management techniques. This article explores the methods deployed by dispensationalist Christians to manage the cognitive dissonance generated by Y2K’s “failed failure.” Following a brief summary of evangelical predictions regarding Y2K, I offer a typology of responses ranging from denial that Y2K had ever been a problem to declaration that the Y2K problem occurred exactly as predicted. In each response, the central organizing principles of evangelical dispensationalism hold firm, and the cognitive dissonance created by the “failed failure” is successfully managed.

In the video *2000 Time Bomb*, popular prophecy teacher Jack Van Impe declared: “I believe judgment is coming and this [Y2K] crisis could be the prelude—not the tribulation hour but the prelude leading to it described in Revelation [16-18], when twenty-one judgments fall upon the Earth.”¹ In 1998 and 1999, Van Impe sold thousands of copies of the video, and his monthly newsletter referred to Y2K in more than forty separate articles. After 1 January 2000, however, the video was withdrawn from sale and the remaining stock destroyed.²

Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Volume 7, Issue 2, pages 71–85, ISSN 1092-6690 (print), 1541-8480 (electronic). © 2003 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

There was only one mention of the Y2K crisis in ministry material—an off-hand remark made by Van Impe’s wife, Rexella, in a cheery New Year’s message.³

In 1998 Pat Robertson and the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) devoted a good portion of two “700 Club” television programs to the issue of Y2K (10 July and 7 August). Both shows reprised a litany of problems the Y2K rollover could cause in the United States, and hosted a slate of guests advocating a variety of preparation measures. Toward the end of 1999, CBN’s Y2K website was receiving 120,000 hits per month. Like Van Impe’s, though, within weeks of the new year the CBN Y2K website was decommissioned; all links and references to the “crisis” either went dead or disappeared.

Telephone calls in September 2000 to a number of metropolitan area Christian bookstores asking for materials on Y2K elicited similar responses. In Kansas City, at the northern edge of the “Bible belt,” few outlets had any Y2K material left on their shelves. A number had returned books, videos, and pamphlets to publishers; some had warehoused non-returnable items in back storerooms. A few had simply disposed of whatever they could not return, sell, or give away. Perhaps the most telling response to my request for whatever material remained was, “What do you want it for? A museum?”

That many prominent evangelicals had both prepared and encouraged others to prepare for Y2K is clear.⁴ Using variations on framing analysis, Lisa McMinn examined the ways in which some evangelical churches worked Y2K preparedness into their messages.⁵ Both Charles Cameron and Andrea Hoplight-Tapia outlined a variety of ways in which Y2K intersected with prophetic millennialism.⁶ Even *Time* magazine repeated the claims of prophetic “doomsayers.”⁷

How has the failure of the Y2K crisis to materialize, however, been resolved by those Christians who integrated both the crisis and their prophetic interpretation of it into their worldviews? How have evangelical ministries that made predictions about Y2K explained the failure of those predictions? This article investigates how the cognitive dissonance created by the Y2K event and non-event has been managed by these groups.

Data was collected for this project in two stages, separated by the Y2K event itself. Prior to Y2K, I made a survey of relevant Christian literature (most published in 1998 and 1999), as well as a number of Christian websites either devoted to or referring to the Y2K crisis. From a review of this material, a controlling narrative quickly emerged, a particular construction of reality into which other aspects of the authors’ Christian worldviews were made to fit. Since the rollover, however, there has been no significant Christian print publication on the Y2K event. Reasons for this become clearer when we consider the manner in which various authors have resolved the cognitive dissonance brought on by the “failed

failure.” As a result of this, post-Y2K comparison has been for the most part limited to Internet websites.

PRE-Y2K PUBLICATION

The response of dispensationally oriented Christians—those who believe that God deals with humanity in a succession of temporal “dispensations” culminating in the millennial reign of Christ—to the so-called Y2K crisis fell into three broad categories: (a) those for whom it did not appear to be a discernible problem and who spoke or wrote little about it; (b) those who proactively declared it a world crisis but stated that the prophetic sky would not fall, and suggested instead that Christians use Y2K as a platform for increased evangelism; and (c) those who saw it as a component of biblical prophecy and issued all manner of dire predictions that the eschatological sky would fall with the turn of the millennium clock. Regardless of the position they took eschatologically, those who did treat Y2K as some kind of problem followed a very similar discourse pattern. First, there was a historical overview of the situation—how the problem came to be in terms of the difficulties computers would have with the shift from “99” to “00” in their date fields, program codes, and embedded microcircuitry. This was followed by a litany of things that could, would probably, or would definitely go wrong, as well as a battery of suggestions for preparation in the face of catastrophe. Finally, many of these authors and ministries offered regular updates and “report cards” on the state of government and commercial Y2K remediation and preparedness. In some cases, Y2K remediation or other looming crises caused authors to change their minds about the relative seriousness of the problem prior to the rollover.⁸

“The endtime sky seems fine to me.”

Among those for whom the sky seemed fine and who had more important things to do on the ground were the Lalonde brothers, Peter and Paul. For years, these two Canadian prophecy writers divided their time between publishing the *Christian World Report*, a monthly dispensationalist tabloid that reprinted news articles from sources around the world and wove them together into an eschatological pastiche, and producing a weekly television program, “This Week in Bible Prophecy,” which did the same thing within the framing and production confines of broadcast journalism. According to their website, however, they shifted focus from these endeavors to filming their own endtime feature film trilogy, as well as films based on the enormously popular *Left Behind* book series. A search in September 2000 for websites related to the Lalonde brothers’ ministries revealed that those for “This Week in Bible Prophecy” and the *Christian World Report* were closed, and a new site

devoted to their filmmaking company, “Cloud Ten Pictures,” had taken their place.⁹ The new website went online in early 1999, well before the Y2K rollover. No mention of Y2K could be found on the site, and none of their film projects made use of it in their plotlines.

“It is a real problem, but the endtime sky will not fall.”

Prolific Christian reconstructionist Gary North was among the first to sound the Y2K alarm. While North did not view Y2K in the same pre-millennialist framework as other fundamentalists, he did see it as part of God’s judgment on a rebellious society. Given that he regarded the majority of modern culture to be in explicit rebellion against God, however, Y2K was a part of God’s plan for the evolution of a Christian utopia. A 1997 article in *Computer World* quoted North as saying: “I believe God really does bring predictable corporate sanctions on rebellious societies. . . . I am going to make sure I have plenty of cash, food and survival gear on hand come January 2000.”¹⁰ Rather than prepare for the coming of the Antichrist, though, North’s plans for the rollover were to be at his north Arkansas survivalist camp, with a stock of food, water, ammunition, and a natural gas well to supply his energy needs.

Although in a very different camp with regard to the interpretation of biblical prophecy, in *Y2K: A Reasoned Response to Mass Hysteria*, popular dispensationalist and countercult author Dave Hunt also agreed that Y2K was a huge problem but declared that it was not a part of God’s eschatological agenda. Despite his penchant for rhetorical hyperbole and a rather single-minded prophetic determinism, Hunt had some surprisingly cogent logic to offer against the Y2K crisis as an eschatological trigger. For example, since the 1970s a standard component within evangelical/fundamentalist dispensationalism has been that the mechanism the Antichrist will use to coordinate the “mark of the beast,” and the limitation of “buying and selling” to those who have such a mark, is the computer. Whether the “mark” is an implanted computer chip, a laser designation identifiable only by computer, or some other measure as yet over the technological horizon, the computer—the working, functioning computer—is key to the whole plan. As Hunt pointed out, though, if all the computers were to crash—if there were a “millennium meltdown”—how could this plan be carried out? And, since in Hunt’s prophetic determinism, God ordained unequivocally that the “mark of the beast” would happen, obviously Y2K could not be an integral part of the rise of the Antichrist.

“The endtime sky will fall.”

In *The Millennium Meltdown: The Year 2000 Computer Crisis*, Grant Jeffrey wrote: “we will face severe disruptions to our normal way of life

for a period of weeks, months, or, in the worst scenario, a year or more. The evidence is very compelling that the magnitude of the Year 2000 computer crisis will prove to be the most expensive and disruptive man-made technological disaster in history.”¹¹ Once again, the first two-thirds of Jeffrey’s book rehearsed the history and major effects of the Y2K problem, detailing how the rollover would devastate electrical power and utilities, banking and insurance companies, the stock market, the military, government, and business communities. The concluding chapters, however, integrated these problems into Jeffrey’s own biblical hermeneutic and prophetic agenda: Y2K was the technological platform for the establishment of a one-world government and cashless society, in his view necessary conditions for the rise of the Antichrist and fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

Despite his claim that he was “not a prophet,” that this was “not the end of the world as we know it,” and that the sky would “not fall,”¹² in Jeffrey’s eyes, the Y2K “meltdown” was clearly a leading candidate to catalyze the creation of a unified world government. Indeed, the “Y2K computer crisis” provided a unique opportunity to impose a “global government solution” on that pesky problem of sovereign nations acting like sovereign nations and not falling into proper prophetic line. What was required by “those people dedicated to creating a New World Order” was a manufactured “economic, political, or military crisis of such vast proportions that no nation, on its own, could possibly solve it.”¹³ In Jeffrey’s view, Y2K provided just such a crisis.

Like the ministries of Grant Jeffrey and Jack Van Impe, *Newswatch Magazine* is both a print and Internet ministry dedicated to “making clear today’s news in the light of Bible prophecy.”¹⁴ In a number of issues leading up to the rollover, author David Smith (a Texas prophecy writer and Republic of Texas secessionist) repeated the most dire predictions. He tied these variously to the final implementation of a plan originally laid down in the eighteenth century by the Illuminati; a government seizure of all personal firearms; the mobilization of United Nations’ “stealth” troops already stationed around the United States and Canada; and the establishment of concentration camps to maintain social order. While these events are the staple of some modern conspiracy theories, for Smith all led directly to the rise of a one-world government and incontrovertibly to the endtime.

In his December 1999 Internet editorial, Smith described a fictional timeline following the millennium rollover. “As you read the following scenario,” he warned, “keep in mind that it is only a ‘projection’ of a potential series of events, but given the sheer scope of the implications of Y2K, it is not entirely out of the realm of possibility.”¹⁵ Despite his dissembling rhetoric, it is clear that Smith believed that events of this nature were imminent and that Y2K was an integral component. What follows is a capsule summary of the first week of 2000. Services fail; mar-

tial law is declared; the Republic of Texas “*promptly SECEDES from the union, immediately ejects the National Guard and the IRS, and then announces the takeover of all Federal military bases in Texas. The Federal Government is absolutely unable to retaliate or prevent the move.*”¹⁶ Finally, in an episode almost emblematic of post-World War II Christian dispensationalism, the

EXCHANGE RATE is fixed at one new dollar for 100 old dollars. People resist the cash exchange recall as the government insists that CASH REPORTING paperwork be filled out for the IRS and that “citizens” wishing to exchange their cash must also accept a NEW “Social Security” number to be tattooed on the inside of the wrist of every man, woman and child in each family turning in the cash.¹⁷

POST-Y2K RESPONSE

Just as interpretation of the Y2K problem varied among evangelicals and fundamentalists, so too did the responses after the 1 January 2000 rollover. Of those who presented Y2K as a specific problem, I have identified three main categories of response: revisionist deletion, unrepentant defiance, and conspiracist confirmation. Each of these managed the dissonance between expectation and experience in a different way.

Revisionist Deletion

Revisionist deletion was the approach taken by those who simply expunged most or all references to Y2K from their websites, and removed Y2K-related materials—books, videos, audio cassettes, tracts, etc.—from their ministry inventories. In a program reminiscent of Soviet historical revision, for this group it is as though Y2K simply never happened and the crisis never existed.

While Pat Robertson was careful to avoid connecting Y2K directly with prophecies of the endtime, the dedicated Y2K website that CBN operated for two years disappeared within two months of 1 January 2000. For a while, links to CBN’s Y2K news pages were still operational (e.g., from <<http://www.garynorth.com>>), but when one tried to access these stories, an error message appeared indicating the link no longer existed. Gary North’s site ceased operating, as well.

Jack Van Impe, who all but predicted the Y2K crisis as the catalyst for the Antichrist, simply ignored the fact that bank machines dispensed cash on New Year Day, airliners remained airborne, and life proceeded pretty much as it had. When I requested information on Y2K from his ministry, I was told that *2000 Time Bomb* was no longer available for purchase, and that all stock copies of the video had been destroyed. As noted above, besides a very off-hand remark by Rexella Van Impe there

was no mention of Y2K in any of Jack Van Impe's "Intelligence Briefings" after the turn of the new year. For Van Impe, as for CBN, it was as though Y2K was never an issue.

Unrepentant Defiance

The second level of response was that of an "unrepentant chicken little." That is, "I said the sky would fall and, despite all evidence to the contrary, I stand by my prediction." If revisionist deletion simply ignored the problem of cognitive dissonance, unrepentant defiance endeavored to remain true to the original prophetic vision—whether that vision was oriented toward imminent eschatology or mere global crisis. Dissonance management at this level, though, required that the Y2K event be framed as an ongoing problem. While some authors in this group maintained that the full ramifications of Y2K were yet to manifest, and that the effects would continue to escalate into the fall of 2000 or even the turn of 2001, others sought refuge in the carefully phrased ambiguity of their claims, maintaining that they did not actually predict anything would happen, but spoke only in terms of possibilities.

For example, Grant Jeffrey dealt with Y2K on his website in one document, "The Millennium Meltdown—A Retrospective Analysis."¹⁸ Somewhat disingenuously, he wondered whether people would think the problem was hyperbolized in books such as *The Millennium Meltdown*. This bit of rhetorical distraction allowed him to conclude that he was not, in fact, wrong. "A careful analysis of the issue reveals that Y2K is a genuine problem and that we would have suffered major breakdowns if we had not awoken [sic] to the danger, taken the proper corrective action, and fixed millions of computers and billions of lines of code worldwide."¹⁹ Despite the fact that he explicitly denied being a prophet, which very neatly avoided the problem of false prophecy, he took a position one might call "prophecy in process."

The *Millennium Meltdown* (and its fictional equivalents written by Jeffrey and co-author, Angela Hunt)²⁰ painted the new year in the very darkest of colors. Jeffrey linked the Y2K problem explicitly to his own eschatological agenda through the failure of banks and other services, which required the implementation of extreme measures—a cashless society and a one-world government—well-established conditions for the rise of the Antichrist. However, in his "retrospective" he pointed to the ongoing nature of the Y2K crisis, that the work of fixing all the computers worldwide "would not likely end until 2004."

