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Phillip Charles Lucas — *New Religious Movements and the "Acids" of Postmodernity*

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Book Reviews

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Tracing the Contours of Daoism in North America

Louis Komjathy

ABSTRACT: Utilizing an interpretive model based on "family resemblances," this paper provides a survey of Daoist teachers and organizations in North America, giving particular attention to those individuals who fall on the "close relations" (Daoist priests, lineage holders) side of the spectrum. The paper first discusses the question of identity with respect to American Daoists. The author advocates the principle of self-identification as an initial methodology, with the additional distinction of Daoist adherents (birthright and convert) and sympathizers. Next, the paper discusses Daoist teachers and organizations in North America via two primary chartological methods: (1) a chronological discussion of the social history of Daoism in North America; and (2) an interpretive framework centering on three models, namely, literati, communal or ritual, and self-cultivation. The author emphasizes that the predominant model in American Daoism centers on self-cultivation, focusing particularly on personal health and healing.*

In New York City's Chinatown, a Chinese Daoist priest performs a Dipper Ceremony for community purification and welfare. Scholars and practitioners of Daoism meet on a secluded island in the Puget Sound to discuss the history and contemporary practice of Daoist cultivation. In San Francisco, a Euro-American Daoist initiate practices sitting-in-forgetfulness (*zuowang*) meditation after reading a precept handbook. Daoist practitioners take classes on Daoist history and literature at a neighborhood cultivation center in Seattle. Somewhere in Colorado, a group of British Daoist priests ordained in China teach a *daoyin* (gymnastics, lit., "guiding and stretching") practice called the Eight Sectioned Brocade (*baduan jin*). Elderly Chinese immigrant women chant incantations (*zhou*) before an altar to the Jade Emperor, Guanyin, and

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Ancestor Lü in Toronto's Chinatown. A middle-aged scholar of Daoism translates ancient Daoist scriptures at a research university. In Vancouver, a group of Chinese Daoist priests performs a funeral service. At a Daoist school in San Diego, students learn Qigong and meditation practices based on a system of internal alchemy (*neidan*).[1] In a rural Vermont café, two young Euro-American women read and discuss chapter fifty-six of the *Daode jing* (*Tao Te Ching*). In a suburb near Chicago, a Chinese American teacher gives meditation instructions based on the *Huangting jing* (Scripture on the Yellow Court).

What these diverse practices, individual and communal, urban and rural, have in common is that they are part of the landscape of Daoism in North America, of the emergent religion of "American" or "Western Daoism."[2] In addition, there are many other cultural borrowings, adaptations, and appropriations occurring within American society with regard to Daoism. Daoist cosmology and philosophy is part of teaching instructions given at various Taiji quan (T'ai Chi Ch'üan) and Qigong (Ch'i Kung) centers throughout the United States. The *Daode jing* has become the prototype for numerous American appropriations, including the immensely popular *The Tao of Pooh* by Benjamin Hoff (1982). New Age discourse communities and advocates of Perennial Philosophy identify and interpret Daoist texts as part of a "universal wisdom tradition."[3]

Such phenomena have varying degrees of connection (family resemblances) with the tradition(s) of Chinese Daoism.[4] Here I am concentrating on Daoist teachers and organizations in North America, with particular emphasis on the United States, from a socio-historical and textual perspective, and at times utilizing insights gleaned from field research and interviews with Daoist teachers and their students.[5] I locate those teachers and organizations along a spectrum based on family resemblances, ranging from "close relations" (Daoist priests, lineage holders) to "distant relations" ("Pooh-bear Taoists;" i.e., followers/practitioners/adherents of *The Tao of Pooh*).[6] In this paper, I draw particular attention to the "close relations" end of the spectrum. This paper will show that there are individuals in North America who claim to be Daoist priests or lineage holders and organizations associated with them that identify themselves as Daoist communities. In addition, these teachers and groups most frequently emphasize a self-cultivation model, understanding and representing Daoism in terms of health and healing. Daoism in North America may, in turn, be understood as an emergent American religion.

IDENTIFYING DAOISTS IN NORTH AMERICA

Throughout the development of Daoist Studies, various attempts have been made to define criteria for those who qualify as "Daoists" or for what constitutes "Daoism."[7] For the purposes of the present paper, I adopt the principle of self-identification: that is, anyone who identifies

himself or herself as a Daoist is a Daoist. Given our current understanding of Daoism in North America, we must begin by documenting and studying those teachers and organizations that *identify themselves* as Daoist. Regardless of whether or not such claims are historically accurate or justifiable (which in many cases I believe they are), they are nonetheless part of the *transmission* of Daoism currently occurring in North America. My initial methodology, and the methodology that I am advocating here, involves accepting self-identification as the criterion for being a Daoist teacher or organization.[8]

It may be helpful to consider the issue of identity in Buddhism in America.[9] In an article on the subject, Jan Nattier presents the example of a student who reads a book on Zen by Alan Watts and then claims to be a Buddhist. Nattier asks if he should be included within the scope of Buddhism in America. She in turn argues that there are dangers involved in both uncritical inclusiveness and arbitrary (or sectarian) exclusiveness, to use Nattier's phrases.[10] In my view, the former disrespects the tradition involved; it is political in the sense that it implicitly condones appropriation and commercialization, which often exploit the original tradition as well as disempower and disenfranchise the representatives of that tradition. In addition, this stance can easily lead to an impoverishment of a given religious tradition; the traditional worldviews and practices become so mingled with other agendas that it is impossible to gain a clear historical understanding. However, exclusiveness, whether arbitrary or not, seems more problematic, in that the historian too soon comes to resemble a sectarian spokesperson. In the case of Daoist Studies, this is evident in the views of Michael Saso and Michel Strickmann and their subsequent influence on the field.

Returning to the issue of religious identity, Charles Prebish has argued as follows:

> If we define a Buddhist as someone who says "I am a Buddhist," when questioned about "his [*sic*] most important pursuit," we not only abandon our attachment to a ritual formulary that is neither workable nor widely followed, but we also provide more than a modicum of freedom for the American Buddhist groups—a freedom in which they can develop a procedure that is consistent with their own self-image and mission . . . . In other words, what appears initially as an outrageous definition of Buddhist affiliation serves the double purpose of providing a new standard and a simple method of professing Buddhist commitment while at the same time imposing a renewed sense of seriousness on all Buddhist groups.[11]

While Prebish's statements resemble my own methodological strategy in the present paper, they also pose a number of problems with regard to Daoism in North America. First, Buddhism in America is much more of a tradition-based phenomenon than its Daoist counterpart. It would

seem that a greater percentage of people identifying themselves as Buddhists have direct instruction from and experience with ordained or initiated Buddhist teachers, whether immigrant teachers or their dharma successors. In the case of Daoism, North American popular discourse assumes that the distinction between philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism is true, as well as that the former is "real" Daoism. Thus, a greater percentage of Daoists in North America would identify themselves as Daoists simply because they find certain popular publications meaningful, and these individuals and groups would, in turn, have very little historical connection to the larger Chinese Daoist tradition.[12]

Nonetheless, I am adopting and advocating an initial stance of inclusiveness. Extending Prebish's notion, one might employ the criterion of a Daoist as someone for whom being a Daoist is his or her "most important pursuit." Verification of this would require extensive fieldwork and interviews. As a final point concerning Daoist identity, again drawing from the study of Buddhism in America, I would distinguish between Daoist adherents, *birthright* (usually ethnic Chinese) and *convert* (usually Euro-American; the majority of North American Daoists),[13] and Daoist sympathizers (consisting of a much more diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic spectrum). Drawing upon Thomas Tweed, Euro-American Daoist *adherents* are those Americans of European heritage who identify themselves as Daoists or those for whom other reliable evidence exists that suggests they think of themselves in this way. Those who are attracted to Daoism but do not embrace it fully or exclusively may be referred to as *sympathizers*, generally using the term *sympathizer* for those individuals who "confess" that they are attracted to Daoism.[14] In the present paper, I focus my attention on Daoist *adherents*, specifically those on the *close relations* (ordained priests, lineage successors) side of the spectrum. These are the practitioners and teachers who identify themselves as Daoists and who, in addition, claim to have some type of connection with the larger Chinese Daoist tradition.

DAOIST TEACHERS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

Daoism in North America may be mapped according to a number of distinct but complementary criteria. My primary cartographical method is twofold. First, as this is a preliminary and pioneering study, I will provide a tentative chronological discussion of the social history of Daoism in North America. Second, I employ Livia Kohn's helpful categorization of the Chinese Daoist tradition, as developed in her *Daoism and Chinese Culture*. Kohn distinguishes between three types of organizations and practice models: (1) literati, (2) communal, and (3) self-cultivation.[15] Literati Daoists are members of an educated elite who emphasize Daoist ideas, usually relating to classical texts such as the *Daode jing* and

Zhuangzi, which they use to create meaning in their own lives and often to influence the larger society. Communal Daoists have a ritual or liturgical orientation, including priestly hierarchies, formal initiations, regular rituals, and prayers to the gods. Self-cultivation Daoists focus on personal health, longevity, peace of mind, and "immortality."[16] It should be emphasized that these are "ideal types," and living Daoists often combine various aspects of the Daoist tradition in diverse and innovative ways. Daoist teachers and organizations in North America also fall along a spectrum from *close relations* to *distant relations*. Here I concentrate on the former. In combination with this emphasis on connections and continuities with Chinese Daoism, I will discuss such individuals and groups in terms of birthright and convert, i.e., Chinese immigrant and Euro-American teachers, respectively.[17]

From a socio-historical and anthropological point of view, Daoism in North America is poorly documented and almost completely unknown.[18] We currently know next to nothing about a Daoist presence in North America for the first one hundred years of Chinese immigration, from 1849 to 1950. I do not know of any individual or teacher in North America who identified himself or herself as a Daoist during this time period. One possible exception is the Daoist representative at the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 where a talk on Daoism was given, later published anonymously as "Taoism, a Prize Essay."[19] The speaker and author are unknown, and a number of conjectures are possible. From my perspective, the least likely is that the person was an ordained or lineage-based Daoist. Based on the tone and content, it also seems unlikely that the person considered himself to be a Daoist.

Although I will generally refrain from discussing Qigong and Taiji quan (Yin-Yang Boxing) teachers and organizations, it is important to recognize the influence that they have had and are having on the transmission of Daoism to North America. The study of Daoism in North America from an ethnographic or anthropological perspective is also complicated by the fact that many of these teachers and organizations claim to be Daoist or use the term Daoist in their self-references.[20]

One early example is Da Liu (1904–2000), who began his study of Taiji quan under Sun Lutang (1862–1932), the founder of Sun style, before traveling to China's southwest provinces, where he studied with a number of teachers and became a practitioner of Yang style.[21] Following World War II Da Liu came to the United States and began teaching Taiji quan classes in New York City. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Da Liu made several television appearances, and his story, together with information about Taiji quan, appeared in many newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Herald-Tribune*, *Newsweek* (which credited him with introducing Taiji quan to the United States),[22] *Vogue*, *Mademoiselle*, *McCall's*, and *Children's Day*.[23] He later taught at

Columbia University's Teachers College, The Cathedral School of St. John the Divine, and the Riverside Church.[24] He also became president of the T'ai Chi Ch'üan Society of New York. Da Liu wrote a number of books on Daoist practices, including the *Taoist Health Exercise Book* (1974), *The Tao of Health and Longevity* (1978), and *The Tao and Chinese Culture* (1979). On the back cover of *The Tao and Chinese Culture*, Da Liu is described as "a practitioner and teacher of Taoism for over fifty years." In the book's preface, Da Liu claimed that his task, "has been guided by the conviction that if the ideas and practices of Taoism are presented as faithfully as possible, the wisdom contained in them will naturally become apparent and their benefits will gradually achieve widespread recognition."[25] In addition to being recognized as a Taiji quan teacher, then, Da Liu has identified himself as well as the worldview and techniques that he teaches as Daoist. Da Liu clearly falls within a self-cultivation model, emphasizing the practice of Taiji quan as a method of self-development and as a way to personal well-being. He is also representative of a more general phenomenon: Qigong and Taiji quan teachers identifying what they do as Daoist.

Early History

Many of the first self-identified Daoists in North America were Chinese immigrants, principally from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Some had fled from mainland China after the Communist takeover in 1949. It seems that the earliest identifiable and self-identified Daoist priest, whether Chinese or non-Chinese, in North America is Share K. LEW (b. 1918).[26] LEW was born in Guangdong province, north of Guangzhou. As an orphan, he was taken in by a wandering monk from Wong Lung Kwan (Huanglong guan; Yellow Dragon Monastery). Eventually he was taken to this monastery in the Luofu shan (Mount Luofu) area. After an apprenticeship of several years of menial labor, he was initiated and taught a variety of Daoist practices, including Daoist health and longevity techniques. This Daoist system is called Tao Ahn Pai (Daodan pai; Daoist Elixir sect), an internal alchemy system claiming Lü Dongbin as its founder.[27] ShareLew lived and studied at Wong Lung Kwan for thirteen years. He left the monastery in 1948, shortly before the Communist revolution and moved to San Francisco, where he stayed within the Chinese community for several years studying Gongfu (Kung Fu) with his uncle LEW Ben. In 1959, Share LEW accepted his first non-Chinese student and in 1970 began to teach Qigong to non-Chinese students. In that year, he and the late Khigh DHIEGH (Kenneth Dickerson, 1910–1991),[28] a television actor, formed the Taoist Sanctuary in Los Angeles (now based in San Diego). This was "the first Taoist religious organization to receive federal status as a church."[29] In 1979, Share Lew moved to San Diego, where he still resides, seeing people for health appointments, teaching small or

private classes, and traveling to teach his students in workshops around the United States. Share Lew's Tao Ahn Pai system emphasizes self-cultivation, personal health, and alchemical transformation. However, as Lew was trained at a Daoist monastery, he also has at least a foundational knowledge concerning Daoist ritual. This was in evidence when he performed the opening ritual for the first altar at Xuanji guan (Temple of the Mysterious Pivot, see below) in full Daoist robes.[30]

It also seems that Share Lew gave Daoist ordination to a number of his students, as a recent workshop flyer for Tom McCombs shows him dressed in Daoist robes. Another one of his students, Jeff Nagel of the Golden Dragon Tao Health Association, is a staple on the American Qigong/Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) workshop circuit.[31]

The Taoist Sanctuary, now the Taoist Sanctuary of San Diego, is "dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of information on traditional Chinese healing and martial arts."[32] It is a non-profit organization focusing on the teaching of Taiji quan, Qigong, Daoist meditation, Daoist philosophy, and traditional Chinese healing methods. According to its website, the school is directed by Bill Helm who is said to be a Daoist priest, Chinese medical practitioner, and martial artist. The Taoist Sanctuary of San Diego also publishes an online newsletter entitled "Thunder Under Heaven" (begun in autumn of 2000).[33] The original Taoist Sanctuary has now become the Taoist Institute of Los Angeles. The new Taoist Institute was established by Carl Totton, another self-identified Daoist priest.[34] The institute offers instruction, guidance, and practice in a variety of Daoist and Chan (Zen) Buddhist practices and precepts, including Chinese philosophy and religion, the *Yijing*, Qigong, Chinese internal yoga and meditation, internal martial arts, and Chinese medicine. Individual and group classes, workshops, as well as seminars are frequently offered and are open to the general public. These various students of Share Lew and the related Lew-inspired organizations embrace and propagate an understanding of Daoism in terms of self-cultivation, emphasizing health and healing.

Another Chinese immigrant Daoist practitioner focusing of self-cultivation was Moy Lin-shin (1931–1998). "Master Moy" was born in Taishan county, Guangdong. He moved to Hong Kong in 1948 or 1949. There he trained at the Yuen Yuen Institute, which was established by monks from Sanyuan gong (Three Primes Palace) in Guangzhou, which traces its lineage to the Longmen (Dragon Gate) sect of Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) Daoism. At some point, it seems that he was ordained, as many of the leaflets from his organization describe him as a Daoist monk, and as he ordained a number of members of his future organizations.[35] Moy immigrated to Canada in 1970 and began teaching in a small studio in downtown Toronto, where he also lived. He taught Gongfu as well as a martial arts-oriented style of Taiji quan. Later, he softened the style and called it "Taoist Tai Chi."[36] Eventually, Moy Lin-shin

founded the Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS, Daojia Taiji quan she) in Toronto, which was renamed the International Taoist Tai Chi Society in 1990.[37] He and his students bought a permanent center and registered TTCS as a charitable organization.

Fung Loy Kok (Daojiao Penglai ge, Penglai Daoist Pavilion) is the religious arm of the Moy organization. According to a leaflet entitled "History of the Fung Loy Kok International Centre,"[38] the Fung Loy Kok Temple (FLK), now referred to as the International Centre of the Fung Loy Kok Institute of Taoism, was first established in 1985 in rented premises in Toronto's old Chinatown. Fung Loy Kok purchased this property in 1988, and by October 1991 the organization had raised sufficient funds to pay off the initial mortgage. The International Taoist Tai Chi Society, its visible public counterpart, is now one of the largest non-profit Taiji quan/Daoist organizations in the world, with classes in 437 cities worldwide.[39] In addition to the founding center in Toronto, two major branches of TTCS/FLK exist in Tallahassee, Florida and Denver, Colorado. This organization is also in the process of completing construction of the Taoist Retreat Centre, a temple compound outside of metropolitan Toronto. The main activities of these various centers are the practice of Moy's Taoist Tai Chi system and chanting at the temple. (The conventional architectural arrangement of TTCS/FLK buildings includes a reception room and practice studio on the ground floor, and a temple dedicated to the Jade Emperor, Guanyin, and Lü Dongbin on a higher floor.) These practices are often separate, with a larger percentage of Euro-Americans practicing Taiji quan and a larger percentage of ethnic Chinese, predominantly elderly Chinese immigrant women, practicing chanting.[40] The community practice of chanting at FLK points towards a ritual dimension in addition to the self-cultivation model of TTCS evident in its emphasis on the practice of Taoist Tai Chi for health and healing.

The founder of the TTCS/FLK Denver branch, Eva Wong (b. 1951)—a prolific translator of Daoist texts—has become one of the most recognizable Daoist "teachers" (via her writings) in North America.[41] Wong severed her ties to this organization when Moy died in 1998, however.[42] She currently lives somewhere near Denver, where she continues her research and writing as a recluse. Wong is one of the few lineage-based female Daoist teachers in North America.

In addition to Moy Lin-shin and the Taoist Tai Chi Society/Fung Loy Kok, two other early and highly visible Daoist teachers and organizations stand out: Ni Hua-ching and the Intėgral Way and Mantak Chia and Healing Tao. Both of these individuals and their related communities follow a self-cultivation model, emphasizing health and healing in terms of qi or subtle breath.

In the mid-1970s, a group of Euro-Americans in Los Angeles involved with the Taoist Sanctuary became interested in learning more about

Daoism than what was available in the United States at the time. One member of the group, Mark Johnson (now of the Tai Chi for Health Institute, Mill Valley, California) was living in Taiwan and went searching for a Daoist master. In November of 1976 he brought back Ni Hua-ching.[43] According to the cover of his book, "Master Ni"

> is heir to the wisdom and experience transmitted through an unbroken succession of seventy-four generations of Taoist Masters dating back to the Han Dynasty (216 B.C.). As a young boy he was chosen to study with Taoist Masters in the high mountains of mainland China. After more than thirty-one years of intensive training he was fully acknowledged and empowered as a true Master of traditional Taoist disciplines including all aspects of Taoist science and metaphysics. In Taiwan, for twenty-eight years, Master Ni has taught and practiced such Taoist arts as T'ai Chi Ch'uan, Kung Fu, Taoist meditation, Internal Alchemy, acupuncture and herbal medicine.[44]

Ni's autobiographical accounts are an ever-changing series of vague generalizations.[45] One is unable to determine even the most basic information: date and place of birth, his Daoist teachers' names and lineages, his associations in Taiwan, and so on.[46] Based on the above description, Ni would have been about 64 years old when he arrived in the United States in 1976, but the pictures of him on the back of his first publications (1979) show him as a man in his 40s.[47] By my calculations, this means that Ni Hua-ching would have been born around 1931.