Even though Jeffrey's writings were predicated almost exclusively on a 1 January 2000 deadline, this reframing of the problem allowed him to maintain his belief that there was indeed a problem (as there was), and that it might yet prove to be a part of God's prophetic timetable. In this, he shifted his discourse from the event to the process. In one sense,

he was entirely correct: Y2K was a problem on which tens of thousands of programmers and consultants worked, expending billions of dollars and millions of worker-hours. For Jeffrey, that was the evidence that his alarm was not raised in vain. He simply avoided the more definitive dispensationalist aspects of his predictions, subsuming them into a declaration that he was, in fact, correct about Y2K. He concluded, somewhat tautologically: "Only time will tell the full story of this crisis."²¹

On 20 October 1999, Gary North began his last Y2K webpage update with the words, "We've got a problem." He continued: "It may be the biggest problem that the modern world has ever faced. I think it is. At 12 midnight on January 1, 2000 (a Saturday morning), most of the world's mainframe computers will either shut down or begin spewing out bad data. . . . This will create a nightmare for every area of life, in every region of the industrialized world."²² In the wake of the rollover, North took a very similar approach to Jeffrey. Despite the fact that whatever problems materialized did so on a scale nowhere near the most moderate of his predictions, he maintained the essential integrity of his position. In response to accusations that he had overplayed the Y2K problem for his own benefit, North admitted both that he had been wrong, and that there had been nothing approaching the destructive scale he predicted. He qualified that admission, however, by adding that there should have been consequences, that "statistically speaking," something of major import should have happened. And, even though until late 1999, he was one of the most prolific and vociferous proponents of a millennium meltdown, he very quickly shifted responsibility for that onto "those in authority" who declared the advent of a millennial crisis. He did not, however, assume responsibility for his own place as one of those in authority. "I am indeed perplexed," he wrote. "I call upon Y2K mainstream prognosticators to explain this anomaly. I am open to suggestions."²³ Technically, North could not be wrong if he was misled by the "experts."

Conspiracist Confirmation

Finally, and from my perspective most interestingly, there were those for whom Y2K precipitated precisely the kind of crisis they expected. Shortly after the new year, in his online *NewsWatch Magazine*, David Smith published a six-part series entitled "The TRUTH About Y2K!" In it, he epitomized the most entrenched position of cognitive realignment—conspiracist confirmation. In his interpretation of events, Y2K was never really the problem that it had been made out to be. Whereas North blamed government and industry for misleading so many trusting people, Smith wondered, "Was it built up to provide a cover for the real agenda?"²⁴ The answer? "Y2K provided the EXCUSE to transfer the world FROM individual nation-states INTO an electronically knit

world—a world which is now ONE and which includes BOTH governments and corporations—the Great Trust.”²⁵ Smith concluded: “Everyone seemed to be LULLED to sleep by the Y2K hoax pulled off by the proponents of World Government! Notice what the Bible says about it: ‘For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then SUDDEN destruction cometh . . . and they shall not escape’ (1 Thes. 5:3).”²⁶

For two years prior to the rollover, the *Last Days Journal*, another online prophecy information service, declared “belief that Antichrist will be the one to rescue the [New World Order] and the entire world from the brink of disaster [i.e., Y2K], and in turn, be worshipped and served by the ruling elite who constitute the NWO.”²⁷ In late 1999, the authors reframed their expectations and recast Y2K as an even clearer confirmation of their deepest suspicions. Then, the event ceased even to be a “problem.” It was, in fact, “nothing more than a propaganda operation undertaken on the part of the Elites who rule our country and who desire a firmer and more comprehensive control over us all.”²⁸ “Y2K was first and foremost a ‘psy-op’ conducted for the purpose of gathering valuable intelligence as to how the American people would react in the face of a putative crisis.”²⁹ In these cases, there was little or no cognitive dissonance to resolve. The Y2K event and non-event correlated precisely with the reading given them by Smith and the *Last Days Journal*.

CONCLUSIONS

Whether they support, refute, or extend the basic theses, most analyses of failed prophecy events have been located within the theoretical framework of prophetic disconfirmation and cognitive dissonance first articulated by Leon Festinger and his colleagues in the mid-1950s.³⁰ Put broadly, when responding to the social reality that “dissonance produces discomfort . . . there will arise pressures to reduce or eliminate the dissonance.”³¹

While acknowledging the original work done by Festinger *et al*, as well as the numerous studies that have in one way or another proceeded from it, I would like to suggest that the material and social realities inherent in the Y2K crisis argue for a slightly different theoretical framing. Fortunately, Lorne Dawson’s meta-analysis of failed prophecy research provides just such a framework.³² Rather than simply a variation on the theme of Festinger *et al*, Dawson extends the analysis and proffers three basic “adaptational strategies” for managing cognitive dissonance, as well as six “influencing conditions” that help determine which strategy, strategy cluster, or strategic trajectory a particular group might employ.³³ First, as Festinger *et al* hypothesized, in the wake of failed prophecy a group may proselytize, seeking new adherents in an attempt to reinforce a now fragile worldview. Second, and more commonly, groups or individuals will rationalize the failure, perhaps by spiritualiz-

ing their interpretation of the event, translating it into a test of faith, or blaming it either on human error within the community or on the actions of others. Finally, and at first blush paradoxically, they may interpret the failure as a reaffirmation of their beliefs or ideology.³⁴ As Dawson points out, these are not discrete categories, and groups caught in a crisis of cognitive dissonance may employ one or more of them simultaneously, shuttle back and forth between them, or use one adaptational strategy in support of another.

In terms of the immediate and conclusive disconfirmation of the Y2K crisis following the 1 January 2000 rollover, proselytizing in the classic sense was simply not an option. Recall the bookstore owner who asked if I wanted leftover Y2K material for a museum exhibit. Thus, those evangelicals who had predicted Y2K as a problem were left either to rationalize the “failed failure” or to reinterpret it as an actual affirmation of their predictions. The three categories of response identified above include examples of each of the adaptational strategies proposed by both Festinger *et al* and Dawson.

Those who participated in a revisionist deletion of the crisis, and simply removed Y2K-related material from their ministry inventories and websites—e.g., CBN and Jack Van Impe—also effectively eliminated the “millennium bug” from their respective prophetic discourses. Choosing Festinger *et al*'s third option, they consigned the Y2K event and its aftermath to the “memory hole.” It became as much a non-event in the documentary history of the organization as it was in reality following 1 January 2000. Two conditions privilege the Internet as a medium that favors such a consignment: the ephemeral materiality of the World Wide Web, and its ability to function as a low-risk platform for “audience cult” participation.³⁵

First, as a means of communication and information provision, the Internet is fluid and ephemeral; structurally, it is not conducive to the permanent production, storage, or transmission of cultural products, a circumstance of which regular users are becoming increasingly (and often frustratingly) aware. Information appears as bits of light coherently but transiently arranged on a computer screen, a coherence that is dependent on an increasingly complex matrix of personal computer hardware, software, and the evolving architecture of Internet service provision. As most of us who use computers with any regularity can attest, unless specific, intentional measures are taken to save computer data, transience eventually takes its toll: data disappears when the power fails, a machine “crashes,” “freezes,” or is turned off inadvertently. In the case of the Internet, website authors can simply decide to remove material, either by taking pages down or by breaking the hyperlinks that “Internauts” need to find them. Once removed, it is as though the material never existed.

Second, there is the essentially consumerist nature of the target community. While this point is not limited to the World Wide Web, the

intentional, voluntarist nature of Internet participation constitutes a community very different from many of those studied by Festinger *et al*, and scholars who have replicated and tested their research on cognitive dissonance. In terms of large organizations like CBN and Van Impe Ministries, there were no closed communities in which cognitive dissonance over Y2K predictions could be called to specific account. Representing only a portion of those potentially affected by the “millennium bug,” evangelicals simply integrated the crisis into an already established and much more broadly conceived worldview. As far as the loose collectivity of evangelical actors concerned with Y2K may be called “communities,” they existed essentially as audiences, consumers of a Y2K product that ultimately demanded a significantly lower level of participation than those with more fully orbited commitments to particular religious communities. And, since Y2K was only one aspect of that worldview, indeed little more than the latest in a ongoing series of crises interpreted as portents of the eschaton, it is not hard to understand how easily this one could be relegated to the ashbin of history. New crises are always looming on the horizon.

Among the second group, the “unrepentant chicken littles” for whom the sky really did fall, Grant Jeffrey and Gary North chose to rationalize the “failed failure”—Jeffrey by appealing to the ongoing nature of prophetic fulfilment, North by leveling accusations that we were all misled by those in “authority.” In each instance, their prophetic case was improved by the continuing claim that the case, in fact, was not yet closed. That is, if they did not admit to a specific prophetic disconfirmation, no realignment of the cognitive dissonance was required because they believed no cognitive dissonance had occurred. Rather than an event the outcome of which was open to immediate and conclusive disconfirmation, Jeffrey reinterpreted Y2K as an open-ended process into which suspicious events may be integrated or not as they arise. North, on the other hand, reaffirmed his Christian reconstructionist critique of government by blaming nameless others for the problem, and ignoring his own contribution to the social construction of that problem. Once again, the extremely fluid nature of computer technology, and the ability to integrate any computer problem into an evolving Y2K scenario contributed to these adaptational strategies. By changing the framework in which the Y2K crisis manifested, Jeffrey and North managed the cognitive dissonance generated by the “failed failure” by refusing to admit any prophetic disconfirmation.

Similarly, there is no disconfirmation for the third group, evangelical conspiracists such as David Smith and the producers of the *Last Days Journal*. Because the Y2K event/process fits into a much more carefully articulated conspiracy theory of the endtime, one which does not require a single, overt catastrophe in order to be fulfilled, there is no cognitive dissonance because events transpired exactly as expected. For these par-

ticipants in the construction of the crisis, Y2K functioned as a government “Trojan horse” precisely as anticipated, moving society one step closer to a unified world government. For both this group and the “unrepentant chicken littles,” constructions of reality were maintained by the essentially non-falsifiable nature of their claims. In both groups, cognitive dissonance was reduced, because there was no way to prove that the crisis did not happen. Both successfully rationalized the difference between expectation and experience, between prediction and product.

In this third group, however, the “scope and sophistication” of the ideology in which prophetic events (as well as their interpretation and ongoing reinterpretation) were located allowed for a recursive and mutually supportive relationship between two parallel discourses. As Dawson points out, “if specific prophecies are anchored in a broader and more complex set of beliefs that frame a fairly comprehensive worldview, sense of mission, and collective identity, it is unlikely that specific disconfirmations will have a serious impact on the integrity of the group.”³⁶

Two mutually supportive discourses were available to this third group: a fundamentalist dispensationalism that interprets all world events as part of a grand narrative culminating in the Second Coming of Christ, and an entrenched conspiracism that regards the current political system as both hopelessly corrupt and a pawn in the hands of the powerbrokers of the New World Order. When Y2K failed to usher in the Antichrist, the discourse shifted from dispensationalism to conspiracism. Recursively, because the rise of the New World Order is a necessary component of the eschatological grand narrative, it both explained the “failed failure” and reinforced the dispensationalist ideology of which that failed failure was a part.

The subtle brilliance of this kind of conspiracism is that there is no event or circumstance that cannot be integrated into its larger grand narrative. Because the most important component of a successful conspiracy theory is the ability to incorporate all aspects of new data into its construction of reality, in the conspiracist worldview nothing is insignificant. In what is almost a rationalist parody of chaos theory, the very nature of conspiracism requires that events, which on the surface bear no relation to one another, be intimately and causally connected. If the conspiracy theory cannot integrate events—especially events that appear unrelated—then it will ultimately founder as a viable explanation. The inability to integrate events suggests at least the possibility that history occurs not as the result of some grand and sinister scheme, but instead as a multi-causal confluence of experiences, agendas, individual actions, social coalitions, and random events, all of which are later interpreted into a coherent framework known to observers as “history.” Because this possibility gainsays the ultimate monocausality upon which conspiracism depends, it fatally disables the conspiracy theory itself. Unable to abide ambiguity, conspiracism allows for no loose ends. Thus,

in this kind of dispensationalist Y2K discourse, if civilization as we know it was to end with the 1 January 2000 rollover, that was a sign that the Antichrist was to come and that the eschaton was imminent. On the other hand, if nothing significant happened following the rollover, Y2K must have been an elaborate government plot to prepare the world for the coming of both the Antichrist and eschaton. Rationalization and reaffirmation became the order of the day.

As researchers from Festinger *et al* to the present have consistently pointed out, the discomfort generated by prophetic disconfirmation needs to be managed in ways that reduce the tension inherent in the disconfirmation. In their comparative analyses of failed prophecy, both Zygmunt and Dawson note that the range of options employed in reducing dissonance was much broader than Festinger *et al* originally hypothesized.³⁷ As the range of evangelical responses to the “failed failure” of Y2K has shown, the ephemerality and transience of computer-generated phenomena, as well as the non-falsifiability of the role those phenomena play in the unfolding of the endtime, add considerably to the repertoire of available strategies and tactics by which the reduction of cognitive dissonance may be effected.

ENDNOTES

¹ *2000 Time Bomb*. Produced and directed by Jack and Rexella Van Impe. 80 min. Jack Van Impe Ministries, 1998. Videocassette.

This paper was originally presented at the 2000 annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Houston, Texas. Since then, I have greatly benefited from correspondence and conversation with Lorne L. Dawson.

² Personal conversation with the marketing department at Jack Van Impe Ministries International, 19 September 2000.

³ Rexella Van Impe, “A New Beginning” *Perhaps Today* (January-February 2000) at <<http://www.jvim.com/PerhapsToday/janfeb2000/beginning.html>>.

⁴ See, for example, Jim Bakker and Ken Abraham, *Prosperity and the Coming Apocalypse* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998); Shaunti Feldhahn, *Y2K, The Millennium Bug: A Balanced Christian Response* (Sisters, Oreg.: Multnomah, 1998); *Y2K, The Millennium Bug: A Balanced Christian Response for Youth* (Sisters, Oreg.: Multnomah, 1998); Shaunti Feldhahn, ed., *Countdown Y2K: A Christian Response to the Millennium Bug* (Sisters, Oreg.: Multnomah, 1999); Hank Hanegraaff, *The Millennium Bug Debugged* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1999); Dave Hunt, *Y2K: A Reasoned Response to Mass Hysteria* (Eugene, Oreg.: Harvest House, 1999); N.W. Hutchings and Larry Spargimino, *Y2K=666?* (Oklahoma City: Hearstone, 1998); Michael S. Hyatt, *The Millennium Bug: How to Survive the Coming Chaos* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 1998); Grant R. Jeffrey, *The Millennium Meltdown: The Year 2000 Computer Crisis* (Toronto: Frontier Research, 1998); Grant R. Jeffrey and Angela Hunt, *By Dawn's Early Light* (Nashville: Word, 1999); *Flee the Darkness* (Nashville: Word, 1998); Mark A. Kellner, *Y2K: Apocalypse or Opportunity?* (Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 1999); Hal Lindsey and Cliff Ford, *Facing Millennial Midnight* (Torrance, Calif.: Western Front, 1999);

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⁵ Lisa McMinn, "Y2K, the Apocalypse, and Evangelical Christianity: The Role of Eschatological Belief in Church Responses," *Sociology of Religion* 62, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 205-20.

⁶ Charles Cameron, "Overdetermined and Underestimated," Arlington Institute, <<http://www.arlingtoninstitute/articles/Overdetermined.htm>>, accessed 20 September 2000; Andrea Hoplight-Tapia, "Techno-Armageddon: The Millennial Christian Response to Y2K," *Review of Religious Research* 43, no. 2 (March 2002): 266-86.

⁷ Richard Lacayo, "The End of the World As We Know It? Doomsayers Say It's All in God's Endgame," *Time*, 18 January 1999, 60-70.

⁸ For example, while Jim Bakker had suggested that the Y2K crisis might be a "highly plausible explanation" for one of the riders of the Apocalypse, in a May 1999 interview he retreated from that position, declaring that "Y2K is going to be a Sunday picnic compared to what else is going to happen"—namely an asteroid currently on collision course with Earth the impact of which would completely block out the sun and the moon. See "Y2K a Piece of Cake," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 26 May 1999.