Nonetheless, Ni Hua-ching and his organizations are central features of the Daoist landscape in North America. After his immigration, Ni began teaching Daoist cultivation techniques in the form of an ongoing seminar called the College of Tao. He also dedicated a small shrine in his home, known as The Shrine of the Eternal Breath of Tao, which consists of paintings of the Three Pure Ones,[48] surrounded by protective deities and a portrait of Ni Hua-ching's mother and father.[49] Ni's private acupuncture clinic was known as the Union of Tao and Man. In January 1989, the Yo San University of Traditional Chinese Medicine was established under Ni's direction. This is a non-profit educational institution and accredited degree-granting college. According to the website, the school is named after Ni Yo-san (1879–1968), Ni Hua-ching's father, who was born in Pengyang province in northern China in 1879.[50] Other Ni-sponsored or related organizations include the Universal Society of the Integral Way (USIW), Seven Stars Communications, and Traditions of Tao, to name a few.[51] Seven Stars Communications is responsible for publishing Ni Hua-ching's many books, formerly under the imprint of The Shrine of the Eternal Breath of Tao.[52] In addition, his two sons, Daoshing Ni and Maoshing Ni (known as Dao and Mao), whom he left in Taiwan, have moved to Los Angeles. Together they run a private TCM practice named Tao of Wellness as well as the Yo San University,

with Daoshing Ni as president and Maoshing Ni as vice president. In 2000, Ni Hua-ching formally transferred power to his son Maoshing.

Mantak CHIA (b. 1944) was born in Thailand to Chinese parents. After being taught basic Buddhist meditation at the age of six, Chia met and studied with his first Taiji quan teacher, a certain Master LU.[53] Later, when he was a student in Hong Kong, a classmate named CHENG Sue-sue introduced him to his first Daoist teacher, Yi Eng (Yiyun, One Cloud). At this point, he began serious Daoist training. From Yi Eng, Chia learned various Daoist cultivation methods, including the Microcosmic Orbit, Fusion of the Five Elements, and internal alchemy. "It was Yi Eng who authorized Master Chia to teach and heal."[54] Mantak Chia's biography goes on to list a variety of other teachers including MUI Yimwattana, CHENG Yao-lun, and PAN Yu. Eventually, using his knowledge of Daoism combined with other disciplines, Mantak Chia began formulating and teaching the Healing Tao System. He established the Natural Healing Center in Thailand, and five years later he moved to New York. There he opened the Healing Tao Center in 1979. Since then, Healing Tao centers have opened in many other locations throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. In addition, Mantak Chia has published numerous books under the imprint of Healing Tao Books. At some point, Chia moved back to Thailand, where he currently lives and teaches at the Tao Garden Health Resort and runs a new variation of the Healing Tao System called Universal Tao.[55]

Healing Tao USA continues to thrive and expand under the leadership of Michael Winn (b. 1951), who has also been president of the National Qigong Association (NQA). Healing Tao USA is now a private educational trust in the process of filing for non-profit 501c(3) status. It operates Healing Tao University at the Jeronimo Center (New York) and the Healing Tao USA website and fulfillment center.[56] According to its website, "Healing Tao USA advocates using the spiritual sciences of the Tao for managing the Life Force" through the practice of Qigong (which includes the traditional Chinese internal martial arts) and *neigong* (which includes internal alchemy and other forms of meditation). The Healing Tao System contains a systematized internal alchemy set, which may represent a distinctively American form of *neidan*. In its present form, the Healing Tao System involves a wide range of certifications.[57] These various practices are combined in different ways, one according to Mantak Chia and one according to Michael Winn.

A less market-oriented and more traditionally-organized Daoist community in North America is the American Taoist & Buddhist Association (Meiguo daojiao fojiao lianhe xiehui).[58] Located in New York City's Chinatown,[59] the American Taoist & Buddhist Association (ATBA) was chartered in 1979 and was incorporated in the state of New York. The association operates the North Pole Gold Temple (Beiji jindian) and Temple of Transcendental Wisdom (Panruo yuan), which consists of

two altars, one to a diverse Buddhist pantheon and the other to a Daoist one. These combined temples provide members and the surrounding community with a variety of rites and services, performing religious ceremonies and cosmic renewal (*jiao*) rituals.[60] The association also offers intensive Daoist training with classes and seminars given regularly.[61] In addition, the association is committed to community outreach and charity, including a free Sunday vegetarian lunch for those in need.

The American Taoist & Buddhist Association is under the directorship of Hsien Yuen (Xuan Yuan): "Heir to the wisdom and tradition as transmitted through an unbroken succession of the Lümen sect, he is fully empowered as a true Master of traditional Taoist disciplines, including all aspects of Taoist science and metaphysics."[62] Originally born in mainland China, "Master Hsien" emigrated from Taiwan, where he received ordination as a Daoist priest, to the United States at an unknown date. He teaches and has written a book on Elixir Cauldron Sitting Meditation (*danding dazuo*; *danding chanzuo*),[63] a complete internal alchemy system, and is one of the few American Daoists, priest or otherwise, who claims to have direct communication with immortals and deities.[64] Some of these include Yuanshi tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Original Beginnings), Yaochi jinmu (Golden Mother of the Turquoise Pond), Yuhuang dadi (Great Sovereign Jade Emperor), Xuantian shangdi (High Emperor of the Mysterious Heaven), and Nanji xianweng (Immortal Sage of the Southern Polestar).[65] Unlike the other teachers and organizations discussed thus far, Hsien Yuen and ATBA clearly advocate and represent a ritual model. This centers on Hsien Yuen's standing in a Chinese immigrant community as a Daoist priest, who is capable, through cosmic renewal (*jiao*) and purification (*zhai*) rites, of ensuring family and community harmony and well-being.[66]

A number of other Daoist teachers in North America have received training from Hsien Yuen. While some of these individuals have asked me not to mention their names or organizations, one noteworthy figure is Jeffrey YUEN. Although involved with ABTA early on, Yuen also comes from a Daoist family lineage through his grandfather. Born in New York City, he identifies his lineage as the Yuqing (Jade Purity) school. He is an ordained Daoist priest and is Chairman of the Eastern United States Taoist Association.[67] Yuen is also Academic Dean of the Acupuncture Program at the Swedish Institute and President of the International T'ai Chi Institute, both in New York City. In addition, he travels to various TCM schools, teaching the Chinese medical classics and Chinese medicine from a Daoist perspective.

Recent Developments

While Moy Lin-shin, Ni Hua-ching, Mantak Chia and their related organizations have been the most visible early examples of Daoism in

North America, another presence has recently come to the fore. This is the Euro-American convert and ordained Daoist priest Liu Ming (formerly Charles Belyea, Lao Ge [Elder Brother]).[68] Born in Boston in 1947, Liu Ming began his study of meditation in 1966, which included work with Chinese, Tibetan, and Japanese teachers. After spending twelve years studying and practicing with several Tibetan lamas, all associated with Dzogchen (Great Perfection),[69] Liu Ming (then Charles Belyea) was ordained as a Buddhist monk in Taiwan. Taken by his patron to visit many of Taiwan's retreat hermitages, he eventually met and apprenticed with several Daoist masters, including the patriarch of a family lineage that traces its origins to the Han dynasty.[70] From this teacher, he received Daoist ordination and succession to the Liu Daoist family lineage. This transmission occurred in Taiwan in 1978. After completing a one-year solitary meditation retreat in 1981, Liu Ming began teaching Daoism in seminars and meditation retreats throughout California. With Steven Tainer, he founded the Da Yuen Circle of Yogic Taoism, a group composed partially of Dzogchen students. The group met and trained primarily in intensive *daoyin* and meditation retreats. After helping to found the Five Branches Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Santa Cruz in 1984, he established Orthodox Daoism in America (ODA) in 1986.[71] As of 1995, Liu Ming ceased his involvement with Five Branches and in that year began investiture training for a select group of ODA students. Through a specifically designed ordination curriculum, he trained and eventually gave the first level (of nine) ordination to three Santa Cruz-based members of ODA in 2000.[72] As of 2000, Liu Ming established and tended to the needs of three Daoist parishes: Santa Cruz (ODA's headquarters), San Francisco, and Seattle. In the summer of 2001, Liu Ming moved to Seattle, Washington, where he began teaching out of his home and collaborating with the Taoist Studies Institute (see below). This relationship formally ended in October 2002, around the time when the Santa Cruz parish was absorbed into the San Francisco parish, which is the current seat of Orthodox Daoism in America.[73]

Members of ODA engage in a variety of practices, including hygiene customs, precept and scripture study, meditation, longevity techniques, and dietetics. According to its newsletter, *Frost Bell*, ODA

> views Daoism as a personal and collective religious practice, not merely a group of philosophical ideas or yogas. We believe that practicing, observant members may choose from the rich possibilities of two main streams of spiritual involvement: (1) the personal practice of alchemical meditation (in the Chinese Shangqing or Supreme Clarity tradition) or (2) the collective practice of ritual (in the Tianshi or Celestial Master tradition). Both of these personal spiritual choices are traditionally informed by study, practice, and religious hygiene observances in daily life.[74]

Liu Ming as a teacher and ODA as an organization manifest qualities from each of the three models utilized in the present study. The literati dimension is present in their concern for reading and interpreting traditional Daoist scriptures and their interest in Chinese aesthetics.[75] With regard to self-cultivation, *zuowang* (lit., sitting and forgetting) meditation and dietetics are central to ODA's prescribed system of Daoist practice. Finally, the ritual dimension is evident in some of Liu Ming's and ODA's other concerns: altar maintenance, astro-geomancy, tea ceremony, wearing Daoist robes and top-knots, and formal naming ceremonies.