⁹ "This Week in Bible Prophecy" and the *Christian World Report*, <<http://www.twibp.com>>, accessed 10 August 1999, defunct by 25 September 2000; Cloud Ten Pictures, <<http://www.cloudtenpictures.com>>, accessed 24 September 2000.

¹⁰ Gary North, quoted in Robert Scheier, "The Doomsayers," *Computer World*, 27 October 1997, at <<http://www2.computerworld.com/home/online9697.nsf/All/971027y2k2>>.

¹¹ Jeffrey, *Millennium Meltdown*, 23.

¹² Jeffrey, *Millennium Meltdown*, 23.

¹³ Jeffrey, *Millennium Meltdown*, 155.

¹⁴ *NewsWatch Magazine*, <<http://www.newswatchmagazine.org>>, accessed 18 January 2000.

¹⁵ David J. Smith, "Personal Editorial: December 17, 1999." While normally archived at the *NewsWatch Magazine* website, this editorial has been removed. Smith maintains only a two-year running backlist of editorials, and the website administrator was unable to locate an archive copy.

¹⁶ Smith, "Personal Editorial" (emphasis in the original).

¹⁷ Smith, "Personal Editorial" (emphasis in the original).

¹⁸ Grant R. Jeffrey, "The Millennium Meltdown—A Retrospective Analysis," 10 January 2000, <<http://www.grantjeffrey.com/article/y2kretro.htm>>.

¹⁹ Jeffrey, "The Millennium Meltdown."

²⁰ See Jeffrey and Hunt, *Flee the Darkness and By Dawn's Early Light*.

²¹ Jeffrey, "The Millennium Meltdown."

- ²² Gary North, "Summary and Comments," 20 October 1999, <http://www.garynorth.com/y2k/detail_.cfm/6577>.
- ²³ North, "Summary and Comments."
- ²⁴ David J. Smith, "The TRUTH About Y2K!" *NewsWatch Magazine*, <<http://newswatch-magazine.org/y2k>>, accessed 25 September 2000.
- ²⁵ Smith, "The TRUTH About Y2K!"
- ²⁶ Smith, "The TRUTH About Y2K!"
- ²⁷ "Y2K, the New World Order, and Antichrist," *Last Days Journal*, <<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2813/>>, accessed 18 September 2000.
- ²⁸ "Y2K as Propaganda," *Last Days Journal*, <<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2813/article14.html>>, accessed 18 September 2000. Similar interpretations of the Y2K event and non-event can be found at the Power of Prophecy, <<http://www.texemarrs.com>>, accessed 18 September 2000; and The Watcher, <<http://www.watcher.org>>, accessed 18 September 2000.
- ²⁹ "Forecast for the Year 2000," *Last Days Journal*, <<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2813/article20.html>>, accessed 18 September 2000.
- ³⁰ Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956). Many of the studies inspired by Festinger *et al* are anthologized in Jon R. Stone, ed., *Expecting Armageddon: Essential Readings in Failed Prophecy* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
- ³¹ Festinger *et al*, *When Prophecy Fails*, 26.
- ³² Lorne L. Dawson, "When Prophecy Fails and Faith Persists: A Theoretical Overview," *Nova Religio* 3, no. 1 (October 1999): 60-82.
- ³³ Dawson, "When Prophecy Fails and Faith Persists," 63-75.
- ³⁴ Dawson, "When Prophecy Fails and Faith Persists," 63-70.
- ³⁵ See the chapter on "Client and Audience Cults in America," in Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 208-33.
- ³⁶ Dawson, "When Prophecy Fails and Faith Persists," 72.
- ³⁷ See Dawson, "When Prophecy Fails and Faith Persists," and Joseph F. Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail: A Theoretical Perspective on the Comparative Evidence," *American Behavioral Scientist* 16 (1972): 245-68.

Before and After Jonestown

The Peoples Temple Collection at the California Historical Society

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ABSTRACT: The California Historical Society is the chief repository for materials pertaining to the Peoples Temple. There are five collections that together form the Peoples Temple Collection, and each represents a unique perspective on the membership and the events leading up to the tragedy on 18 November 1978 at Jonestown, Guyana. Ongoing efforts at the Society to make these collections more accessible to researchers have resulted in new approaches for research into the Peoples Temple, its membership, and the nature of the church as a new religious movement.

On a recent quiet gray April morning in downtown San Francisco, several former members of the Peoples Temple gathered in the library of the California Historical Society to identify photographs from the Peoples Temple Collection. They were calm, reflective and determined. Looking through hundreds of passport, publicity, and candid photographs and contact sheets, they identified many of them with the help of the membership lists they had created 25 years ago. They asked each other about names and places in the photographs, some of which they had taken, as they recalled who was living and who had died. They talked about the work, music, and services of the Peoples Temple, and about those they missed. As they left at the end of the day, they offered to ask others who had been involved with the Temple to help identify images.

It was a remarkable event.

Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Volume 7, Issue 2, pages 86–91, ISSN 1092-6690 (print), 1541-8480 (electronic). © 2003 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

It was an event that signified an important marker in the archival work on the Peoples Temple Collection. For it is with and for the former members and their relatives, as well as current and future researchers, that this unique collection is being processed. The event of that day not only reflected the sustained community effort to process the collection, but also reflected the dichotomies that run throughout the collection and the history of the Peoples Temple. At once, the collection is an organizational record and a family record. It is a collection that spans the origins of the organization and the end of it. It is a collection that is sharply divided by the tragic events known as Jonestown. It is a collection that, although assembled because of death, is teeming with life.

ABOUT THE PEOPLES TEMPLE COLLECTION

The California Historical Society (CHS) currently holds five collections related to the Peoples Temple. The bulk of the papers came directly from the receiver of the Peoples Temple, Robert A. Fabian, who had been appointed by the California Superior Court in February 1979 to oversee the dissolution of the organization. Fabian obtained records, papers, ephemera, and realia from the basement of the law offices of Peoples Temple attorney Charles R. Garry, from the Peoples Temple headquarters in San Francisco, the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office that had obtained records and realia from real estate offices and members' homes in Los Angeles, places of business and members' homes in Mendocino County, the Government of Guyana, the United States State Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and from banks around the world. He produced documents related to lawsuits and claims against the Peoples Temple, records of his efforts to identify and bury those who had died in Jonestown, and the expense and court records of his five-year effort to deal with the estate. In June 1983 the court formally approved the assignment of the Peoples Temple and the receivership documents to CHS. Over the course of that summer, Fabian delivered 40 full file cabinets and cartons of documents to CHS. CHS processed and rehoused the collection in 130 cartons and printed several bound copies of a finding aid entitled *Guide to the Peoples Temple Records, 1941-1983 (MS 3800)* in June 1985.

In 1987 John R. Hall donated his supporting documents for his book, *Gone from the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History*.¹ The collection, the John R. Hall Research Materials (MS 3803), provides an excellent and accessible sampling of the types of documents collected and generated by the members of Peoples Temple, especially in the early years of the organization's history. Although many of the documents are photocopies, the collection includes originals of Peoples Temple pamphlets, flyers and appeals. His donation included a coded, detailed inventory listing each document.

In September 1988, Fabian unsealed nine boxes that contained copies of the papers recovered in Guyana by the United States Government and the Government of Guyana. On 19 November 1978, consulate officers from the United States Embassy in Guyana and Guyanese police and military authorities gathered these documents from Jonestown and Georgetown and stored them in 30 to 40 footlockers at the United States Embassy in Georgetown, Guyana. This collection, released by the FBI, consists of thousands of pages of documents that were generated by members of the Peoples Temple between 1972 and 1978. The FBI Papers from Jonestown (MS 3801) consist of correspondence; members' personal documents; records of the organization; manuscripts; interview and radio transcripts; financial, legal and government documents; and research materials. The records of the organization include details about the Jonestown agricultural community's medical, education and housing efforts, correspondence with the Guyanese government, and reactions to the media and United States government investigations. The members' personal documents include letters to Jim Jones, wills, and self-evaluations. Substantial portions of the papers are records from banks and the organization's ledgers. The FBI numbered each page in the collection and produced a document called the Guyana Index, an outline of categories they used in identifying the documents.² This collection is currently minimally processed, but available for use.

The Moore family donated their family's collection related to the Peoples Temple to CHS in 1989, after the tenth anniversary of the Jonestown tragedy in which they lost three family members. The Moore Family Papers (MS 3802) include correspondence from their relatives in Jonestown that describes their daily life in the agricultural community in Guyana and their growing concern about negative reports in the American media. The Moore family's research materials contain information about the Peoples Temple's history, supporters and detractors, and newspaper articles. A substantial portion of the collection consists of documents released by United States government agencies in response to numerous Freedom of Information Act requests and two lawsuits filed by Fielding McGehee III and Rebecca Moore.

In July 1999, Mrs. Luella Case, the widow of Ross E. Case, contacted CHS about donating her husband's collection of papers related to the Peoples Temple. Case was an associate minister with the Peoples Temple from 1961 to 1963. The Ross E. Case Papers (MS 4062) focus on Case's involvement with media investigations of Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple as a member of the Truth Squad in Mendocino County and a participant in the Concerned Relatives and Citizen Committee based in San Francisco. The collection includes a Peoples Temple commemorative plate, photographs, and an assortment of mainstream periodicals covering the initial reporting of the Jonestown deaths.

Stephan Jones, son of Jim and Marceline Jones, deposited photo-

graphs of the Peoples Temple and his family at CHS. The photographs include Jones family photographs from the 1930s to 1978 and the passport photographs of thousands of former members, most of them from the mid-1970s. In 1999 Stephan began visiting CHS to identify approximately 1,200 candid and publicity photographs. CHS has assigned the collection number MSP 3800 to these photographs and the passport photographs, contact sheets and negatives.

Taken together, these collections reveal a number of facets of the organization of the Peoples Temple. While creating a more balanced overall perspective, the collections provide the conflicting views of the insiders, those in opposition to the Temple, and those who are still grieving and searching for answers. New approaches continue to develop as the research field of new religious movements expands and better access to the collections is achieved. Recently, research into the racial makeup of the Temple has become a topic of interest again. Although the church is popularly known for its white membership, a far larger percentage of the members were African American; a fact that challenges assumptions about the nature of the Black Church in twentieth-century America. As more of the former rank and file members of the Peoples Temple come forward to give their stories, this issue will become a rich subject for further research. The weight of these stories may serve to provide a more complex view of the membership and shift popular focus away from representations of Temple leader Jim Jones, and toward examining the members' struggle to establish what many believed was a utopia in Jonestown.

RESEARCHING AND PROCESSING THE COLLECTION

Over the years, dozens of researchers have explored a variety of aspects of Peoples Temple history, practices and membership. Specific requests have ranged from "anything colorful" to photographs of the Jonestown agricultural settlement to biographical information on Temple leaders to letters of support from public officials to handwriting samples. Filmmakers and journalists have breezed through the materials. Some researchers are overwhelmed by the sheer amount of material in the files at CHS, especially when combined with other available materials from the media, the Internet, scholars, and from living people who were associated with the Temple.

In 2001 CHS began to work with interns and volunteers on a three-year project to review thoroughly the overall collection, to develop and complete processing procedures for the individual collections, and to revise the 1985 finding aid for the Peoples Temple Records. CHS continues to offer full public access to the collection to researchers; current users include researchers for media and scholarly projects related to the 25th anniversary of Jonestown in November 2003.

An overall view of the collection shows a division in the style as well as the content of the files. The Peoples Temple Records, the documents before the event of Jonestown, reflect the energy and struggles of an organization and families on the move and on a search for what they called the “promised land.” After the deaths at Jonestown, the documents contain the details of searches by lawyers, grieving survivors and relatives looking for answers, for someone to hold responsible, and for closure. These records detail the efforts to identify and bury the dead, to honor claims against the Temple’s estate and to disburse its assets, and to preserve its history. The papers of a disillusioned early member who left the organization in 1965, Ross E. Case, remind us that conflict was ever present in the Temple’s history. Before 1978, Case’s views were seen as those of an off-base former member and an outsider. After the deaths, Case was frequently interviewed and became a public speaker on what went wrong with the Peoples Temple. In the papers that are footnoted in his scholarly work on the Peoples Temple, John R. Hall carefully documents the evolution and sociological context of the Temple’s belief system that was immediately labeled “cult” by the media after 18 November 1978. The files in the Moore Family Papers that cover the years before the mass suicide-murders document the family’s efforts to stay connected even as differences of opinion and belief as well as the miles between California and Guyana separated them. The bulk of the Moore collection documents the family’s grief and their investigation of what happened that day in Jonestown and why.

The impact of researchers’ use over the past twenty years informs many of the processing issues and decisions. The guides that have been available to the collection, although lengthy, have been limited. One goal of the processing project is to open as many avenues of research as possible into these files by providing additional subject access. It is a daunting task—there are 150 cartons of material to make accessible versus the striking single image of the dead bodies at Jonestown—to disperse the biases that people have when approaching the collection. The media have described papers in the files as the writings of cult fanatics, particularly the FBI papers, and thus have dismissed the records of entire families and of an organization that affected many lives.

Research in these files offers specific challenges because of the record-keeping styles of the Peoples Temple and the organizations that collected the material. There have been several surprises. Folders labeled Official Correspondence in the Peoples Temple Records contain charming letters and drawings by children who were in Guyana. Files from the Los Angeles District Attorney’s office contain detailed summaries of interviews with members before 18 November 1978. Interspersed throughout the numbered documents in the FBI Papers from Jonestown are the separated and out-of-order pages of the history of the organization that members were assembling, and their docu-

mentation of the problems they encountered with the United States and Guyana governments. Among the many essays that members wrote about their commitment to the cause are papers in which the writers question the practices and plans of the Temple's leaders. Just this year, the author of a suicide note written as the deaths were taking place was identified—it is the second of only two suicide notes from that day.³

This under-utilized collection, with its thousands of pages generated by the members until the evening hours of 18 November 1978 and the newly available photographs, contains rich possibilities for research that may tell us more about the individuals who worked so hard to build Jonestown and who lost so much.

ENDNOTES

¹ John R. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987).

² The FBI's Guyana Index has been superseded by a set of three CD-ROMs containing Peoples Temple and FBI-related documents. The set is available from the FBI through the Freedom of Information Act. Unfortunately, it currently lacks an index or finding guide to the 40,000+ items on the disks.

³ The letter written by Ann Elizabeth Moore was found near her body in Jim Jones' cabin. The text of Ann Moore's letter may be viewed at <<http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/annie.html>>, accessed 5 May 2003. The second suicide letter, located by Denice Stephenson at the California Historical Society, has been determined to have been written by Richard Tropp based upon samples of his handwriting in the collection. The text of Tropp's unsigned letter may be viewed at <<http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/tropp.html>>, accessed 5 May 2003.

Drinking the Kool-Aid

The Cultural Transformation of a Tragedy

Rebecca Moore

ABSTRACT: The expression “drinking the Kool-Aid” has entered the American idiom with little reference to its origins in the Jonestown tragedy of 18 November 1978. Instead, people are using Jonestown—the event—and Kool-Aid—the phrase—to signify a number of contradictory meanings and values. This is because those who died in Jonestown were ritually excluded from cultural consideration. The more traumatic the original incident, the more likely memory of that event will be forgotten or repressed. The author identifies the ways Kool-Aid and Jonestown are used in the news and on the Internet, and catalogues four main groups of uses: cult disasters, including 9/11; political uses; entertainment; and business uses. The categories of cult disasters and politics use Jonestown references negatively, thereby indicating a tenuous connection with the origins of the concepts. The entertainment and business worlds, however, use the references both negatively and positively, thus revealing dissociation and amnesia about the reality of Jonestown.

Shortly after the suicide missions conducted by members of al-Qaida on 11 September 2001, reporters as well as the general public compared Osama bin Laden to Jim Jones, and al-Qaida to Jonestown. The comparison of the two events and the two leaders was almost inevitable because elements of religious fanaticism, suicide, and murder played a role in both. Jones was the charismatic leader of Peoples Temple, an interracial religious movement that immigrated to Guyana, South America, in the late 1970s. On 18 November 1978, members of the agricultural project, called Jonestown, apparently killed the senior citizens and children of the community before ingesting a mixture of

Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Volume 7, Issue 2, pages 92–100, ISSN 1092-6690 (print), 1541-8480 (electronic). © 2003 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

cyanide and fruit punch. Since then, Jonestown and Jim Jones have entered American discourse as code for the dangers of cults and cult leaders. For example, at least one columnist compared the 1978 tape recording documenting the process of dying in Jonestown with bin Laden's "confession" of his own crimes in 2001.¹

Other symbols from November 1978 have also entered the national vocabulary. To understand these symbols it is first necessary to note that the people in Jonestown apparently lined up at a galvanized metal tub that contained potassium cyanide, tranquilizers, and a British knock-off of Kool-Aid called Flav-R-Aid. Since that time, however, the association of Kool-Aid with Jonestown, and with suicide, has become fixed in popular understanding of the event. Thus, references to Kool-Aid, drinking the Kool-Aid, and lining up at the vat, also point to Jonestown. These references are not uniformly negative. On the contrary, they describe the positive qualities of corporate loyalty or team spirit. For example, when Michael Jordan, a former Chicago Bulls basketball player who in 2002 played for a competing team, returned to his former home to attend a Chicago Bears football game, he was said to be willing to drink "Bears' Kool-Aid."² This meant that Jordan was willing to set aside basketball rivalries in support of the home team at a football game.

This essay looks at how various elements of Jonestown have become contemporary metaphors for several different—and sometimes quite contradictory—meanings in American life.³ These metaphors encompass loyalty and pride, as well as danger and death. They developed because Jonestown represents a tabooed moment of the past. The trauma led to ritual exclusion of the Jonestown dead from American life and thought, and consequently to repression of and dissociation from the tragedy. Although some of the current references to Jonestown or Kool-Aid note their historical antecedent, many do not include any such indication, further distancing the metaphors from their source. This seems particularly clear in corporate uses of Jonestown metaphors, where the symbols have assumed positive, rather than negative, valences. Such transformations indicate how completely Jonestown has been repressed in American culture.

I will approach the subject by looking first at the rituals of exclusion that led to the repression and dissociation of cultural memories about Jonestown. I will explain the methodology I used, and then discuss the four categories of data identified: cult disasters, including 9/11; political uses; entertainment; and business uses.

MEMORY AND EXCLUSION

David Chidester argued that the treatment of the bodies from Jonestown characterized "rituals of exclusion."⁴ From initial United States government efforts to have the bodies buried in Guyana, to its transport-

ing them to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, 3000 miles from most deceased members' relatives in California, to the rejection by people in Delaware—the victims, or perpetrators, of Jonestown were ritually excluded from United States society. “Generally, Americans came to terms with the event by dismissing the people of Jonestown as not sane, not Christian, and not American, thereby reinforcing normative psychological, religious, and political boundaries around a legitimate human identity in America.”⁵ The Jonestown dead had no names, no graves, and no memorials, according to Chidester. Although the religious community of San Francisco enacted rituals of inclusion, by obtaining funding to transport and bury the victims in California, the mood of the rest of the country, and particularly the state of Delaware, was definitely exclusionary. Chidester identifies three reasons for this: first, dread of contamination and anxiety about health and hygiene because of the advanced decomposition of the bodies; second, concern for public safety given the nature of the deaths and the fear that relatives or weirdos might flock to the site of a mass grave; and third, apprehension that Peoples Temple somehow presented a spiritual danger.⁶ Because the people of Jonestown violated American norms—by rejecting American norms in the first place,⁷ and by committing murder and suicide—United States society failed to perform the usual integrating rituals that accompany death.

The initial exclusion, in fact, has led to cultural amnesia about Jonestown. Exclusion, coupled with the age of many people now using Jonestown metaphors, who have no historical memory from 1978, means that people have forgotten the source of the language they are using. According to Mieke Bal, cultural memory “signifies that memory can be understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual or social one.”⁸ She says that traumatic memory encompasses events that cannot successfully be integrated into society. As a result, memories are either repressed—that is, apparently forgotten—or are dissociated—that is, channeled into directions disconnected from the trauma. An example of the repression of Jonestown is the failure to memorialize those who died by erecting a monument listing their names.⁹ An example of dissociation is the use of the Kool-Aid metaphor, divorced from any reference to its origin in Jonestown. The headline on an article about mindless enthusiasm for technology stocks—“Did the Analysts Drink the Kool-Aid Too?”—presupposed that readers of an online business journal understood the reference to Kool-Aid, as there was no further explanation of the term.¹⁰

In summary, rituals of exclusion enacted within a year of the deaths alienated United States society from what was already culturally taboo: murder, especially of innocents, and suicide. The traumatic nature of the violation of these taboos resulted in cultural amnesia about the facts and particulars of Jonestown. Memories were either repressed, as by the failure to investigate the deaths or to memorialize those who died; or

were dissociated into widely divergent directions. It is these dissociated memories to which I now turn.

THE METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED

I first heard the expression “drink the Kool-Aid” in a 2002 radio account on Enron, the bankrupt energy company. This phrase referred to the willingness of Enron executives to accept uncritically what they saw happening at the company. The references to Kool-Aid prompted me to conduct Lexis-Nexis and Internet searches on a number of variables: Kool-Aid; drink the Kool-Aid, drank the Kool-Aid, with variant spellings; vat of Kool-Aid; Jonestown; Jim Jones; and pairs of variables, such as Jonestown and Waco, or Jim Jones and David Koresh.

I found over 2,000 references to Kool-Aid alone. Less than half the citations indicated fruit punch in its normal sense. The data that emerged can be classified into four distinct categories: 1) cult disasters, including 9/11; 2) politics; 3) entertainment; and 4) business in general, and high technology companies in particular. The categories of cult disasters and politics used Jonestown references negatively, with the sole exception being gangs or gang members calling themselves Kool-Aid.¹¹ The entertainment and business worlds, however, used the references both negatively and positively. This would indicate that cult disasters and politics maintain some, though tenuous, connection with the original historical referent, while business and entertainment uses reveal dissociation and amnesia.

CULT DISASTERS AND POLITICS

Finding references to Jonestown and Jim Jones linked to other cult disasters was to be expected. There were thus many intersections between Jim Jones and various cult leaders. More surprising, however, were the connections between Jim Jones and Osama bin Laden, with eighteen Lexis-Nexis references. The Leo J. Ryan Foundation, the anticult successor to the Cult Awareness Network, quickly made the connection between terrorism and cults at its national conference in October 2001. One speaker was scheduled to talk about “the similarities between cults and terrorist cells,” while another planned “to explain what goes through the minds of terrorists and suicide bombers.”¹²

A letter to the editors of the *Los Angeles Times* noted that bin Laden and al-Qaida were no more Muslim than other cults were Christian. “Like bin Laden, the Rev. Jim Jones and David Koresh considered themselves religious fundamentalists but led their followers down destructive and suicidal paths. The media referred to them as cult leaders, not Christian.”¹³ A reader of the *Seattle Times* took the same stance when writing, “I don’t know why no one has referred to bin Laden and the Taliban

as religious cult leaders. Like Jim Jones, they lead their people to suicide through sadistic means.”¹⁴

A number of columnists and reporters did make the comparison, however. The most extensive came from Don Lattin, *San Francisco Chronicle* religion writer. Lattin wrote that “one way to understand the cult of bin Laden is to look back on the horrors of Jonestown.”¹⁵ His column examined the words of Muhammad Atta, one of the leaders of the 11 September 2001 attacks, and of Jim Jones in light of their statements on martyrdom and death. He concluded by reminding the reader that “these acts are often carried out—not by mindless zombies—but by sincere ideological converts.”

Politicians continue to understand Jim Jones and Jonestown negatively as well, and see them as dangerous and deadly. Senator John Kerry (Democrat, Massachusetts) compared bin Laden to Jim Jones when he was confronting anti-war protesters in 2001.¹⁶ A less current, and more bizarre, political reference was made in 1997 when someone noticed exhausted legislators and staff members in the Albany, New York, statehouse. They said it “looked like Jonestown—with everybody lying on the floor or sleeping on their computers.”¹⁷ The reporter wondered how far the analogy should go: “Whether [the exhausted staff] were also sorry souls following demented leaders to tragic ignominy is for history to decide.”

Many political or labor leaders employed Jonestown or Kool-Aid as a metaphor for economic or political suicide. The earliest such example came from Lane Kirkland, President of the AFL-CIO in 1982. He denounced President Reagan’s policies as “Jonestown economics,” which featured a budget that “administers Kool-Aid to the poor, the deprived and the unemployed.”¹⁸

A reference to Jonestown as political suicide occurred just after Reagan’s re-election in 1984. In this case, however, Clarence M. Pendleton, chair of the Commission on Civil Rights, charged that black leaders led black constituents into a “political Jonestown” by encouraging them to vote Democratic.¹⁹ In 1995, United States Senator Kent Conrad (Democrat, North Dakota) suggested that American farmers would be committing economic suicide if they accepted reduced farm subsidies. Conrad likened the political deal offered to farmers with drinking Kool-Aid, thinking it was going to be a refreshing drink, “but you don’t wake up.”²⁰

A final example of the use of Jonestown as synonymous with political suicide came during California’s energy crisis in 2001. When the House Appropriations Committee voted along party lines to reject rate caps, California Democrat Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco claimed that Republicans were “lining up to drink Kool-Aid.”²¹ She was alluding to the political damage Republicans had done to themselves by rejecting a popular measure.

It can be seen that while cult disaster references read Jonestown on a literal level, its use in politics has assumed more figurative meanings. These metaphors range from political or economic suicide, to shooting one's self in the foot, to sugarcoating a bitter pill. Though somewhat remote, these meanings still maintain a fragile connection to the original event. The metaphors generated in the business and entertainment worlds, however, have repressed the narrative referent to Jonestown, and are thus dissociated from the original trauma.

ENTERTAINMENT AND BUSINESS

The extent of the dissociation of cultural references from Jonestown can be seen in the fact that Jonestown or Kool-Aid frequently function positively in corporate and entertainment discourse. Fans of the Sci-Fi Channel's "Invisible Man" send the star of the series packets of Kool-Aid, which restore his super powers when they are weakened. Underground film director John Waters bought the Jonestown death tape because he thought his record collection needed it. References to Jonestown abound in sports, the media, and popular fiction.²²

Perhaps the most bizarre appropriation of Jonestown is the garage punk band, the Brian Jonestown Massacre. The group has a sort of retro-1960s sound, especially in the "Ballad of Jim Jones," which one reviewer called "Dylan-esque."²³ Anton Newcombe established the band in 1989 or 1990, and according to his publicist, "Newcombe's fixation on the late Rolling Stones guitarist Brian Jones—along with the Jonestown mass suicide in Guyana, the band's spiritual mascot—is no joke."²⁴

Though Newcombe and others seem to capitalize on the horror of Jonestown, they still see it as horror, and market it as horror. This orientation is quite different from that of the corporate appropriation, or creation, of the metaphor "drink the Kool-Aid." The expression has been around for quite awhile, and seems to have arisen as part of the vocabulary of technology companies. The website *logophilia.com* provided a definition of "drink the Kool-Aid" in 1998: "drink the Kool-Aid, verb. To become a firm believer in something; to accept an argument or philosophy whole-heartedly."²⁵

This commitment may be understood either positively or pejoratively. Pejoratively, it means blindly jumping onto the bandwagon, to use another metaphor. So, for instance, a critic of the Perl computer programming language described supporters of Perl as an "ugly mob" that claimed that "Perl is the way and the light, man, so drink the kool-aid and ascend to programmer heaven."²⁶ When a news director arrived at KDKA-TV in Pittsburgh, he said he poured out the vat of Kool-Aid.²⁷ Al Blinke said that new employees had been discouraged from working hard in the newsroom. "[P]eople would tell them to drink the Kool-Aid and get in line."

But more often than not, “drinking the Kool-Aid” exemplifies support and loyalty rather than dysfunction. An Internet editorial titled “Will They Drink the Kool-Aid?” describes the advantageous lesson of inspiring employees to accept the vision of an effective corporate leader:

In an offhand reference to the power of Bill Gates and his vision, one of the water cooler phrases at Microsoft is “He drank the Kool-Aid.” The message is that the power of Gates’ vision and his view of how Microsoft products are helping make a better world have resulted in very committed followers of his dream for the company and its mission.²⁸

Another Internet editorial goes further in an article headlined: “Oracle: ‘Drink the Kool-Aid’ for e-success.”²⁹ The editorial argues that Oracle Corporation, a software company, needs a dictator. That “strong dictator” exists in Larry Ellison, Oracle chair, who is forcing Oracle staff to drink the Kool-Aid. Finally, another tech website I visited featured an image of the smiling Kool-Aid pitcher. The site reviewed MPEG-4, a program for producing computer animation. The reviewer raved about the new program and bragged that “yes, I drank the Kool-Aid.”³⁰

Dissociation from the trauma of Jonestown seems complete in these examples.

CONCLUSIONS

The events of 18 November 1978 in Jonestown were so horrifying that United States society has been unable to integrate them into constructive discourse about religion and religious violence. Jonestown has been purged from cultural memory because it does not “cohere” with institutional thinking about either religion or human nature.³¹ What happens when we forget, however, is that the trauma returns to affect the present. This can be seen in micro-events, such as the individual suicides or dysfunctional behavior of returning Peoples Temple members who escaped the deaths in Jonestown, and in macro-events such as the assault on the Branch Davidians, in which a faulty analysis of the group came from willfully repressing its differences from the Peoples Temple.³² This kind of repression results from the rituals of exclusion that Chidester identified.

When Jonestown is not actually repressed, however, it emerges loosed from its moorings in the dissociated expression “drinking the Kool-Aid.” While the Kool-Aid symbol has variable meanings, it has lost its signification of horror. Indeed, it has become downright praiseworthy in some cases. This transformation is extremely interesting, because it inverts the events of 1978 and converts them into something positive. The loyalty which Peoples Temple members had to each other and their cause seemed to lead them to accept death rather than betrayal of their

commune. In 1978, this loyalty was criticized and characterized as fanaticism, brainwashing, or mind control. Today, however, loyalty to a corporation is a virtue, to be promoted by a charismatic CEO, and embraced by committed employees. Loyalty is team spirit, cooperation, and commitment, all qualities that we endorse.

The only explanation for this radical shift in meaning—from Kool-Aid as deadly to Kool-Aid as desirable—is the incredible distancing from Jonestown that has occurred over the last twenty-five years. Though our society cannot speak of this taboo subject, the subject nevertheless continues to speak to us. It emerges in a twisted dissociation from reality and history. It lives on in metaphor and figure even as it is repressed from consciousness.