Another Daoist organization in North America that exhibits traits from each of the three models is the Taoist Studies Institute (TSI, Meiguo daojiao xueyuan) in Seattle, Washington. TSI was founded in 1992 by a number of people interested in deepening their understanding and practice of the Daoist tradition. Originating in predecessor organizations such the Xuangu Taoist Research Association (founded in 1982) and the Northwest School of Internal Arts (founded in 1988), both under the direction of Harrison Moretz (Mo Chenghua), TSI is a not-for-profit educational organization dedicated to fostering the Daoist tradition through cultivation, education and the arts.[76] The school offers and emphasizes a diverse and wide-ranging curriculum, including Chinese language, Chinese medicine, Daoist literature, Fengshui, internal alchemy, Taiji quan, and Qigong. The Taoist Studies Institute is also the teaching arm of Xuanji guan (Temple of the Mysterious Pivot), an altar dedicated to the Three Pure Ones.

The current director of the Taoist Studies Institute and one of its founding members is Harrison Moretz. Born in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1952, Moretz has been studying Chinese culture and language, Daoist cultivation, and internal martial arts for thirty years, with teachers in mainland China, Taiwan, and the United States.[77] He has studied with Chinese Daoist teachers connected with Longmen (Dragon Gate), Huashan (Mount Hua), and Wudang shan (Mount Wudang) traditions. In the summer of 2001, Harrison Moretz and the Taoist Studies Institute formed an alliance with Liu Ming and Orthodox Daoism in America. With the advice and assistance of various community members, Moretz and Liu Ming began renovating the altar at the Taoist Studies Institute to become a formal and active Daoist altar (*daotan*).[78] While this collaboration formally ended in October 2002, the Taoist Studies Institute continued the renovation, with an altar opening ceremony scheduled to occur sometime in 2004.[79] TSI offers classes that focus on self-cultivation, which includes the practice of Taiji quan and Qigong for personal health and martial prowess. Aspects of the literati model are evident in scripture study, classes on Chinese aesthetics, and Moretz's dedicated practice of the *guqin* (Chinese zither). Finally, the ritual dimension is most clearly present in the small group of community members who

meet on certain calendrically important days to chant Longmen incantations (*zhou*) and practice group meditation.

A Russian Immigrant Priest

Thus far, I have described Daoism in North America in terms of Chinese immigrant teachers, their organizations, and their Euro-American students, as well as Euro-American Daoist teachers and organizations. As a final note, I would like to balance this picture somewhat through mention of a Russian immigrant named Alex Anatole. A Daoist convert, "Master Anatole" was born in Moscow, Russia where for twenty years he studied with Luyang TAI, a medical doctor and high-level martial artist. Under Luyang Tai, Anatole learned Daoism, Gongfu, Qigong, and Daoist healing techniques and meditation. In 1966, Luyang Tai and Alex Anatole founded the first Daoist temple and seminary in Moscow.[80] At some point, it seems that Alex Anatole received ordination as he claims to be a Daoist priest. In the late 1970s, Anatole immigrated to the United States where he established the New England Center of Tao, located outside of Boston, Massachusetts. This organization was eventually renamed the Center of Traditional Taoist Studies (CTTS), which is a non-profit religious organization established to promote traditional Daoist studies.[81] The center offers classes in Daoist religion, philosophy, Qigong, and martial arts. The first floor of the center is a martial arts studio, while the renovated second floor contains a Daoist temple with a large collection of Daoist artwork.[82] In 1994, the Center of Traditional Taoist Studies formed alliances with Baiyun guan (White Cloud Temple) in Shanghai as well as with Shanghai University and Longhua hospital. CTTS generally falls within a self-cultivation model of Daoism, with Qigong and martial arts training for personal health and martial prowess being supplemented by an interest in the *Daode jing* as a philosophical text.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

In this paper, I have focused on those teachers who identify themselves as Daoist priests or lineage successors in combination with the organizations that they have established or with which they are associated. A more exhaustive socio-historical and anthropological account of Daoism in North America would have to consider numerous other teachers and organizations as well as the individual members of these organizations.[83] There are a few other elements of Daoism in North America that deserve mention, however.

First, one of the only Westerners to receive formal Daoist ordination was an American, Michael Saso, a Daoist scholar-practitioner and former

professor at the University of Hawaii.[84] Saso has been highly influential in determining the ways in which Daoist practitioners in North America understand Daoism, specifically his views on orthodoxy/heterodoxy and the necessity of receiving registers (*lu*).[85] Saso believes "Daoist" refers only to Daoist priests (*daoshi*), a view that has influenced both Liu Ming of Orthodox Daoism in America and Brock Silvers of the Taoist Restoration Society.[86] Second, two Euro-American Daoist nuns founded the first Western language journal dedicated exclusively to Daoist Studies. *Taoist Resources* (1988–1997) eventually became an academic journal edited by noteworthy scholars in the field. In 1998 it was absorbed into the *Journal of Chinese Religions*.[87] *The Empty Vessel* (begun in 1993) is a more popular Daoist journal edited by Solala Towler and published by the Abode of the Eternal Tao.[88]

Finally, in addition to presses dedicated primarily to self-publication (Healing Tao Books, Seven Stars Communication, Abode of the Eternal Tao), there is a new academic press dedicated to publishing works on Daoism. This is Three Pines Press under the editorship of Livia Kohn (Boston University) and Harold Roth (Brown University).

This discussion has shown that there is a Daoist presence in North America. In particular, there are teachers and organizations here that identify themselves as Daoist *and* have some connection to the larger Chinese Daoist tradition. These groups include priests, lineage-holders, and committed practitioners who are generally Chinese immigrants or Euro-American converts. Such teachers and their related organizations may be charted in terms of three primary models, namely, literati, ritual, and self-cultivation. By far, the predominant model in North America centers on self-cultivation, specifically on health and healing. The dominance of health and self-improvement practices in American Daoism, in contrast to a soteriological or ritualistic orientation, suggests modification and innovation: that is, American Daoism as a health and fitness movement may be largely determined by Euro-American concerns and demands.

This study reveals a number of trends. At the present time, the landscape of Daoism in North America is dominated by male teachers who tend to have primary control over their organizations. American Daoism is patriarchal and hierarchical. Furthermore, Daoism in North America tends to emphasize and teach systems based on health and healing.[89] This is obvious both in the actual practices advocated and in the association of various teachers with schools of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The connection between Daoism and health in North America finds its culmination in the establishment of Yo San University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Los Angeles) by Ni Hua-ching and his sons; and Liu Ming's (then Charles Belyea) involvement in the founding of Five Branches Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Santa Cruz). Similarly, the most visible practices and the primary means of

financial support are Taiji quan and Qigong. Field observations confirm that the majority of prospective students come via either the study of TCM or the search for personal health. Finally, I have observed that a ritual model tends to exist in Chinese immigrant communities, particularly as found in North America's major Chinatowns. In contrast, a self-cultivation or self-help model is most attractive to Euro-American converts and sympathizers.

ENDNOTES

* An earlier version of this paper was presented under the title "Daoism in North America: A Preliminary Inquiry" at the Daoism and Tantra Conference, Boston University, 19–21 April 2002. I am grateful to Livia Kohn, Stephen Prothero, and Elijah Siegler for their comments on earlier drafts. I have also benefited from the suggestions of the anonymous reviewers of *Nova Religio*.

[1] On internal alchemy see Fabrizio Pregadio and Lowell Skar, "Inner Alchemy (*Neidan*)," in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 464–97.

[2] In the present paper, when I speak of "American Daoism" I mean Daoism *in* America and nothing more.

[3] The study of Daoism in North America may, in turn, proceed in at least four distinct but complementary directions: (1) intellectual history, including cultural and literary influences and adaptations; (2) textual studies, including analysis of Daoist literature written in North America; (3) ethnographic and anthropological field research; and (4) social history. At the present time, only the first has received any significant consideration. See, for example, Steven Bradbury, "The American Conquest of Philosophical Taoism," in *Translation East and West*, ed. Cornelia N. Moore and Lucy Lower (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 29–41; Jonathan Herman, *I and Tao: Martin Buber's Encounter with Chuang Tzu* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Julia M. Hardy, "Influential Western Interpretations of the *Tao-te-ching*," in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, ed. Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 165–88; and J. J. Clarke, *The Tao of the West: Western Transformations of Taoist Thought* (London: Routledge, 2000). For critical responses to Clarke's *The Tao of the West* see *Religious Studies Review* 28, no. 4 (October 2002), which is a special issue dedicated exclusively to reviews of this book.

[4] Beyond the field of Daoist Studies, the Daoist tradition is, generally speaking, poorly understood. There are numerous misconceptions that continue to dominate and be perpetuated. While some of these are addressed in this paper, various publications are available to the interested reader, including Russell Kirkland, "The Historical Contours of Taoism in China: Thoughts on Issues of Classification and Terminology," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 25 (1997): 57–82; Louis Komjathy, "Changing Perspectives on the Daoist Tradition," *Religious Studies Review* 28, no. 4 (October 2002): 327–34; and Livia Kohn, *Daoism and Chinese Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Three Pines Press, 2001).

[5] A more complete study of Daoism in North America would have to include extensive ethnographic interviews with members of the various Daoist organizations. This would enable one to determine both the individual understanding of Daoist lifeways *within* the same group and to discern the degree to which idealized models of belief and practice correspond to anthropological realities.

[6] While there are problems with statistics for Daoists in North America, they may number in the 10,000s, if that. See <http://www.adherents.com>, accessed 1 July 2004. This translates to about .01 percent of the population. Nonetheless, Daoists are becoming a more visible and influential part of that religiously pluralistic landscape.

[7] For an overview see Kirkland, "The Historical Contours of Taoism in China." For recent developments see Livia Kohn and Harold Roth, eds., *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage, and Ritual* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002). Contemporary American Daoists have also attempted to assign parameters to the use of "Daoist." In this respect, LIU Ming of Orthodox Daoism in America (ODA) and Brock Silvers of the Taoist Restoration Society (TRS) stand out. See especially Liu Ming, "Daoist Cultivation: Traditional Models and Contemporary Practices," part 1, *Frost Bell: The Newsletter of Orthodox Daoism in America* (Summer 2001): 1, 4–7 and part 2, *Frost Bell* (Autumn 2001): 1, 4–7.

[8] As a historian of Daoism, especially the Chinese tradition of Daoism, and *as an educator*, I cannot accept self-identification as the *sole* criterion for membership in a given religion. If we speak about Daoism, for instance, we assume that some kind of *tradition* is involved. If this category is simply what *self-identified* Daoists tell us it is, then the category of Daoism becomes historically useless and sociologically irrelevant. Thus, the principle of "self-identification" should be our beginning point, not our end point.