Thus we see how Jonestown has crossed the border from conscious to unconscious memory, from history to figure, and from tragedy to comedy. The event looms on the other side of consciousness, for it is too terrifying to face directly. Nevertheless it slips over the border between history and imagination, because its presence continues to demand acknowledgement.

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⁵ Chidester, "Rituals of Exclusion," 700.

⁶ Chidester, "Rituals of Exclusion," 687-89.

⁷ They had abandoned what they saw as a racist society and had chosen a comparatively harsher, but more egalitarian, lifestyle in the jungles of Guyana.

⁸ Mieke Bal, "Introduction," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover N.H.: University Press of New England, 1999), vii.

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²³ Sara Scribner, "Out of Their Heads," *Los Angeles New Times*, <<http://www.newtimesla.com/issues/1999-08-12/music.html>>, accessed 7 March 2002, but offline 3 April 2003.

²⁴ Scribner, "Out of Their Heads."

²⁵ "Drink the Kool-Aid," 9 April 2002, <<http://www.logophilia.com/WordSpy/drinktheKool-Aid.asp>>.

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A Decade After Waco

Reassessing Crisis Negotiations at Mount Carmel in Light of New Government Disclosures

Stuart A. Wright

ABSTRACT: On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the disastrous federal siege of the Branch Davidians, the tragedy is revisited in light of new government disclosures regarding negotiations during the 51-day standoff. Some of the newly available records—post-incident interviews with negotiators conducted by Justice Department investigators and memoranda written by negotiators or members of the FBI command structure—were concealed by the government for six years because they contained incriminating information. The new evidence reveals the degree to which negotiators at Mount Carmel recognized and roundly condemned the actions taken by the Hostage Rescue Team during the standoff that ultimately led to the insertion of deadly CS gas. Some negotiators even predicted the violent and fatal outcome of the siege weeks before it ended. Indeed, two veteran negotiators challenged the decisions of FBI commanders and were banished from Waco for their remonstrance.

The tenth anniversary of the tragic federal assault on the Branch Davidian complex outside Waco, Texas in 1993 affords scholars an opportunity to reflect on what is arguably the worst federal law enforcement disaster in our nation's history. I continue to be fascinated by the scope of the debacle and the missed opportunities by the government to resolve this matter peacefully; there is no greater example of misfeasance than the failure of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to bring about a bloodless resolution to the 51-day standoff. The brief analysis and update here will focus on the management of the

Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Volume 7, Issue 2, pages 101–110, ISSN 1092-6690 (print), 1541-8480 (electronic). © 2003 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

standoff at Mount Carmel in light of government disclosures that surfaced more than six years after the tragedy.

Researchers know substantially more today than was known ten years ago. This is due in no small part to the fact that the Department of Justice and the FBI concealed incriminating information about the operation. Some of this incriminating information leaked out slowly in the years after the siege raising suspicions about the official explanation and the pretext of unity within the FBI's crisis management team. There were some early indications that negotiators' efforts to resolve the standoff without bloodshed were undermined by aggressive tactical actions. The Justice Department report, for example, documented complaints, by negotiators and made reference to problems of "communication" between the negotiation team and FBI command.¹ At least one behavioral science expert involved in the standoff, Pete Smerick, later complained that he was pressured by senior FBI officials to change his assessment from a non-confrontational approach to a more aggressive tactical plan.² Yet in the ensuing years, key negotiations personnel in the FBI downplayed the discord among agents at Mount Carmel and denied that Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) tactical actions had sabotaged conciliatory negotiations. In fact, some new religious movement scholars met with FBI agents and were told that everything possible was done to get the Branch Davidians to come out of Mount Carmel.³ But in the face of the new government disclosures concerning the negotiations, the intent of this heralded effort of cooperation by the FBI with scholars must now be questioned. One could make a compelling argument that the intended effect of the putative synergy was nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt at co-optation.

The government's effort to bury this information ultimately imploded, however, when in 1999 evidence emerged that the FBI had fired pyrotechnic projectiles at Mount Carmel the day the complex burned to the ground.⁴ In response to sweeping subpoenas for FBI and Justice Department records by congressional investigators in 1999 and discovery motions filed by Branch Davidians' attorneys in the civil case, the Justice Department reluctantly turned over interviews with negotiators and other records pertinent to the disaster. The contents of these new records reveal deep rifts within the FBI during the standoff—rifts between the negotiators, on the one hand, and the FBI/HRT command structure and tactical team on the other. Why is this important? Because the rifts expose egregious violations of hostage-barricade protocols and procedures that caused the negotiations to break down. The gravity of this evidence can hardly be understated—it speaks to the *manipulation* of the standoff by the HRT command to achieve a desired end. The demise of negotiations was offered as proof by officials that the Branch Davidians were not truly interested in negotiating, and on this false assertion the direction of the whole operation turned. It was the prin-

principal justification for the high-risk, dangerous CS gas assault on 19 April 1993 that killed 76 people.

The government clearly understood the importance of this damning information and fought furiously to keep it out of the civil trial. In the wrongful death law suit brought by Branch Davidian survivors and family members against the government in the summer of 2000, federal attorneys filed *in limine* motions seeking to exclude depositions of negotiators, Department of Justice interviews with negotiators after the incident, and any memoranda written during the standoff. The motions to exclude were based on the "discretionary function" exemption. The discretionary function exemption provides immunity for government agents who have to make critical decisions in the face of a crisis. The law is designed to provide legal protection to agents for what might later be determined as "bad judgment," assuming good intentions and conceding the risk of unforeseeable circumstances. In this case, however, the law should not have applied because plaintiffs' attorneys could show reasonable cause for malicious intent on the part of key government officials. Nonetheless, Judge Walter Smith granted most of the government's motions to exclude evidence and the jury never had an opportunity to consider the full range of facts in their deliberations. The verdict, which exonerated the government of wrongdoing, was based on a constricted array of evidence and bewildering procedural rulings.⁵

Elsewhere I have offered a more systematic analysis of violations of basic crisis negotiations guidelines at Mount Carmel.⁶ At the time of that research, I felt duly compelled to produce extensive documentation of crisis negotiations protocols. There is no need to reproduce that work here, so I am going to summarize some of the key principles and objectives in crisis negotiations and then examine some of the violations, bolstered by the new evidence. Crisis negotiations with hostage-takers or barricaded subjects can be summarized as follows: with the goal of saving lives as the chief objective, negotiators should exercise patience, maintain a conciliatory posture, establish reliable communication, cultivate empathy, defuse fear and anxiety, avoid escalating stress, build trust and rapport, avoid power plays or heightened gestures of threat, and use the advantage of time to wear down the recalcitrant party. As time passes, defenses subside, fatigue sets in, concessions are made, and the likelihood of a peaceful resolution increases.⁷ The FBI's own reports show that when agents pursue a strict strategy of containment and conciliatory negotiations, 95 percent of hostage-barricade incidents are resolved without loss of life.⁸ On the other hand, tactical assaults result in a 78 percent injury or death rate.⁹

What happened at Mount Carmel is that the FBI grew impatient and pushed to resolve the standoff by force. The joint congressional report by the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight and the Committee on the Judiciary concluded that the assault was

“premature” and stated, “The Attorney General knew or should have known that there was little risk to the FBI agents, society as a whole, or to the Davidians from continuing this standoff and that the possibility of a peaceful resolution continued to exist.”¹⁰ In fact, HRT commander Dick Rogers conceded to investigators soon after the Waco debacle that negotiators could have coaxed sect members from their barricaded complex if given enough time. “I think given enough time,” Rogers stated, “any negotiator could get them out if [there was] no suicide, but what is enough time?”¹¹ As critics suspected, the negotiators at Waco firmly believed the standoff could have ended peacefully. Agent Gary Noesner, FBI negotiation coordinator for the first half of the standoff, told Justice Department investigators in August 1993, “The negotiators’ approach was working until they had the rug pulled out from under them” by aggressive tactical actions. In the same interview, Noesner also stated, “Any negotiator would have told them that dismantling the building would provoke a violent response. Anyone would have seen the risk. What was the rush?”¹²

According to an internal FBI memo apparently written in late March 1993, Danny Coulson, Deputy Assistant FBI Director and founder of the HRT, complained to Justice Department officials, “A lot of pressure is coming from [Dick] Rogers. We had similar problems in Idaho with him and he argued and convinced the SACs [Special-Agents-in-Charge] that Weaver would not come out. That proved to be wrong. I believe he is a significant part of the problem here.”¹³ The reference to the 1992 FBI standoff with the Randy Weaver family at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, is instructive. In Coulson’s autobiographical account, *No Heroes: Inside the FBI’s Secret Counter-Terror Force*, he describes his reaction to the operational plan submitted by Dick Rogers and Gene Glenn. The plan called for dismantling the building and, if the Weavers did not surrender, introducing CS. I quote Coulson because the tenor of his reaction is revealing.

As I read the fax, my jaw locked. *My God, we’ve got a problem*, I said to myself. *Well, this is just not going to happen*. I [had] thoughts that would’ve earned me about a hundred letters of censure, the cleanest of which was, *These dumb shits. Have they got their heads up their ass or what?*

What I had in my hand didn’t resemble anything that the HRT or any law enforcement agency should do. It was a military assault plan. [. . .] This so-called plan violated every tenet of crisis management drummed into us at the FBI Academy.¹⁴

Coulson conveyed similar frustration with Rogers’ aggressive tactics at Waco:

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 D.C.¹⁵

The impatience with negotiations exhibited by HRT commander Dick Rogers in critical incidents apparently was well known among negotiators. In deposition testimony for the Branch Davidian civil trial, veteran negotiator Clint Van Zandt was asked for his assessment of Rogers. Van Zandt replied, "I think he [Rogers] 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."¹⁶

The development of trust between negotiator and hostage-taker or barricaded persons is essential for any successful resolution of a stand-off to occur. But no such trust was ever allowed to develop at Mount Carmel. This was the crux of the complaints made to government officials by the negotiating team with regard to tactical strategies in the 1993 Justice Department report.¹⁷ The complaints centered on the "punishment" of Branch Davidians meted out after compliance with requests by negotiators on 12 March and 21 March, undermining any bond of trust cultivated between the two parties. After sending out two sect members on 12 March, FBI commanders cut off all electricity to Mount Carmel. Following the surrender of seven sect members on 21 March, the HRT's tactical unit bulldozed Davidian cars and smashed the children's motorcycles and toys with tanks. FBI negotiation coordinator Gary Noesner stated in a post-incident interview with Justice investigators, "If the power had not been cut . . . additional people would have come out. This could have set a positive example where people would have continued to cooperate and built to a peaceful resolution." The negotiations were working and agent Noesner considered the events of 21 March "the most positive day they had experienced." He said, "There were indications that 20 people would come out the next day." But within hours, the Combat Engineering Vehicles began destroying the group's automobiles. Noesner later recalled the situation with horror, saying it was "the worst decision he's seen in 21 years with the FBI."¹⁸

One imperative task of the negotiator is to reduce stress. High stress interferes with negotiators' performance, adversely affects decision-making skills, elevates emotions, speeds physiological processes and increases frustration and anxiety. Yet, the HRT's response plan in Waco after 17 March was referred to as a "stress escalation" program, according to the Justice Department report.¹⁹ This is the most obvious and defiant breach of fundamental crisis negotiation protocol evidenced by the government. It is virtually impossible to reconcile a *stress escalation* strategy with the principle of *stress reduction*. The only rationale offered for the stress escalation plan recorded in the Justice Department report was that it would result in driving a psychological wedge between Koresh and

his followers, in the apparent hope that group fragmentation would occur.²⁰ The strategy produced the opposite effect, however, bonding members together against a perceived common enemy, a basic sociological axiom. Most observers assumed Rogers was simply unenlightened in the ways of social science and did not anticipate the consequences. But Rogers later admitted in a September 1993 interview with Justice Department officials that he was aware that tactical actions would drive the Branch Davidians closer to their leader, blatantly contradicting the “psychological wedge” theory offered in the report: “[W]hen we started depriving them, [we were] really driving people closer to him [Koresh] because of their devotion to him.”²¹

Rogers’ contempt for the Branch Davidians and his preference for tactical force appears to explain his impatience with both negotiators and barricaded sect members. In the 1993 interview with Justice Department investigators, Rogers derided efforts by negotiators, saying they just “wanted to curry favor with these people” while he and others wanted to “up the ante.”²² Rogers and on-scene commander Jeffrey Jamar repeatedly claimed that negotiations were futile and pushed for the CS gas assault. This push for an assault was made in the face of conflicting advice from the FBI’s own experts. FBI psychological profilers Pete Smerick and Mark Young advised on-scene commanders to ease the tactical pressure at Mount Carmel in a series of memos written between 5 March and 8 March. The HRT command ignored their advice and, according to Smerick, later pressured him into changing his assessment to support a more confrontational approach. In a 1993 post-incident interview with Justice Department investigators, Smerick said the FBI commanders were driven by a desire to intimidate and anger the Davidians; they thought that “these people were criminals, and you must punish criminals.”²³

Evidence clearly shows that pressure from FBI officials in charge impeded effective negotiations through tactical aggression, causing communication between the federal agents and the Branch Davidians to stall, and providing a rationale for the deadly assault. Dr. Alan Stone, who was later asked by the Justice Department to review the actions of the FBI, made the following statement in his report: “[T]he FBI’s own experts recognized and predicted in memoranda that there was the risk that the active aggressive law enforcement mentality of the FBI—the so-called ‘action-imperative’—would prevail in the face of frustration and delay. They warned that, in these circumstances, there might be tragic consequences from the FBI’s ‘action-imperative,’ and they were correct.”²⁴ According to another expert commissioned by the Justice Department, Dr. Nancy Ammerman, the negotiators and the people representing the Behavioral Sciences Unit “were outranked and outnumbered. Within the command structure . . . people from the tactical side were simply trusted more and were more at home with the SACs in

Waco.” According to Ammerman, “There was an understandable desire among many agents in Waco to make Koresh and the Davidians pay for the harm they had caused. Arguments for patience . . . fell on deaf ears.”²⁵

The lack of control by the negotiators at Mount Carmel was a critical flaw in the government’s handling of the standoff. Negotiators did not have control of their side of the bargaining and thus could not provide assurance of safety and security to the besieged group. The negotiating unit remained at Mount Carmel after the third week apparently to provide only the appearance that conciliatory negotiations were still taking place. Consider that two and a half weeks into the standoff, the FBI command requested a library of recordings of irritant sounds to be used for purposes of sleep deprivation.²⁶ The Justice Department log records the use of high-intensity stadium lights on the building at night while deafening sounds were blared that may have exceeded 105 decibels, a level that according to Dr. Stone “can produce nerve deafness in children as well as adults.”²⁷ Stone states that “[b]y March 21, the FBI was concentrating on tactical pressure alone: first by using all-out psychophysiological warfare intended to stress and intimidate the Branch Davidians; and second, by ‘tightening the noose’ with a circle of armored vehicles.”²⁸

Stone summarized the problem as follows:

[T]actical pressure began at the operational level over the objections of the FBI’s own experts in negotiation and behavioral science, who specifically advised against it. These experts warned the FBI command about the potentially fatal consequences of such measures in dealing with an “unconventional” group. Their advice is documented in memoranda. Nonetheless, tactical pressure was added.²⁹

According to the Justice Department report, “negotiators lamented the absence of joint strategy sessions with the on-site commander and the tactical commander.” Negotiators complained that “the on-site commander and the tactical personnel were often impatient with their progress and failed to provide them with adequate information so that negotiators could coordinate their efforts with the efforts of the tactical team.”³⁰

These “communication problems,” as they were referred to in the Justice Department report, were likely an explanation designed to cloak the intentions of the HRT command. Negotiation coordinator, Gary Noesner, later told a Justice Department investigator that the aggressive actions by the tactical unit were pre-meditated. “A guy from the HRT said it was just to ‘piss them off,’” Noesner said, referring to the events of 12 and 21 March.³¹ Another negotiator, Frederick Lanceley, told Justice Department investigators that he was so concerned that he went

directly to on-site commander Jeffrey Jamar and complained. Soon afterwards, agents Noesner and Lanceley were recalled from Waco. Upon learning of his banishment, a distraught Lanceley told another member of the negotiation unit, "I want to get out of here because all of these people in that compound are going to die, and I don't want to be here when it happens."³²

CONCLUSION

In sum, the FBI abandoned conciliatory negotiations early in the standoff, even though negotiations were succeeding and sect members were still surrendering. Tactical-aggressive actions sabotaged good-faith negotiations, sending mixed messages to the barricaded sect members by "punishing" positive responses to overtures from negotiators. Contradictory gestures of conciliation and threat served to confuse and terrify those inside Mount Carmel, leading to communication breakdown, distrust, and polarization. Despite warnings from their own behavioral science advisors, FBI officials proceeded methodically toward a military solution. Seizing upon a purported impasse in negotiations that the HRT command helped to create, a tactical plan was implemented, entailing a massive insertion of the riot-control chemical agent, CS. The likelihood that the standoff would end violently was greatly increased. Perhaps the most poignant statement epitomizing the perspective of the negotiators was made by veteran negotiator Clint Van Zandt. Van Zandt told Justice Department investigators in 1993 that seeing the CS insertion plan go forward on 19 April was "akin to sitting on the bow of the Titanic and watching the iceberg approach."³³ Indeed, an accurate record of official decisions and actions that transpired at Waco differs dramatically from the one most people were told. It shows that the negotiators recognized the manipulation and self-destruction of the operation and predicted the tragic outcome even as the events at Mount Carmel were still unfolding.