[9] Throughout this article, I draw insights and perspectives from the study of Buddhism in America. There are obvious parallels, and the study of Buddhism in America is fairly developed. The first publications appeared in the late 1970s. In addition, similar patterns appear in each: Asian immigrant teachers, Western converts, and so on. The study of Chinese Buddhism in America is especially relevant, as most of the first generation Daoist teachers in North America are Chinese immigrants.

[10] Jan Nattier, "Who Is a Buddhist? Charting the Landscape of Buddhist America," in *The Faces of Buddhism in America*, ed. Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 183–95.

[11] Charles S. Prebish, *American Buddhism* (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1979), 188.

[12] For a contemporary American group whose formation is based on such cultural influences see Western Reform Taoist Congregation at <http://www.wrt.org>, accessed 1 July 2004, and <http://www.westernreformtaoism.org>, accessed 1 July 2004.

[13] The distinction between birthright and convert adherents was first formulated by Stephen Prothero. In the next years, we can expect to encounter birthright Daoists from a variety of non-Chinese ethnic groups and many more convert Daoists who are not Euro-Americans.

[14] Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844–1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 39–47; and idem, "Who Is a Buddhist? Night-Stand Buddhists and Other Creatures," in *Westward Dharma*, ed. Charles S. Prebish and Martin Baumann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 17–33.

[15] It should be made clear that "communal Daoists" are ritual Daoists. I make this clarification because many "self-cultivation types," whether in China or North America, undertake their training in community settings.

[16] See Kohn, *Daoism and Chinese Culture*, 5–6. In her brief discussion of Daoism in the United States Kohn distinguishes between three groups: 1) ritual lineages; 2) self-cultivation schools; and 3) self-improvement groups, 198–202.

[17] For personal names, I follow the method utilized by the individual in question; some keep the traditional Chinese order of last name first (e.g., LIU Ming), while others have adopted the American convention (e.g., Share K. LEW). For greater clarity, I have placed the last name in "small caps" at its first appearance in the main text and at every appearance in footnotes.

[18] Before recent research by Elijah Siegler of the College of Charleston and myself, academic discussions of Daoism in North America most frequently have been either footnotes and/or dismissive comments about its inauthenticity. See Russell Kirkland, "Varieties of Taoism in Ancient China: A Preliminary Comparison of Themes in the *Nei Yeh* and Other Taoist Classics," *Taoist Resources* 7, no. 2 (1997): 76, n. 10; Norman Girardot's comments in Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), xix; and Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 24, n. 5. Although he has since modified his earlier position, Girardot's initial views are strange given his involvement with the American Taoist & Buddhist Association of New York (see below) as early as 1986. The skeptical perspective was also represented by Terry Kleeman of the University of Colorado, Boulder during a review panel at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Denver, Colorado in 2001 where he commented, "there are no Daoists in America." At the time of this writing, Elijah Siegler has completed "The Dao of America: The History and Practice of American Daoism" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2003). Julia Hardy of Muhlenberg College is also working on a book on the same topic for the Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series. A brief discussion may be found in Kohn, *Daoism and Chinese Culture*, 198–202. The only book-length discussion to date is a general audience book: Solala Towler, *A Gathering of Cranes: Bringing the Tao to the West* (Eugene, Ore.: Abode of the Eternal Tao, 1996).

[19] This article was reprinted in Richard Seager, *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Press, 1993), 361–63.

[20] From a historical perspective, there are many misconceptions concerning Daoism, the origins and history of which remain to be studied. Although Taiji quan, Qigong, and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) have some historical connection with Daoism, they are not, of themselves, Daoist in origin or in practice. Such a widespread misunderstanding, which prevails in both popular and academic discourse, includes the purely mythological identification of the Daoist ZHANG Sanfeng (Chang San Feng) as the originator of Taiji quan and the (later) association of Taiji quan with the Daoist sacred mountain of Wudang shan (Mount Wudang [Wu Tang], Hubei province).

[21] Birth dates and death dates are supplied whenever known.

[22] The history of Taiji quan and Qigong in North America remains unclear today. Some of the earliest English-language books on Qigong and Taiji quan include Lily SIOU, *Ch'i Kung: The Art of Mastering the Unseen Life Force* (Honolulu: Lily SIOU 'S School of The Six Chinese Arts, 1973); Sophia Delza, *T'ai Chi Ch'uan: Body and Mind in Harmony.* (New Canton, Ohio: Good News Publishers, 1961); and Edward Maisel, *T'ai Chi for Health* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

[23] Da LIU, *The Tao of Health and Longevity* (New York: Paragon House, 1991[1978]), xiv.

[24] From the homepage of the Rochester T'ai Chi Ch'uan Center <http://rtccc.hypermart.net/news>, accessed 15 March 2003, defunct 1 July 2004.

[25] Da LIU, *The Tao and Chinese Culture* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), vi.

[26] The present biographical description comes from Amy Kinder, "Profile: Master Share K. Lew," *The Jade Dragon* 2, no. 2 (1993). Kinder uses Cantonese transliterations throughout her brief article, so I have generally followed her usage while including Mandarin in parentheses.

[27] This is based on Share LEW's autobiographical account. The system of Tao Ahn Pai is frequently synonymous with internal alchemy in general. LÜ Dongbin (b. 798?) is generally recognized as one of the first patriarchs of alchemy and as one of the most famous immortals.

[28] Khigh DHIEGH was an American of English, Egyptian, and Sudanese descent who made his living playing "Oriental" villains on film and television, most notably the Red Chinese agent Wo Fat on Hawaii Five-O. See <http://www.mjq.net/fiveo>, accessed 1 July 2004;

<http://www.hawaiifive0.org>, and especially <http://www.hawaiifive0.org/Cast%20Members/WoFat.html>, accessed 1 July 2004. Dhiegh also published a number of books on the *Yijing* (Classic of Changes). I am grateful to Elijah Siegler for most of this information. Siegler has also made the following point: "The fact that [Khigh DHIEGH] was not Chinese, but played one on TV, suggests a performative element in being a Daoist master from the beginning," in "Teaching American Taoism," paper presented at the American Academy of Religion, Nashville, Tennessee, November 2000. I would go even further and say that the Orientalist fascination with exoticism has led to the view that Chineseness is equivalent to authenticity. In the case of Khigh DHIEGH, playing a Chinese Daoist priest led to greater authority than being an American Daoist priest of English, Sudanese, and Egyptian background.

[29] Kinder, "Profile: Master Share K. Lew," 6.

[30] Field observations of the ceremony, winter 1994.

[31] See <http://members.aol.com/bagua64>, accessed 1 July 2004. The use of "Tao" (instead of "Taoist" or "Daoist") is noteworthy here. Many of the relevant groups in North America choose to distance themselves from the religious or assumed institutional connotations of "Daoist." It seems that the use of "Tao" is intended to imply a more immediate or authentic connection to the pure/original source that Daoist religious groups have lost. The Pluralism Project once placed Daoist organizations in the category of "Tao Groups," although this misrepresentation has been corrected. See <http://www.pluralism.org/directory/ index.php>, accessed 1 July 2004.

[32] 4229 Park Blvd., San Diego, California 92103. See <http://www.taoistsanctuary.org>, accessed 1 July 2004.

[33] As most of the historical information in this essay comes from the organizations themselves, conclusions must be tentative. More research must be done on the teachers and organizations, as well as on the "lived experience," including style of organization, practices emphasized, group demographics, etc. Thus, at present my historical account must be taken as tentative.

[34] 10630 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood, California 91601. See <http://www.taoistinstitute.com>, accessed 15 January 2002, but defunct on 1 July 2004.

[35] I do not have information on the members who were ordained, but it seems that initiation began in the early 1980s and ended in the late 1980s. One individual who went through this process is the Owl Clan Recluse, a frequent contributor to the Taoist Restoration Society's chatroom. See <http://www.taorestore.org>, accessed 1 July 2004. This website and its chatroom are an important source of information for the study of Daoism in North America. See also <http://www.taoresource.com>, accessed 1 July 2004; and <http://members.boardhost.com/zentao00>, accessed 15 March 2003, defunct 1 July 2004.

[36] Siegler, "Teaching American Taoism," 11. I am following the romanization used by the Taoist Tai Chi Society.

[37] Denver branch: 1060 Bannock Street, Denver, Colorado 80204; Tallahassee branch: 1310 N. Monroe St., Tallahassee, Florida 32303; Toronto branch: 1376 Bathurst St., Toronto, Ontario M5R 3JI. See <http://www.taoist.org>, accessed 1 July 2004.

[38] Most of my information on the Taoist Tai Chi Society and Fung Loy Kok Temple comes from leaflets collected and interviews conducted during my visit to the Denver branch on 19 November 2001.

[39] Taoist Tai Chi Society leaflets.

[40] Elijah Siegler, personal communication, 2 March 2001.

[41] See, e.g., Eva Wong, *Cultivating Stillness: A Taoist Manual for Transforming Body and Mind* (Boston: Shambhala, 1992); idem, *The Shambhala Guide to Taoism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997); and idem, *Teachings of the Tao* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997).

[42] To the best of my knowledge, Eva Wong was still connected with the Denver branch when she was invited to participate in the Taoism and Ecology Conference, Harvard University, 5–8 June 1998.

[43] Siegler, "Teaching American Taoism," 5.

[44] NI Hua-ching, *Tao: The Subtle Universal Law and the Integral Way of Life* (Malibu, Calf.: The Shrine of the Eternal Breath of Tao, 1979), backcover.

[45] See also NI Hua-ching, *Internal Alchemy: The Natural Way to Immortality* (Santa Monica, Calf.: The Shrine of the Eternal Breath of Tao, 1992), 249–50.

[46] In addition, NI Hua-ching has recently become fairly reclusive, with limited private interviews being given in exchange for large sums of money.

[47] NI, *Tao*, backcover. A chronological list of NI's publications through 1992 may be found in the latter pages of NI, *Internal Alchemy*.

[48] The Three Pure Ones (Sanqing) represent the three primordial energies that came into being when the Dao began the process of differentiation and often occupy the main altar in Longmen (Dragon Gate) temples. Depicted as three "gods" in the guise of ancient Chinese men, they are Yuanshi tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Original Beginnings), Lingbao tianzun (Celestial Worthy of Numinous Treasure), and Daode tianzun (Celestial Worthy of the Dao and Inner Power).

[49] This shrine is now located at Yo San University, behind a folding partition, in a second floor classroom. Siegler, "Teaching American Taoism," 8.

[50] See <http://yosan.edu>, accessed 1 July 2004. Discrepancies between the father's autobiography and his son's account raise questions about NI Yo-san's actual lineage.

[51] P.O. Box 1530, Santa Monica, California 90406. See <http://www.usiw.org>, accessed 1 July 2004.

[52] This marks a major trend in Daoism in North America: the establishment of presses for self-publication. Both NI Hua-ching and Mantak CHIA, the two most prolific Daoist teachers to date, have their own presses. Similarly, Orthodox Daoism in America (ODA) is in the process of starting its own press.

[53] This information comes from the biographical section on Mantak CHIA in Mantak CHIA and Maneewan CHIA, *Awaken Healing Light of the Tao* (Huntington, N.Y.: Healing Tao Books, 1993), xiii–xv.

[54] CHIA and CHIA, *Awaken Healing Light of the Tao*, xiii.

[55] See <http://www.tao-garden.com>, <http://www.universal-tao.com>, and <http://www.multi-orgasmic.com>, all accessed 1 July 2004.

[56] See <http://www.healingtaousa.com>, and <http://www.healingdao.com>, both accessed 1 July 2004.

[57] See <http://www.healingdao.com>. A study of the Healing Tao System may be found in Paulino Belamide, "Taoism and Healing in North America: The Healing Tao of Mantak Chia," *International Review of Chinese Religion and Philosophy* 5 (2000): 245–89.

[58] ATBA is one of the few Daoist organizations in North America that follows a ritual model in practice. It seems that this may be the result of market factors and/or demographics. That is, organizations catering to a Chinese immigrant population (i.e., in Chinatowns) may have the necessary support to maintain a ritual orientation. In contrast, a Euro-American clientele demands self-help practices. One group not covered in the present study is Ching Chung Taoist Association, a group with temples in San Francisco and Vancouver that are based in a predecessor organization, Ching Chung Koon (Qingsong guan, Azure Pine Temple), from Hong Kong. The priests of these temples peform rituals for the community, including funeral services and rites for consecrating new businesses.

[59] 81 Bowery Street, 3rd Floor, New York, New York 10002. The association is housed on the second floor of a somewhat dilapidated building. During my visit there 16 February 2002,

I found that the organization identifies itself through a number of other names: Hunyuan xuanji tang (Hall of the Mysterious Pivot of the Primordial Origin) and Jueguang gong (Palace of Expansive Enlightenment).

[60] See Hsien Yuen, *The Taoism of Sage Religion: True Principle Great Tao, Transcendental Wisdom, and Supernatural Power* (New York: North Pole Gold Temple and Temple of Transcendental Wisdom, 1988), 136.

[61] See Yuen, *The Taoism of Sage Religion: True Principle*, 140.

[62] Yuen, *The Taoism of Sage Religion: True Principle*, 141. This quotation parallels the biographical description of Ni Hua-ching cited above.

[63] Hsien Yuen, *The Taoism of Sage Religion: Tan Ting Sitting Meditation—Disclosing the Highest Form of Taoism for the First Time in 60,000 Years* (New York: North Pole Gold Temple and Temple of Transcendental Wisdom, 1988).

[64] Also noteworthy in this respect are LU Sheng-yen, leader of the Purple Lotus Society and head priest of Ling Shen Ching Tze Temple (Redmond, Washington), and Reverend YAU of Ching Chung Taoist Association, who now lives in Hong Kong.

[65] Relevant material on Hsien Yuen and ATBA includes four issues of *The Great Tao* magazine, beginning with 1, no. 1 (Summer 1986) and ending with 1, no. 4 (Autumn 1987). Members of the advisory council for this magazine are also important in the present discussion; these are DENG Wen-yi (Chairman of the Taoist Society), Norman Girardot (Lehigh University), LU Xin-zu (24th generation Daoist priest of the Longmen sect), John Major (formerly of Dartmouth College), Michael Saso (formerly of University of Hawaii), and Jeffrey YUEN (Swedish Institute).

[66] There are also elements of self-cultivation in ATBA. While more advanced members have been taught the internal alchemy system mentioned above, it is unclear how common such transmission is.

[67] See Mitchel Chalek's interview with Jeffrey YUEN at the Acupuncture Society of New York (ASNY) website, <http://www.asny.org/mts012.asp>, accessed 1 July 2004.

[68] LIU Ming's rise in status within the landscape of Daoism in North America was, to a large degree, the result of a number of interviews published in the *Yoga Journal*, beginning in the 1990s, and ODA's publication of *Frost Bell*. See, for example, Holly Hammon, "Being Human Is Nothing Extraordinary: An Interview with Charles Belyea," *Yoga Journal* (May/June 1995): 72–75, 143–49. Charles Belyea legally changed his name to LIU Ming 10 December 1998.

[69] A fuller study of LIU Ming's Daoist system would have to address his long-standing connection with the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of Dzogchen. Much of what and how he teaches is at least partially influenced by that Tibetan tradition, including his association with Chogyam Trungpa (1939–1987).

[70] See Charles Belyea [LIU Ming] and Steven Tainer, *Dragon's Play: A New Taoist Transmission of the Complete Experience of Human Life* (Berkeley: Great Circle Lifeworks, 1991), 197.

[71] P.O. Box 210375, San Francisco, California 94121. See <http://www.orthodoxdaoism.org>, defunct when accessed 1 July 2004. For current information on ODA see <http://www.northstarmartialarts.com/oda>, accessed 1 July 2004.

[72] Interview with LIU Ming, Seattle, Washington, 23 July 2001.

[73] Based on field observations and informant interviews from June 2002 to March 2003.

[74] The final issue of *Frost Bell* was published in 2002; this was the Summer 2002 issue, with the feature article "Ritual as Personal Practice in Tantric Buddhism and Daoism" by LIU Ming.

[75] LIU Ming has composed a translation of the *Daode jing*, which includes his lengthy commentary from what he calls an orthodox Daoist perspective.

[76] 225 N. 70th St., Seattle, Washington 98103. See <http://www.taoiststudiesinstitute.org>, accessed 1 July 2004.

[77] Harrison Moretz was also an early supporter of and teacher at the Northwest Institute of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NIAOM), which went out of business in the summer of 2002. There Moretz taught classes on Qigong. This association provided much of the student base for TSI.

[78] Much of this information comes from an interview with Harrison Moretz, Seattle, Washington, 28 June 2001, as well as from my former participation in this Daoist community.

[79] An entire ethnographic account could be written on the process of establishing this altar, one of the first traditional Daoist altars in North America. As LIU Ming represents the Zhengyi (Orthodox Unity) tradition and Harrison Moretz is connected with the Longmen (Dragon Gate) sect, the issue of iconography and arrangement required extensive discussions. The establishment of the altar at Xuanji guan, called Sanqing dian (Shrine to the Three Pure Ones), is now being supported by the monks of Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery, Beijing).

[80] See <http://www.tao.org/center/master>, accessed 1 July 2004.

[81] See <http://www.tao.org>, accessed 1 July 2004.

[82] See <http://www.tao.org/temple>, accessed 1 July 2004. CTTS is actually a large private home in Weston, Massachusetts. During my visit there in May 2002, I was informed that visitors were not permitted without reservations, as the center was based on private membership. None of the Weston townspeople with whom I spoke knew that CTTS was there.

[83] Some of these would include the following: Lily SIOU (CANG Yi Hsiang) and the Tai Hsuan Foundation (Honolulu, Hawaii); KWAN Sai-hung and DENG Ming-dao; the Ching Chung Taoist Association (San Francisco and Vancouver); Hyunmoon KIM and Sun Do (Berkeley and Seattle); Tzu Kuo SHIH (T.K. Shih) and the Wu Tang Ch'uan Association (Kingston, New York); Duane PANG, the Wah Kong Temple (Liliha, Hawaii), and the Ch'ing-ning Tao Yuan Taoist Center (Hawaii); the Genesee Valley Daoist Hermitage (Moscow, Idaho); Solala Towler and the Abode of the Eternal Tao (Eugene, Oregon); the Taoist Arts Center (New York, New York); WU Jing-nuan, the Taoist Center, and the Taoist Health Institute (Washington, D.C.); Brock Silvers, the Taoist Restoration Society (TRS) (Honolulu, Hawaii), Sacred Mountain Press (Nederland, Colorado), and the U.S. Taoist Association; Ken Cohen (GAO Han), the Taoist Mountain Retreat, and Qigong Research and Practice Center (Nederland, Colorado); Chunyi LIN and Spring Forest Qigong (Minnetonka, Minnesota); Chungliang Al HUANG and the Living Tao Foundation (Urbana, Illinois); Stephen CHANG, the Foundation of Tao (San Francisco, California), and Tao University (New York, New York); GIA Fu-feng and the Stillpoint Taoist University (Wetmore, Colorado); B. K. Frantzis and Energy Arts (Fairfax, California); Terri Morgan and the Wudang Research Association (Boynton Beach, Florida); WU Baolin (Santa Monica, California); the Taoist Sanctuary (Tempe, Arizonia); the Taoist Center (Oakland, California); the Taoist Temple (Hanford, California); the Taoist Resource Center (Burbank, California); Hsien Taoist Monastery (Aptos, California); Michael Rinaldi and the Daoist Medical Qigong Center (Sebastopol, California); and the Great River Taoist Center (Washington, D.C.). See Louis Komjathy, "Daoist Teachers in North America," <http://www.daoistcenter.org/articles.htm>, posted 15 September 2003, accessed 1 July 2004; idem, "Daoist Organizations in North America," http://www.daoistcenter.org/articles.htm, posted 15 September 2003, accessed 1 July 2004; and Siegler, "The Dao of America," 413–21. Information on Daoist teachers and organizations in North America can be sent to me at the following address: Louis Komjathy, Department of Religion, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington 98447–0003.