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- ¹⁰ *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, August 2, 1996* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1996), 4.
- ¹¹ Lee Hancock, "Sect Could Have Been Coaxed Out, FBI Figure Told Officials," *Dallas Morning News*, 23 June 2000.
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- ¹⁶ Deposition testimony was read into evidence at civil trial. See also Jim Henderson, "Woman Says Tank Prevented Escape," *Houston Chronicle*, 27 June 2000.
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- ¹⁹ *Report to the Deputy Attorney General*, 138.
- ²⁰ *Report to the Deputy Attorney General*, 129.
- ²¹ Hancock, "Sect Could Have Been Coaxed Out."
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- ²³ Hancock, "FBI Missteps."
- ²⁴ Alan S. Stone, "Report and Recommendations Concerning the Handling of Incidents Such as the Branch Davidian Standoff in Waco, Texas," unpublished report to the Deputy Attorney General, 8 November 1993, 15.
- ²⁵ Nancy T. Ammerman, "Waco, Federal Law Enforcement and Scholars of Religion," in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), 291-92.
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²⁷ Stone, "Report," 28.

²⁸ Stone, "Report," 10.

²⁹ Stone, "Report," 9.

³⁰ *Report to the Deputy Attorney General*, 140.

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Conference Updates

Compiled by John Bozeman

CONFERENCES

Communal Studies Association (CSA): 9-11 October 2003, Mary's City of David, Benton Harbor, Michigan, USA. CSA meetings include papers about historic and contemporary communal societies, as well as tours of nearby historical communal settlements. The society welcomes participation of scholars from all disciplines who are researching communal groups, as well as museum curators and historic site managers, members of current communities, and descendents of communal members. This year's conference will be held at Mary's City of David in Benton Harbor. This was an agrarian community known in the early twentieth century for running an amusement park, a jazz orchestra, and a famous traveling baseball team. It also functioned as a resort, primarily for Jewish residents of Chicago. For more information contact the Communal Studies Association, P.O. Box 122, Amana, IA 52203. Voice mail and fax: 319-622-6446. Email: csa@netins.net. Website: <http://www.communalstudies.info/index.shtml>. This year's program chair, Lucy J. Kamau, can be contacted at lucykamau@msn.com.

American Family Foundation (AFF): 17-18 October 2003, Radisson Hotel Springfield-Enfield, Hartford, Connecticut, USA. The American Family Foundation generally focuses on the potential for family disruption, personal trauma, and Christian theological issues caused by people converting to new religious movements. Over the past few years, however, the AFF has broadened the scope of its annual conferences to include representatives from both the scholarly community and the new religions themselves. The theme of this year's conference is "Understanding Cults and New Religious Movements: Perspectives of Researchers, Professionals, Former Members, and Families," and will include presentations by sociologists Eileen Barker and E. Burke Rochford, Hare Krishna experts Steven Gelberg and Anuttama Dasa, thought-reform consultant David Clark, Rabbi A. James Rudin, Reverend Robert Pardon, and many others. For more information see: http://www.cultsandsociety.com/infoserv_events/2003/aff_confer

ence_2003_10ct_events.htm>. Mail: American Family Foundation, P.O. Box 2265 Bonita Springs, FL 34133. Email: aff@affcultinfoserve.com. Phone: 239-514-3081; fax: 732-352-6818.

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion/Religious Research Association (SSSR/RRA) joint meeting: 23-26 October 2003, Sheraton Norfolk Waterside, Norfolk, Virginia, USA.

The SSSR program's guiding theme this year will be "Religion in Motion." The events of 11 September 2001 have raised awareness among social scientists and the general public of the complex interrelationships between social change, globalization, religious and cultural transformation/entrenchment, and social conflict. At the same time, however, we are also witnessing challenges to the authority of religious leaders and institutions as civic leaders, intra- and inter-denominational social movements, and the media press for institutional reforms and the adoption of values and policies derived from other social institutions. What have we learned from these, and other, events? What can we say about interrelationships between social change, religion, and social conflict that we could not say just a few years ago? For more information contact James Cavendish, Department of Sociology, University of South Florida, 4202 East Fowler Avenue, CPR 107, Tampa, FL 33620 USA. Email: jcavendi@luna.cas.usf.edu. Website: <<http://las.alfred.edu/~soc/SSSR>>.

As is customary, the Religious Research Association's annual meeting will take place concurrently with the SSSR. This year's RRA conference will focus on "Religion and Contemporary Culture: Exploring the Intersections of Religious Research," and will examine questions such as how ethnicity is linked to religious practice, how state policies of immigration impact religious patterns, the gendered nature of religion and religious experience, how religion, gender, and race intersect, and how categories are constructed to explore these various intersections. For more information contact Lori G. Beaman, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Concordia University, J. W. McConnell Building, Room LB 681, 1455 de Massonneuve Blvd. West, Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8. Email: beaman@alcor.concordia.ca. Phone: 514-848-4539. Fax: 514-848-4539. Website: <<http://rra.hartsem.edu/annual.htm>>.

Society for Utopian Studies: 30 October-2 November 2003, Bahia Resort Hotel, San Diego, California, USA. The Society is an international, interdisciplinary association dedicated to the study of utopianism in all of its forms, with a particular emphasis on literary and experimental utopias. Scholars representing a wide variety of disciplines are active in the association, and approach utopian studies from such diverse backgrounds as American Studies, architecture, the arts, classics, cultural studies, economics, engineering, environmental studies, gender studies, history, languages and literatures, philosophy, political science, psychology, soci-

ology, and urban planning. For conference information, contact Paul Majkut, 11255 North Torrey Pines Road, La Jolla, CA 92037-1011. Email: pmajkut@nu.edu. Phone: 858-642-8465; fax: 858-642-8715.

American Academy of Religion (AAR): 22-25 November 2003, Atlanta, Georgia, USA. The AAR is one of the largest organizations in the world dedicated to the academic study of religion. The group's annual meeting brings together over 7,500 scholars from some 70 program areas. General questions can be sent to the Annual Meeting Director, 825 Houston Mill Road NE, Suite 300, Atlanta, GA 30329-4211. Phone: 404-727-3049. Fax: 404-727-7959. Email: annualmeeting@aarweb.org. More information can also be found at the AAR website at <<http://www.aarweb.org>>. Upcoming annual meetings will be held in San Antonio, Texas (2004), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (2005), Washington, D.C. (2006), and San Diego, California (2007).

CALL FOR PAPERS

Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR): 18-20 June 2004, at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, USA. Sponsored by CESNUR and the J. M. Dawson Institute for Church-State Studies of Baylor University, this conference will be an opportunity for scholars and others to meet and share their insights about the perceptions, reactions, conflict, and adaptations of individuals, religious, and secular institutions to the growing diversity found in many countries. The conference will allow for the discussion, clarification, and exchange of information; also, field trips will be arranged before and after the main conference sessions. Speakers are invited from a broad range of fields, including sociology, anthropology, social psychology, history of religion, law, religious studies, and theology. Paper themes may include, but are not limited to: new religious movements, violence, and conflict; religious liberty issues from different international perspectives; fundamentalist movements in international perspective; fiftieth anniversary reflections on Scientology (founded in 1954); and/or fifty years of the Unification Church's mission to the United States. Two copies of abstracts of 100 to 200 words should be sent, along with a short C.V. (mandatory), by 31 March 2004 to *both* of these organizations: The Director, The J. M. Dawson Institute for Church-State Studies, Baylor University, P. O. Box 97308, Waco, Texas 76798-7308, or preferably by email to Derek_Davis@baylor.edu; and CESNUR, Via Confienza 19, 10122 Torino, Italy, or preferably by email to cesnurto@tin.it. Papers must be written and presented in English.

Book Reviews

Concise Dictionary of the Occult and New Age. By Debra Lardie, with Dan Lioy and Paul Ingram. Kregel Publications, 2000. 302 pages. \$19.99 cloth.

According to its back cover, this dictionary is intended as a reference guide “to help Christians navigate the confusing and potentially dangerous minefield of today’s occult and New Age thought,” a minefield which the authors consider “a powerful opposition to the Christian faith” (back cover). This agenda, alongside frequent errors and the lack of an index or references, limits the book’s usefulness for scholars. Nevertheless, it may be of interest to those studying evangelical Christian responses to New Age and non-Christian religions.

Specifically, the book shows that some of the more alarmist 1980s assessments of the New Age movement by evangelical Christian authors (such as Constance Cumbey), despite having been tempered somewhat, linger in their effects. For instance, the authors show a fascination for some of Cumbey *et al*’s bugbears, such as the supposed New Age plot for a one-world government or theosophist Benjamin Crème’s proclamations about the arrival of Lord Maitreya. Some entries show what could be interpreted as a projection of the authors’ own fears. The entry entitled “Green,” for instance, begins by defining this term as “[a] New Age political movement particularly strong in Europe” (p. 117), but goes on to inform readers that “[p]roponents of Green blame Christianity for the current environmental crisis” and that, for them, “[t]he problem can only be solved by banishing Christians to alternate dimensions of space and time . . .” (p. 118).

Conceptual confusion results from what may be an unwillingness on the part of the authors to think through their own positions. The very first entry, “Abortion,” tells us that “New Age philosophy views humanity from a dualistic, Eastern perspective, in which matter is regarded as evil or in which the spiritual is deemed to be more valuable than the material. This results in a pro-abortion inclination . . .” (p. 11). Meanwhile, the “New Age Movement (NAM)” entry informs us that adherents “try to convince people that everything is fundamentally divine because every-

thing flows from the universal self or 'God'" (p. 184). This issue of monism versus dualism in New Age thought is never grappled with directly. The latter entry reveals the authors' penchant for simplification by defining the New Age Movement as a "broad coalition of various networking organizations that believe in a New World Order, a new world (pantheistic) religion, and a New Age Christ" (p. 184).

At other times, readers are treated to simple errors of fact or misleading characterizations. An entry on "Ectopia" repeatedly misspells the title of its subject, Ernst Callenbach's novel *Ecotopia*. Joseph Campbell is said to have been "one of the most influential minds behind the New Age relativism of the late 20th century and the concept of 'political correctness'" (p. 55). (Anyone who knows much about Campbell should know that he can hardly be criticized, let alone be held responsible, for "political correctness.")

The choice of entries shows much unevenness. There are entries on Antichrist, Dolphin, Doukhobors, Eliade, Hegel, Kinesiology, Thomas Kuhn, Karl Marx ("many" of whose ideas, we are told, "have found a home in New Age philosophy" [p. 166]), Sun Myung Moon ("New Age adherents are quite sympathetic to Moon's beliefs" [p. 175]), Rolfing, and the Windham Hill recording label. But there are no entries on such more central figures as G. I. Gurdjieff, Margaret Murray, Dion Fortune, Alan Watts, or Starhawk. Despite such errors of fact and judgment, however, the book's tone is generally relatively neutral. It offers more than 700 entries and two appendices, "Knowing the Truth: God's Word, Cults, and the Occult" and "Scripture Twisting."

Adrian Ivakhiv, University of Vermont

The Universalist Movement in America. By Ann Lee Bressler. Oxford University Press, 2001. \$35 cloth.

It's a safe guess that Universalism is not deeply familiar to the average American (or even the average scholar of American religion) today. To the extent that it is known at all, it is typically as the term that follows "Unitarian" in the name of the most prominent highly liberal contemporary religious movement. A few churches remain faithful to their heritage and call themselves "Universalist," but the movement seems near extinction today, except as the weak half of the Unitarian-Universalist Association.

Because of the movement's obscurity, this book will probably not turn up on the must-read lists of any but a few specialist scholars. It does, however, rate inclusion in serious libraries as a standard monograph on its subject. Likewise, the book will not replace Russell E. Miller's massive *The Larger Hope* (1979/1985), but it does provide a new interpretation of what once seemed like a faith that would prosper and expand in an

optimistic new nation. Those who do have this special interest will find the volume carefully researched and appealingly written.

Bressler captures the vitality of the Universalists as their movement took shape in the rational intellectual climate forged by the Enlightenment. She focuses a good deal on Hosea Ballou, the key promoter of the faith. After about 1840, however, the story becomes one of decline (first in vitality, then in membership) as Universalists moved on to other interests (especially Spiritualism), and as the idea that there will be no eternal punishment for even the most severe sinners gained a foothold in nominally orthodox denominations.

Perhaps extinction, or at least obscurity, is inevitable for a small movement centered on a single distinctive doctrine, in this case the belief that ultimately all, not just the good or the faithful, will be provided with eternal salvation by an infinitely loving God. Universalism does occupy a unique niche in the enormous world of American religion, however, and Bressler's study thus makes a useful contribution to the understanding of American religious history and genius.

Timothy Miller, University of Kansas

Aum Shinrikyo and Japanese Youth. By Daniel A. Metraux. University Press of America, 1999. 144 pages. \$24.50 paper.

Ever since the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system by members of Aum Shinrikyo, a plethora of books and articles has been written by scholars and journalists trying to understand the how and why of this incident. Daniel Metraux has contributed the modest volume under review.

Metraux states that while the leaders of Aum Shinrikyo "have received considerable attention, scholars have paid comparatively less attention to Aum's ordinary members" (p. v). He then claims two primary goals for his book: 1) to explore why ordinary members joined, their goals and expectations, and why they chose to stay or quit; and 2) "to examine how the Aum phenomenon reflects a growing sense of alienation among some younger and middle-aged Japanese" (p. vi).

After a careful reading of this book I am left wondering why it was written. Metraux has pieced together the work of others throughout his text and has not added any of his own research, interpretation, or insights. His claim that "scholars have paid comparatively less attention to Aum's ordinary members" (p. v) is proven false by his abundant use of material from numerous scholars' published works.

Metraux also has the frustrating tendency to make statements that he does not support, e.g., "recent studies" (p. 5), "Aum's older members are mainly female . . . who have suffered from a combination of physi-

cal ailments and mental depression" (p. 57). One is left wondering to which studies he is referring and how he knows of these women's physical and mental states.

Finally, the text is in need of a good dose of editing. For example, what are we to make of the opening and closing lines of the section entitled "Popular Culture" (pp. 43-44): "The Japanese media has detected to a New Age 'religious boom' since the late 1970s," and "They sustain interest in nonrational or extrasensory topics, however, does have some genuine connections with modern religious trends in Japan"? Serious scholars, however, may glance at the bibliography to find some reliable and insightful studies.

Richard W. Anderson, Oregon State University

Tantra in Practice. Edited by David Gordon White. Princeton University Press, 2000. 640 pages. \$75 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

Tantra is one of the most misunderstood of Indian religious traditions. This is partly due to an over-emphasis on what are considered its less savory aspects, and partly to lack of understanding of what Tantric practice is really all about. This book adds considerably to our knowledge of Tantric practice, and the reasons why such practices are undertaken. From its pages emerge stories of kings, monks, and ascetics; poems, mythological stories, and sacred texts; rites of healing, purification, and magic; and fascinating men and women dedicated to the attainment of their goals.

The book opens usefully with an editor's introduction on the nature of Tantra in general, against which the other contributors, all experts in their fields, cover the wide range of Tantric practices. Here the editor explains that behind all practice lies the goal of liberation or salvation, but what distinguishes it from other traditions is that "[r]ather than being impediments, the world and the human body [and desire] become channels to salvation" (p. 10). Knowing something about its *practice* then is particularly important for an understanding of Tantra.

The 36 articles range widely over the diverse religious traditions (Hindu, Buddhist, Jain) and countries (China, India, Japan, Nepal, Tibet) where Tantra is found, from the earliest to modern times. They are consistently well written, informative and interesting. For example, the eight contributions covering Tibet impressed me with their comprehensiveness and clear explanations of what can be difficult material, so that one can almost feel oneself approaching the mountain retreat of some meditating lama. This is due to excellent writing, and the judicious editorial selection of contributors, which characterizes the whole book.

Using this book is made easy by the inclusion of additional lists of

contents by tradition and by country, and a good glossary of foreign terms. Each contribution includes a short list of further reading. And as we have come to expect from this publisher, the book is beautifully produced. I recommend it most highly.

Malcolm McLean, University of Otago

Elvis Culture: Fans, Faith and Image. By Erika Doss. University Press of Kansas, 1999. 304 pages. \$24.95.

Can a god be copyrighted?

How are copyright and canon alike in protecting authority and profit? (Surely the deuteronomic reform, determined to put the high places out of business, was as good for the capital's capital as it was for the developing monotheism.) As I put down Erika Doss' book on the anniversary of Elvis' death, tributes to the "King" flourish. Doss' carefully researched work elicits the core question, *what is religion?* The commemoration of Elvis challenges the study of religion as much as "Any Way You Want Me" shattered the tidy 1950s.

Is religion grounded in ritual?

Elvis has pilgrimage sites, preeminently Graceland, orchestrated and confined by Elvis Presley Enterprises, Inc. Elvis is venerated at abundant shrines—domestic, commercial, and virtual. Elvis has fans. Doss reminds us that "fan" is short for "fanatic." Perhaps this diminished word distends back into the space of its etymology. "Fans," those devotees, appreciators, collectors, speculators, and parodists, consistently outmaneuver the theorists of religion.

Can religion form around a figure without a message?

When Doss and others label the Elvis events a "quasi-religion," where will the boundary line be drawn for a "real religion"? Does religion depend upon a prophetic message? Elvis is mercurial, but no Hermes. Although canonized as a United States postage stamp, he has no message. He's a flash in the tradition of Pan. Doctrine and ethical regulations are unlikely to accrue to the Elvis image; however, religion—despite credal claims of the exclusivists—is not grounded in belief. (Elvis has fans.)

Must religion comfort or transform?

"The fact is, of course, that for the past 40 years, Elvis has held an extraordinary position as an emblem of transgression and transformation in American popular culture precisely *because* of his material culture visibility. His multivalent image as a secular saint, a sexual fantasy, an all-white guy, and even a corporate logo is rooted in the culture of his materiality" (p. 247). Yet, Doss quotes fans who are moving Elvis into immateriality: "God bless the fan who may own only one photo but

remembers Elvis in his thoughts, prayers, and most of all by reaching out to someone in need as did and still does Elvis" (p. 247). Elvis is both an industry and an intercessor: a recipe for an enduring religion.

Does religion need a metaphysic?

"Most fans believe Elvis is dead, but by collecting and displaying Elvis stuff they construct his immortality" (p. 66). Elvis has left the building. Elvis has been sighted.

Does religion rest on sacred text?

Elvis is in gold and platinum.

Does religion require cult?

The Presleyterians and Elvisopalians defy Protestant iconoclasm, thriving on relics, pilgrim badges, and shrines. As Elvis equaled appetite, this is a religion that is enacted by collecting. "Collecting Elvis, in other words, authenticates the loyalty of his fans" (p. 62), says Doss, pointing out that neither high-culture notions of beauty nor standard notions of the rare are signals for the making of sacred stuff. As in any religion, a stone or scrap is sacred by context, not content. "Walter Benjamin argued that the 'aura' of a work of art declines with its mechanical reproduction, but for fans . . . the seductive authority of Elvis's image increases through repetition, mass circulation, and steady consumption" (p. 64). Doss points out that mass-produced memorabilia is more valued in Elvis culture than unique works made by recognized artists. However, mechanical reproduction is nothing to electronic proliferation: Elvis Internet sites promote community, and the "Vigilcast" enables Elvis fans all over the planet to participate electronically in the annual Graceland pilgrimage.

Will the defining line be whether there are second-generation followers? Second-generation fans, born after the death of the "founder," continue the enthusiasm. Most religious movements do not endure so long; but staying power is not a criterion for religion, which is determined less by theologies and doctrines than by performances and fetishes. Elvis sightings may be *darshan*. Perhaps by the time scholars can read the desire of the teddy bear, Elvis will no longer be offering solace or bliss, but will be but a footnote in mid-twentieth-century popular culture, as obscure as Mithra. That does not eradicate the religious qualities of the Elvis phenomenon.

Can religion be ironic?

"Visually resplendent in reds and blacks and golds, the high holy colors of religious cultures from Byzantine to Buddhist, Goodman's *Altar to Elvis* is fun, funny, and tricky" (p. 71) Doss says of an artist's ironic use of iconic value.

Zen (arguably a religion) exploits the ironic, but, after all, Elvis does not ask if the Hound Dog has a Buddha nature. Nevertheless, if this inglorious god's devotees can be simultaneously heartfelt and dis-

ingenuous, perhaps they have been deeply informed by the “book of J” and its ambivalent god, the core of the Hebrew Scriptures—and of Western culture. The Pastor of the First Church of Elvis says, “Although I see all this as satire, Elvis may actually evolve into a major religion some day. Let’s face it, it’s no sillier than any other religion” (p. 105).

A post-modern construction of religion embraces and dissolves its own self-consciousness; the critique comes almost quicker than the faith. Elvis impersonators are goofy shamans who more than imitate, they conjure. Doss claims that Greil Marcus says it best; perhaps he does:

Even as Graceland Enterprises, Inc., the corporation Priscilla Presley formed to market the legacy, gained increasing legal control over the image of Elvis Presley, its meanings spun further and further out of control. They cannot be controlled, any more than, in the beginning, Elvis Presley’s body could stop moving; the sale of Elvis Presley is now an anarchy of possibilities, a strain of freedom less clear, but no less suggestive, than the man ever was (p. 253).

Does religion both purify and contaminate?

Doss is critical of the “canonical,” commercial Elvis Presley Enterprises, owned and controlled by the estate. Oddly, EPE, the estate religion, permits no velvet Elvis, oil paintings on velvet of the King. Is there a reformation looming? Catholic or Baptist fans do not find it difficult to reconcile their faiths with their devotion to Elvis. Is pluralism, in practice, syncretism? The fluff and fraud of Elvis challenges descriptions and analyses of dominant religion. The “exclusivism” of the Western traditions, is, in practice, quite eclectically inclusive. One fan, who works waiting tables in Memphis to be “closer” to Elvis and whose home shrine features Elvis pictures decorated with gold foil from cigarette packages, says, “There is a distance between human beings and God. That is why we are close to Elvis. He is like a bridge between us and God. . . . I believe in Jesus Christ and I believe in God, but Elvis was special. Elvis was in our times, he was given to us to remind us to be good” (p. 70). Are there as many views of Elvis as there are messianic hopes and christological arguments in the early church(es)?

Will religion collapse or stretch into parable?

Is Elvis a parable? Is he like the Buddhist parable of the boy whose mother, as her son set off for the big city, requested a relic of the Buddha? On his return, and nearly home, the boy remembered his promise. Breaking a tooth from a dog’s skull, he wrapped it in silk and presented it to his mother as the Buddha’s tooth. The tooth began to work miracles for the neighbors. The distraught boy confessed his lie to his mother. She wouldn’t listen; she knew it was indeed the tooth of the Buddha. The Buddha himself appeared to the troubled boy and said to him, “It is indeed my tooth.” Elvis is a Buddha’s tooth, a lie that works

mundane little miracles in the neighbors' lives. Is Elvis less the stuff of Durkheim and more the stuff of Campbell?

Is religion the aesthetic dimension?

Doss' greatest contribution is her esteem for humble and funky arts, such as the coin-operated church at Rockin' Rudy's music store in Missoula, Montana. Elvis is venerated and spoofed in homely artistic productions. (Silly is cognate with *seelig*.) Recent Graceland annual arts contest winners include the 50 acres of mown hay, sculpted in his image and titled, "Hay Elvis," a quilt titled, "Elvis: a Gift from the Gods," and the Elvis lawn flamingo. Doss' definition of the aesthetic is as limber as Elvis in 1959.

"This erasure of cultural hierarchy suggests how Elvis fans, like consumers in general, often subvert the stuff of mass culture and use it toward their own ends" (p. 63). As Doss focuses on image, on the translation of consumer goods to consuming good, she demonstrates what may be the central character of religion. America saw itself in Elvis. Well, okay, he can't be as controversial as Jesus, but he does epitomize both possession and ecstasy for his fans. Well, okay, he's not born from Zeus' thigh, but he is Dionysian. Long before anyone knew he was divine, he was divinely beautiful. A popular picture magazine of mid-twentieth century showed that Elvis' features resembled Michelangelo's David. They titled it, "Elvis—A Different Kind of Idol."

Is religion myth?

Can the King tell a story? As rags to riches occupant of Heartbreak Hotel, dying in his bathroom of a combination of 37 prescription drugs, the Elvis myth meets criteria for sacred hero: humble beginnings, culture bringer, mocked, ignominious death, rebirth. Some will argue that there's no rebellion, no redemption. Sure, he was a Mama's boy, served his time in the Army, shook hands with Nixon, and avoided profanity; yet, his icon has been affixed to rebellions left and right, fueled redemptions sexual and spiritual. Less heroic and more trickstery, Elvis the cross-dresser was the psychopomp of puberty who declined as he inflated into buffoon. He's socially slippery, androgynous, and more subversive than Brando's "Whaddayagot?" Doss synthesizes interpretations of Elvis' transgendered image and of his appropriation of racial ambiguity. One characteristic of religion, though, is its transparency—that it makes obvious the hidden, tells a culture about itself. America is as fluid and perplexing in gender and race as is Elvis.

If Gladys Presley had named her son Simon, would he have come to be known as Simon Sacrum, and would the world have recognized sooner that he was the holy bone? Elvis Pelvis should have been a hint, so located in the region of the sacred phallus or the right thigh of the priestly portion. Although it is foolish to speculate on the origins of religion, the fool Elvis shows religion originating in that curious translation of the awe of sex into the sublime.

Does a religion conceal an esoteric dimension?

Perhaps Elvis is shaman, but not a mystic. Uh oh. If mysticism is the experience of the collapse of space and time, some of his fan-atics would tell you a secret:

One night, Elvis told June to look up at the moon, to let herself totally relax and not think about anything else, just let herself float in the space between the moon and the stars. If you relaxed enough, he told her, you could get right up there next to them. "How long have you been doing this?" she asked him. "Since I was a little boy," he told her. But he didn't tell just anyone about it. "I learned a long time ago not to talk about it. People think you're crazy when you talk about things they don't understand." His mother, he said, was the only one he had ever really trusted to understand. ["1956: Elvismania!" at <<http://www.people.Virginia.edu/~acs5d/bio/1956.html>>, accessed January 2001.]

Elvis and Gladys are not Augustine and Monica; yet, if this is not an account of a mystical experience, it still warrants our Jamesian interest in the varieties of experience. Much contemporary religious activity is marked by its eccentricities and privacies. However, despite Whitehead's definition, Elvis isn't exactly what one does with solitariness: Elvis fans use their stuff and his music to form loose, emotional community. Among the theorists, whose definition of religion would most suffice? Maybe Elvis is Marx's opiate, but Elvis' fans are closer to Einstein's definition: "What is the meaning of life, or of organic life altogether? To answer this question at all implies a religion" (*The World as I See It*, 1934, p. 237). Doss deftly shows how collecting stuff, or a coin-operated church, becomes language, makes meaning. She resists the temptation of giving in to calling Elvis culture by the name of religion.

Let's then turn to Suzanne Langer: "Religion is a gradual envisagement of the essential pattern of human life, and to this insight almost any object, act, or event may contribute. . . . Sacred objects are not intrinsically precious, but derive their value from their religious use" (*Philosophy in a New Key*, 1942, p. 155). Finally, we can rely upon Tillich's aphorism, "Religion is the substance of culture, culture the form of religion" (*Theology of Culture*, 1959, p. 42). Thus, ephemeral Elvis is the substance of a culture, popular culture is a form of the sacred.

Those who find religion in the kinetics of the psyche will more likely affirm, ah, yes, a religion can be (even marketed as) play. If we consider religion to be more radically grounded in emotion than belief, more in ritual than in doctrine, more in love than ethics, more in image than in concept, more mystical than salvific, more embarrassing than exalted, then maybe a religion can be built upon this rock.

Lynda Sexson, Montana State University

Rara: Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora. By Elizabeth McAlister. University of California Press, 2002. 279 pages. \$24.95 paper.

According to this extraordinary book, the Rara festival of Haiti's impoverished majority is virtually ignored by that nation's privileged classes and by Western scholarship. However, in her bold ethnography, author Elizabeth McAlister divulges multiple worlds of social critique, political resistance and alliances, power negotiation, religious struggle, and historical remembrance and revision.