[84] See Michael Saso, *Taoism and the Rite of Cosmic Renewal* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1972); and idem, *The Teachings of Taoist Master Chuang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). Saso currently lives in Carmel, California, and conducts research in mainland China.

[85] "Registers" (*lu*) include lists of "spirits" to be summoned during related rituals; they are traditionally accompanied by oral instructions (*koujue*) to ensure efficacious invocation.

[86] Recently, Sacred Mountain Press, under the direction of Brock Silvers, has republished Saso's *The Teachings of Taoist Master Chuang* under the title *Taoist Master Chuang* (Eldorado Springs, Colo.: Sacred Mountain Press, 2000). See <http://www.smpress.com> accessed 1 July 2004. It is also scheduled to publish a manual of Daoist practice, the forthcoming *The Taoist Manual: A Guide to Traditional Taoist Practice* by Brock Silvers.

[87] See Louis Komjathy, "Index to *Taoist Resources*," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001): 233–42.

[88] See <http://www.abodetao.com>, accessed 1 July 2004.

[89] For a critical discussion of the ways in which Taiji quan, yoga, and other alternative practices become part of the American health and fitness movement see Kimberly Lau, *New Age Capitalism: Making Money East of Eden* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

New Religious Movements and the "Acids" of Postmodernity

Phillip Charles Lucas

ABSTRACT: Most scholars of new religious movements (NRMs) have tended to ignore the critiques of contemporary culture offered by postmodern theorists. This article attempts to show how several of these critical perspectives can offer innovative conceptual tools with which to analyze growth, change and "distortion" in these movements. The specific elements of postmodernity considered include: 1) hyper-pluralism, globalization, and the radical relativization of truth claims characteristic of postmodernity; 2) postmodernity's "domination of simulation," by which human experience comes to be increasingly mediated by synthetic images produced and disseminated by the mass media; and 3) ephemerality and the contraction of time characteristic of postmodernity. Two NRMs, Christ the Savior Brotherhood and Church Universal and Triumphant, are used as case studies to demonstrate the utility of these three postmodern conditions in interpreting developments in new religions.

Scholars of new religious movements (NRMs) have, until recently, used conventional paradigms such as secularization, sect-to-church trajectory, the "new voluntarism," and the "religious economy" to interpret the emergence, growth, and "distortion" of these movements during the last forty years.[1] While these perspectives furnish important insights into NRMs, they neglect the significant critiques of contemporary culture by postmodern theorists, many of whom offer innovative conceptual tools with which to analyze developmental dynamics in these groups.

A comprehensive treatment of postmodern theory, its detractors, and its applicability to NRMs would require a book-length manuscript.

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In this article, therefore, I attempt something more modest: to demonstrate how three specific conditions of postmodernity—1) hyperpluralism and the resulting radical relativization of religious truth claims; 2) the increasing mediation of experience through synthetic images; and 3) ephemerality and the contraction of time—can help to interpret the challenges to survival faced by two NRMs in the late-twentieth century, Christ the Savior Brotherhood (formerly the Holy Order of MANS) and Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT), and the radical changes these challenges helped catalyze in these movements. There are other characteristics of postmodernity that could be profitably employed to interpret processes of development in contemporary NRMs—for example, pastiche and commodification—but here I limit my inquiry to these three, which provide a starting point for employing postmodern theory as an alternative hermeneutic in the study of NRMs.

CONDITIONS OF POSTMODERNITY AS NEW THEORETICAL TOOLS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF NRMS

Hyperpluralism and the Radical Relativization of Religious Truth Claims

The first relevant condition of postmodernity has to do with its radical relativization of religious authority and the resulting difficulty NRMs have in establishing and maintaining plausible systems of religious affirmation. This relativization of religious authority can be linked to a number of cultural trends, the two most important of which are the hyperpluralism found in postmodern Western democracies, and the incisive philosophical critiques of essentialist thinking and totalizing discourses that have appeared over the past forty years.[2]

Although pluralism has long been a feature of the North American religious landscape, the impact of pluralism has been greatly augmented in the postmodern era as a result of 1) globalization, with its proliferation of information technologies, greater tolerance toward alternative worldviews and life styles, and easy flow of symbols, meanings, goods, and people across traditional boundaries;[3] 2) the weakening of ascribed religious ties; 3) the breakdown of the nuclear family; and 4) the increased individualism of North American religiosity in general. These cultural conditions have made it relatively easy for NRMs to emerge and gain a small following in their first few years.[4]

Relativization and hyperpluralism have made it increasingly difficult, however, for NRMs to establish the authoritative status of their truth claims vis-à-vis their competitors in the religious marketplace. While it is agreed that law-abiding NRMs have the right to exist, the result of their proliferation is that no one of them can convincingly establish that it is superior to its competitors. Rather, each is regarded

as merely another contestant in the ongoing societal struggle for moral/cultural influence and a market share of paying members. This popular perception severely limits the potential of NRMs for dynamic growth and long-term survival.

The increased cultural skepticism concerning religious truth claims has struck hard at what is, after all, the common currency of new religious communities. As a result, many commentators—scholarly and otherwise—have come to interpret NRMs and their novel worldviews as creative attempts by marginalized individuals or groups to establish a base of power in society. Put another way, it is becoming axiomatic among scholars and the general public that the metanarratives on which new religions base their truth claims are socially constructed discourses whose underlying purpose is to gain committed members and a more influential presence (for their leaders' moral claims) in the nation's religious marketplace. This does not mean that NRM leaders and followers do not sincerely embrace these religious metanarratives, but it does mean that NRMs face extreme skepticism and suspicion when they attempt to assert the absolute truth of their positions. I also assert that the dimension of NRM activity that is most affected by postmodern skepticism and suspicion is recruitment, since most potential recruits have been influenced by the prevailing cultural ethos of religious pluralism and its postmodern corollaries, that absolutist religious truth claims are constructed by group leaders—and thus suspect—and that none merits a privileged position vis-à-vis any other.

The postmodern era's radical relativization of truth claims is enough of a problem for established religious institutions, who at least arrive on the playing field with a loyal body of committed members and the still-significant authority of tradition and custom. New religious communities have none of these advantages, and their alternative worldviews are commonly met with derision and hostility in public forums. This problem is exacerbated by the rapid dissemination of information in contemporary society. Increasingly sophisticated communications technologies now regularly saturate public awareness with news reporting, ensuring that negative portrayals of NRMs are broadcast with dizzying speed and repetition across the airwaves. These portrayals are highly damaging to NRMs' efforts to establish their public legitimacy and credibility. Characteristically the portrayals assume that a group's religious teachings are merely a ruse used by its leaders to exploit followers and enrich themselves. Sensationalized episodes of violence and abuse in NRMs—prominent examples include Peoples Temple in Jonestown, the Rajneesh movement in Antelope, Oregon, the Branch Davidians near Waco, Texas, and Heaven's Gate in Rancho Santa Fe, California—only serve to harden the prevailing attitudes of skepticism and suspicion. In such a climate, member recruitment and commitment become increasingly problematic.

Increasing Mediation of Experience through Synthetic Images

The second relevant condition of postmodernity is what Jean Baudrillard has termed its "domination of simulation," by which he means the tendency of postmodern culture to mediate experience through synthetic images and to dissolve the requirement that these images have any verifiable relation to the world they represent. As these simulations come to dominate contemporary society through their production and reproduction in the media, people become caught in a web of images that increasingly insulates them from the objective reality of the world around them. This domination of simulation arguably creates an imperative for NRMs to craft convincing public images of themselves—whether or not these images conform to the inner reality of the group—in order to combat the negative representations being produced by antagonistic religious, social, and media institutions. In a world in which social and political power is exercised most effectively by those who are masters of the image, NRMs are forced to construct sophisticated image-making apparatuses. Through ritual performances, print media, and various electronic representations, such apparatuses can continually refashion a group's public image, thereby enabling it to maintain a viable level of social acceptability, and thus access to resources and recruits.[5]

The danger that arises from these efforts is that, in a movement's scramble to continually refine its public image, confusion may develop within its membership as to which image represents reality. In other words, it is extremely difficult for a movement to project one image of itself to the public at large, and to maintain a different self-image within its own ranks. The resulting confusion of identity can have disastrous consequences for group cohesiveness and commitment, which are often based on a shared sense of mission, purpose, and identity. In addition, the awareness that a group's public self-representation is a media construct, alterable when the need arises, can foster an air of cynicism and skepticism within the membership itself. The movement can become self-reflexive and thus aware that it is constructing itself as it goes along. This awareness cannot help but threaten the divinely "revealed," authoritative status of a group's truth claims.

Ephemerality and the Contraction of Time

The third relevant condition of postmodernity is its fluidity and seeming ephemerality. The rate at which postmodern culture re-creates itself—new fashions, new products, new information technologies, new lifestyles, and new forms of recreation—has been greatly accelerated over

the past forty years.[6] As a result, NRMs are forced to develop and adapt in a highly impromptu manner and are riven with tension, ambiguity, and contradiction from their earliest foundations. Moreover, in order to represent themselves in a manner attractive to the rapidly changing profile of potential recruits, they must cultivate a sophisticated awareness of the current trends and attitudes of their cultural milieu. In short, new religions in the conditions of postmodernity seem to require a hyperflexibility that, while keeping them competitive in the religious marketplace, tends to rob them of the stability and continuity they need to survive as cohesive organizations. Understood in this way, they are more accurately conceived as chameleon-like formations that elaborate themselves through a rapid and ongoing process of dialogue and accommodation with their larger cultural environment. This chameleon-like character—especially as it manifests in continual refinements in doctrine and practice—hardly engenders the aura of absolute and timeless truth that is crucial to firm member commitment.

To demonstrate how these conditions of postmodernity can be used to interpret change and deformation in specific movements, I now consider developments within two NRMs that rose to prominence during the 1960s and 1970s, the Holy Order of MANS (renamed in 1988 as Christ the Savior Brotherhood) and Church Universal and Triumphant.