Rara season is one of the few times that the poor assemble freely, en masse, relatively unharmed. . . . [T]he religious and political tensions in Haitian society rise to the surface as religious ritual is brought into public space, the popular classes confront the power holders and the Rara bands confront each other (p. 4).

Drawing on folklore research and performance theory, McAlister illustrates how the meaning and intent of songs change as they intersect with Haitian history and politics. Yet, to allow readers to interpret her data for themselves, she provides not only the lyrics in both English and Haitian Kreyol but, in fact, an accompanying CD of performances she recorded in the course of her research. She is likewise open about her methodology and sources, diligently describing how power is expressed and shifts as she, a white, female, American academic, moves from one social location to another. This personal aspect of Rara, so carefully integrated, enhances the book's vibrant writing as much as its research.

Seven chapters examine aspects of the festival's bands and music. McAlister's key contention is made in the first chapter, "Work and Play, Pleasure and Performance" (p. 25-57): "Rara consists of an outer, secular layer of Carnival 'play' surrounding a protected, secret inner layer of religious 'work'" (p. 31). This duality is examined as it manifests itself in a performance's message, or *pwen* ("point"), symbolically couched to convey a number of meanings. While on a local level, these songs typically express an allegiance to Vodou spirits (*lwa*) over and against the Catholicism of the elite, or lewdly comment on individual sexual mores, this ambiguity is absolutely essential when the target is often a corrupt government or a brutal military, as explored especially in chapter six, "Voices under Domination: Rara and the Politics of Insecurity" (pp. 159-81). "Rara both creates popular solidarity and conveys cognitive messages to the dominant classes of the strength and power of the disenfranchised. Within this expressive politics, the significance and connotations of words and phrases are manipulated in a dialogic process of figurative change" (p. 161). Rara hence transmits a rare sense of power and voice to the society's most disempowered and silenced.

The final chapter, "Rara in New York City: Transnational Popular

Culture" (p. 183-207), which examines the role of Rara in forming and maintaining the identity of Haiti's Diaspora community, is followed helpfully by a chronology of Haitian political and Rara events and a glossary of Kreyol terms. With its geo-political scope, resistance to academic myopia, and anticipation of her readers' concerns, McAlister presents not just an invaluable study of a long-neglected facet of the lives of Haiti's poor but also an exemplar of ethnographic research.

Dereck Daschke, Truman State University

Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons. By Jan Shipps. University of Illinois Press, 2001. 400 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

Shipps' new book invites the reader on a journey through some thirty years of her life, both as a historian and a private person. Every chapter begins with a narrative of a certain period of the author's life, arranged in temporal sequence, and provides a glimpse of her personal sphere. Each autobiographical piece precedes and contextualizes Shipps' shorter academic writings from that period: these are mainly unpublished and born of her experience and thoughts. This interesting intermingling of personal and professional histories results in a fascinating set of adventures, each interacting with and enriching the other. Through this structure, Shipps is also able to contextualize her essays within a wider contemporary social, religious and intellectual milieu, thus adding new dimensions to them. As a result, a fuller understanding of her aims, thoughts and writings emerges.

The academic pieces cover a wide range of topics within Mormon studies: Latter-day Saints history, identity, and self-representation; theology and the Mormon experience as well as the history of scholarship on the Saints. These essays should be appreciated not only for their scholarly merits, elegance, and ease of reasoning and argumentation, but also for the unfolding of Shipps' philosophy and conviction regarding the place and role of historiography and the responsibility and ethics of the historian and researcher. The result is a book that is both a major contribution to Mormon scholarship and an edifying experience for anyone interested in history, religion, or social philosophy.

Iren Annus, University of Szeged, Hungary

Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity. Edited by Melvyn C. Goldstein and Matthew T. Kapstein. University of California Press, 1998. 217 pages. \$15.95 paper.

As a work of cultural anthropology, *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet* seeks to explore the link between religious revival and cultural identity

in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region and the areas of Amdo and Kham, which traditionally were not under the Dalai Lama's political control. The fieldwork results focus primarily on the monastic and ritual aspects of Tibetan Buddhist resurgence, and therefore do not privilege forms of revival directly associated with political protest, such as those most often relayed by the Western media.

In an introductory chapter, Goldstein anchors the problem in its historical context by surveying the distinctive phases that have marked Chinese policy on religious expression in Tibet since its 1950 annexation of the territory. Goldstein outlines the gradualist approach in the years 1951-59, the 1959-66 repression which culminated in total suppression during the Cultural Revolution, and the post-1978 relaxation of religious prohibition. It is precisely this last phase on which the authors concentrate.

The second chapter is devoted to the revival of Drepung monastery, the largest institution of its kind in the pre-Communist period. It first gives an overview of Drepung history and its past structure and functioning. It then moves to the effort made to rebuild the monastery since the early 1980s, covering aspects such as financing, recruitment policy, reorganization of the scholarly curriculum, distancing from political dissidence and accommodation of local Communist authorities. The picture that emerges is of an institution with an uncertain future, whose members constantly need to do a fine balancing act to reconcile political and religious aspirations.

The third chapter examines the rebirth of the Nyingma Ter tradition of uncovering sacred relics and texts through the help of a "Terton," a reincarnation of one of Padmasambhava's period disciples in the eighth century. At the heart of this section, we find the figure of Khenpo Jikphun: besides founding a successful mountain hermitage and purifying monasticism of some of its historical corruptions, Khenpo Jikphun has revived the Ter tradition in both political and ethnic Tibet, in effect transplanting it into Chinese soil. This revival of Ter illustrates how Tibetans can—within limits—extend their culture to China and reverse the currently dominant pattern of cultural influence.

The last two chapters concentrate on the restoration of ritual practices, namely the rebirth of the Kagyu pilgrimage of Drigung Powa Chenmo and of the 1,100-year-old Lürol festival in the Regpong and Gu River Valley. While showing how such rituals help shape a feeling of national community, both chapters emphasize the importance of the generational gap when interpreting the value of these events for the participants involved. Also stressed are the differences between the festival and pilgrimage in the pre-Communist era and in their revived forms.

Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet is a study that balances synthetic clarity with detailed scholarship; its style and contents will appeal to laypeople and specialists alike. This work provides a useful introduction for

exploring the intricate links among religion, resistance to oppression, national identity, and nationalism. In addition, it does justice to the paradoxical nature of the religious phenomenon as such: on the one hand, it highlights the inherent potential for renewal of a pragmatic form of spirituality like Buddhism; on the other, the book demonstrates how difficult it can be to resuscitate a religious tradition in all its purity, especially when its forms and practices have not been allowed to undergo a natural transition from an agrarian society to an industrial one.

Throughout this study—and this undoubtedly constitutes one of its greatest merits—the contributors never underestimate the complexity of the issues they address. While sensitive to the destruction enforced upon a civilization, they do not idealize Tibetan society or the dharma in its Tibetan guise; nor do they overlook the difficulty of reconciling religious tradition with social and economic modernity.

Franca Bellarsi, Université Libre de Bruxelles

Waves of Rancor: Tuning in the Radical Right. By Robert L. Hilliard and Michael C. Keith. M.E. Sharpe, 1999. 309 + xii pages. \$32.95, paper.

This is a disappointing book. The idea of examining the far right's use of radio is a fascinating one and the authors have uncovered a considerable amount of highly interesting material. But the result not only suffers from the perpetual problem of much writing on the right, of allowing hostility to get the better of scholarship, but also from other distinct problems. The polemic is easy to detect: Pat Robertson is characterized as a *führer*, the militias as anti-Semites committed to terror and chaos. The last point is somewhat surprising since the authors also quote left-wing writers Chip Berlet and Matthew Lyons arguing against stereotyping militia members as racists or anti-Semites. What is particularly disturbing, however, is a problem not only with interpretation but also empirical information. Robertson's Family Channel is given instead to Jerry Falwell and the libertarian magazine *Reason* becomes transposed into a militia supporters' Internet publication. Perhaps the most startling, however, is the discussion of the former Klan leader and Republican state legislator David Duke's decision to abandon political activity. This would be a real revelation but for the fact that the material in question refers to another former legislator, the Patriot activist *Charles Duke*.

There is much interesting material in this book, from a list of racist websites to correspondence from the influential Patriot broadcaster Chuck Harder. There is a host of well-chosen quotes from different sectors of the right, and it is understandable that President Bill Clinton was reported to have made this book part of his vacation reading. For him,

a full-throttle attack on those who have sought to make his life a misery must have been welcome. For us, however, rather more complex emotions are summoned up. This could have been a great book; instead, we are forced to use its rich array of sources as a starting point to explore what the authors have been too impatient to explain.

Martin Durham, University of Wolverhampton

Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness: Zen Talks on the Sandokai. By Shunryu Suzuki. Edited by Mel Weitsman and Michael Wenger. University of California Press, 1999. 196 pages. \$22.50 paper.

Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness is a compilation of public lectures on the *Sandokai* given by the late Shunryu Suzuki in 1970. This eighth-century poem represents a seminal Zen text, whose title approximately translates in English as “The Harmony of Difference and Equality” or “The Oneness of One and Many.” Composed by Sekito Kisen (Ch. Shitou Xiqian), “dharma successor” to Seigen Gyochi (Ch. Quingyuan Xingsi), this poem would later prove a main source of inspiration for Tozan Ryokai’s *Hokyo Zanmai*. Moreover, the Soto Zen tradition still regards the *Sandokai* as a major work of reference today. Its themes revolve around the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena, the merger of opposites, and the subsuming of dualistic perception into “emptiness,” thereby stressing the unity of the Path and the need to overcome the sectarian divisions that afflicted the various Chinese Zen schools at the time. In twelve talks followed by master-student exchanges, Shunryu Suzuki interprets the poem verse by verse. The book concludes with his own translation of it, a translation whose direct and accessible style strongly conveys the “suchness of things” so central to Zen.

The present work, however, does far more than acquaint the Zen practitioner or scholar with a key text of the tradition. As a companion to Shunryu Suzuki’s *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*, a collection of informal talks on meditation and practice first published in 1970, *Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness* manages like its predecessor to offer a unique insight into the personality and style of one of the greatest Zen teachers in America after World War II. As if they were part of the actual audience who directly listened to him back then, the readers gradually discover the unique blend of simplicity, kindness, patience, approachability, rigor, and demandingness behind the man without whom San Francisco Zen Center and Tassajara Zen Mountain Center would not have come to be. In addition, readers get a sense that it is not just the doubts and confusion of Shunryu Suzuki’s past students, but the readers’ own doubts and confusion, which are being addressed in these pages. Instead of merely documenting a moment in history, these collected talks and

commentaries above all capture the presence of a teacher who died in 1971, but whose spirit has continued to guide meditators down the years.

Likewise, *Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness* also exudes the flavor of Zen practice in all its paradoxical sobriety and immediacy. Because this work comes closer to meditation in action than to a scholarly exercise, its meaning cannot be assimilated in linear fashion and approached with one's analytical faculties only. By being asked to engage with "process" rather than "exposition" literature, readers are not invited to "digest doctrine," but to undergo the dynamic, and sometimes baffling, circularity of the Zen experience as lived, with its combined heightening of mental concentration and letting go of sheer intellect. To persist with this book, one has in part to leave one's preconceptions behind and attempt to recover a genuine "beginner's mind." Shunryu Suzuki's commentaries on the *Sandokai* explain Zen by embodying it. In this sense, they are truly spiritual literature that can accompany the seekers on the Path for a lifetime. *Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness* represents the kind of work that makes one feel like bowing in grateful recognition to its authors and editors and say "gassho."

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Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers. By Ennis Barrington Edmonds. Oxford University Press, 2002. \$29.95 cloth.

Ennis Edmonds' recent book, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers*, shows the development of the Rastafari movement from a small group of obscure outcasts to a movement and symbol system with a stable and permeating place in Jamaican society. Edmonds asks: How did this change take place, especially considering that Rastafari remains loosely organized with few of the structures for legitimating authority that seem necessary to a stable movement?

The book starts with a summary elaboration of Max Weber's understanding of social change, including discussion of his notions of charisma, rationalization and routinization. Charismatic personalities, the chaotic drivers of social change who operate creatively by asking new questions and presenting new answers, exist in tension with rationalization, a gradual process by which human beings adjust means to ends using reason. On their own, charismatic personalities would be swallowed up in history, flashing briefly then burning out and never leaving a mark on their worlds. But charisma can have lasting effects when it is incorporated as a stable and predictable part of society or, in Weber's terms, routinized. Edmonds draws out three emphases in Weber's discussions of routinization, including one to which, he acknowledges, Weber only hints. Edmonds is particularly interested in Weber's account

of “how the ideas or message born in the charismatic eruption may become embedded in the social fabric of society” (p. 14). It is this form of routinization, “routinization as cultural formation” (p. 26), that Edmonds finds in Rastafari. Ultimately Edmonds suggests important modifications of Weber’s ideas about routinization.

In later chapters Edmonds clearly explains the social and historical origins of the Rastafari movement, its early charismatic leaders and their messages, and its origins in other, already existing, and critical symbol systems of Jamaica (e.g., Garveyism and Ethiopianism). Much of this material is familiar to the student of Rastafari and has been covered in more detail by other scholars, but it is necessary background, clearly written and well presented. It becomes especially important to understanding the key symbols that emerge from Rastafari to permeate Jamaican society.

For Edmonds, the symbolism of Rastafari reflects opposition to Jamaica’s dominant order and, as a revitalization movement, has been part of a conscious attempt to create a better culture. Though he addresses symbols ranging from dreadlocks to the lion, the Rastafari symbols of “Babylon” and the reappropriated and revalorized symbols of “Africa” and “Ethiopia” are especially important in understanding Rastafari’s relationship to contemporary Jamaican culture. While “Babylon” encapsulates the Rasta critique of society, “Africa” and “Ethiopia” symbolize a re-visioning of black identity in contrast to the British norms permeating Jamaica’s elites and middle class. Ultimately, the symbols of the Rastafari movement come to cohere in a distinctive Rastafari ethos which itself helps to stabilize the movement.

In the end, Edmonds shows how Rastafari symbols diffused to the wider society in the 1960s and 1970s. While they became popular with the disenfranchised, the symbols were also co-opted (for example, by the Jamaican political parties) and commodified (for example, in the reggae industry and through culture tourism). Co-optation and commodification, though they stripped the symbols of some of their critical power, further established Rastafari as a stable and predictable part of Jamaican society.

The only critique I can offer of the book is that it ends too quickly. The incorporation of Rastafari symbols into Jamaican culture does not happen in a vacuum, and perhaps Edmonds could have devoted an additional chapter to the global context that supports Rastafari as a vision of Jamaican (or general Caribbean) culture. How, for example, do the symbols of Rastafari fit into visions of the Caribbean already imagined in the North? How have Rastafari symbols, such as dreadlocks, been routinized into other cultures differently (for example, simply as counterculture)?

Rastafari provides a lucid and thought-provoking argument for how Rastafari has become established in Jamaican culture. Modifying

Weberian notions of routinization and charisma, Edmonds demonstrates how Rastafari has come to permeate Jamaican society despite Rastafari's minimal formal structure. *Rastafari* is important not only to scholars of Rastafari and other Caribbean religions, but to anyone interested in how new religious movements fit into society as a whole. The book is well-written and suitable for college courses or a general audience, but the elaboration of how Rastafari charisma is routinized in culture is especially fascinating for scholars.

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