THE TRANSMOGRIFICATION OF THE HOLY ORDER OF MANS INTO CHRIST THE SAVIOR BROTHERHOOD INTERPRETED THROUGH A POSTMODERN LENS

The Holy Order of MANS (HOOM) was incorporated in California in 1968 as a nonsectarian, nonpolitical "New Age School of Christian Initiation." Initially the group attracted young persons who were disillusioned with the excesses of the Haight-Ashbury counterculture and in search of authentic spiritual community. The group was the brainchild of Earl W. Blighton (1904–1974), a retired electrical engineer and social worker who had been affiliated with the Freemasons, various Spiritualist churches, the Rosicrucians, and the Subramuniya Yoga Order. His innovative spiritual system was a syncretistic combination of traditional Christian monasticism, New Thought philosophy, the Western Esoteric tradition, Christian primitivism and millennialism, and Tantric initiatory practices. Blighton proclaimed that the Earth was moving into a New Age of spiritual illumination and that the order had been divinely ordained to prepare humanity for this coming era through the administration (by its priests) of esoteric initiatory rites.[7]

The Holy Order of Mans was organized along the lines of Catholic orders such as the Jesuits and spread quickly throughout the United States between 1969 and 1974. During this period it established mission stations and training centers in over sixty major cities. Its members took

traditional monastic vows of poverty, humility, obedience, purity, and service, observed regular periods of fasting and prayer, wore clerical clothing, and held all assets in common. The innovative features of the order's monasticism included its largely urban settings, coeducational membership, ordination of women priests, belief in the universality of the spiritual path, and eclectic repertoire of spiritual practices.[8]

During the early 1970s, the group expanded its outreach to include laypersons who wished to study under the renunciate brotherhood's auspices while remaining financially independent. Families who wished to follow the order's teachings were encouraged to organize "Christian Communities," small spiritual communities headed by order priests. The movement also created two celibate suborders, the Brown Brothers of the Holy Light and the Immaculate Heart Sisters of Mary, as intermediate training steps in which students spent a year dedicated to charitable service and Marian devotional practices.[9]

Blighton died unexpectedly in 1974. After several turbulent years of interim leadership, he was succeeded as the group's director general by one of his closest disciples, Andrew Rossi. The group's combined membership peaked at about 3,000 in 1977 and began to decline in the hostile and suspicious religious ecology that emerged in the wake of the Jonestown mass murder/suicide in November 1978. Like many of the period's new religions, the order was labeled a "cult" by the anticult movement and received increasingly hostile media treatment.[10]

To address the threat this negative publicity posed to the group's long-term viability, Rossi decided to move the order away from its esoteric and New Age public identity toward a more conventionally Christian self-representation. The movement also contracted into about ten large centers in the United States and Europe and shifted its focus from missionary expansion to the creation of a Christian-based subculture committed to spiritual community and "traditional" values. During an ongoing study of the Christian tradition in the early 1980s, Rossi underwent a personal religious conversion to Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Rather than leave the order and join an Orthodox denomination, the director general orchestrated a gradual process by which a number of the order's original identity markers were dropped and replaced with Eastern Orthodox doctrines and practices. Slowly the movement forced all women priests to give up their holy orders, adopted an exclusivist Orthodox attitude in its public pronouncements, and retreated into small enclaves that resembled Potemkin villages in nineteenth-century Russia. The brotherhood's conversion to Eastern Orthodoxy was completed in 1988, when its remaining 750 members were baptized and received into the independent Holy Orthodox Archdiocese of Queens, New York. The group changed its name to Christ the Savior Brotherhood (CSB) and gathered its lay and renunciate branches into conventional parishes. After it was discovered that the archbishop of the Queens

jurisdiction, Pangratios Vrionis, was a convicted sodomizer of teenage boys, CSB disaffiliated itself from the Queens archdiocese and joined most of its remaining parishes to the more mainstream Orthodox Church in America.[11] What remains of the brotherhood now conceives its purpose to be the conversion of the world to Eastern Orthodoxy in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ.[12]

The three cultural conditions outlined earlier provide helpful conceptual frameworks for interpreting the radical transformation the order underwent during its first twenty years. Postmodernity's hyperpluralism, for example (and the absence of a comprehensive religious consensus that is its corollary), has forced individuals to cope with their religious uncertainties by constructing, often with a small group of like-minded individuals, rather precarious structures of religious affirmation. In *The Heretical Imperative*, sociologist Peter Berger specifies three strategies individuals use to create these structures in a hyperpluralistic environment. The first, the *deductive* option, reasserts the sovereign authority of an established religious tradition in the face of modern skepticism and secularity. Having restored the tradition to the status of a transcendent, objective reality, it is then possible for believers to deduce religious affirmations in a manner similar to that used by medieval Christian theologians. The second strategy, the *reductive* option, reinterprets a religious tradition according to the values and assumptions of the contemporary world. This strategy is taken by those who believe that for a religious tradition to speak to contemporary peoples, it must be translated into contemporary structures of intelligibility. The third strategy Berger terms the *inductive* option. This strategy depends on personal and collective experience as the authoritative ground for religious affirmation. The option is inductive because it treats religious traditions as bodies of evidence concerning religious experience. Using this empirical evidence, individuals attempt to arrive at a comprehensive understanding and experience of religious truth.[13]

Postmodernity's hyperpluralism and the three Bergerian strategies used to cope with its challenges provide a useful framework for interpreting the dynamics of the order's transformation. The attracting force of Blighton's original spiritual system was that it appealed to no other authority than the member's own experience. The consensus of respondents from this early period was that they underwent compelling experiences of sacred power without having to accept any creedal or dogmatic formulations. With this foundation in their own ecstatic experiences, they were then free to construct a coherent religious worldview. This early approach of the order clearly correlates with Berger's third, or inductive option.

After Blighton's death, the frequency of charismatic spiritual experiences dropped off rapidly, leaving the group's members with his pastiche

of esoteric teachings as the foundation from which to build a secure spiritual identity. Without the collective spiritual experiences of the founding period to give it coherence, the community began to splinter into various camps. Some camps sought to translate the order's esoteric discourse into the idiom of modern evangelical Christianity (which was enjoying a strong resurgence during the late 1970s)—Berger's reductive option—while other camps began to search for precedents in the history of Apostolic Christianity for small, independent communities focused on service work and mystical spirituality.

It was during the extended identity crisis of this period that the new director general undertook an exhaustive study of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. He became convinced that this tradition transmitted the same mystical truths as Blighton had taught, but enclosed them within the safety and stability of timeless dogmas. In Berger's framework, Director General Rossi had experienced a conversion to the deductive option. The movement's rank and file members, now desperate to find a secure cognitive mooring for their collective spiritual identity, found the new certainty and authority with which Rossi promoted the Orthodox worldview a welcome antidote to their growing doubts and confusion. Orthodoxy appeared as a sovereign metaphysical reality that left no room for subjective interpretation or innovation. The choice that members faced was whether to submit to the Orthodox tradition or to leave the order and face the slippery subjectivism, hyperpluralism, and uncertainty of the postmodern religious marketplace. Because they were still committed to the affective community of the brotherhood, they chose the option that seemed to offer the best chance of movement survival—the reaffirmation of tradition, or Berger's deductive option.

Jean Baudrillard's insight into postmodernity's "domination of simulation" provides a framework for understanding the order's efforts in the late 1970s and 1980s to combat distorted media portrayals of itself by developing a sophisticated image-making apparatus. During its early history, the order managed to maintain non-hostile relations with other religious communities, the press, and civil and legal institutions. Thus, it was unnecessary for the group to create a public relations department to refine and manage its public image. Once it became labeled a "cult" in the late 1970s, however, and began to garner negative publicity, an image-making apparatus became necessary for movement survival. The temptation, once this apparatus was in place, was for the order's leadership to produce a series of subtly nuanced simulations of itself in word and image, many of which did not conform to the lived reality of the brotherhood's beliefs and practices. This image-making apparatus—which employed sophisticated forms of print media, public relations activities, and manipulation of symbols and rites—proved so successful in crafting a respectable public

image that group leaders eventually used it to recast the membership's image of itself as a religious community. This was particularly true during the gradual conversion to Orthodoxy between 1983 and 1988. Each month the order's publications contained a new icon, a new symbol, or a new article extolling the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Many members became so thoroughly confused concerning the order's true identity that they began to parrot each month's fashionable discourse, as they were able to discern it from their careful reading of the signs transmitted by their leaders. It became impossible to tell whether any of these discourses actually conformed to individual members' core beliefs and practices. Mass defections and disillusionment were the inevitable result of this state of affairs.

One of the most significant features of the order's reconstruction and redefinition was the rapidity with which it occurred. This can be viewed as a direct repercussion of the contraction of time that characterizes the postmodern era. With the lightning-paced transmission of information and the rapid circulation of individuals throughout the world, knowledge concerning changes in cultural conditions is received with unprecedented speed. This, in turn, necessitates many micro- and macro-adjustments by movement leaders if NRMs are to remain attractive to potential recruits and tolerated by public institutions. The order was finely attuned to larger cultural shifts in the late 1970s and 1980s. It quickly responded to the post-Jonestown "cult" panic and the Reagan era's return to "traditional values" by crafting sophisticated public representations of itself as a mainstream Christian community with impeccable theological and "family values" credentials. In the inaugural issue of its journal, *Epiphany*, for example, the group's director general authored an elaborate apologia that included a typology of "dangerous cults" and a detailed argument claiming that the order bore none of the characteristics of the stereotypical "cult." It was clear from this article that the director general had been closely monitoring the public debate concerning new religions and was thoroughly familiar with the various typologies articulated in anticult movement literature.[14]

It can be argued that NRMs in the postmodern era are particularly ephemeral formations in the sense that they must continually refine and reconfigure themselves in order to remain viable in the rapidly shifting religious marketplace. In the case of HOOM/CSB, these reconfigurings resulted in a profound transformation that jettisoned the ritual and doctrinal identity markers of its first fourteen years of existence and embraced a comprehensive set of identity markers from Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The rapidity with which this identity transformation occurred proved fatal: the brotherhood has largely dissolved as an independent entity, and its few remaining members have joined mainstream Orthodox jurisdictions.

CRISES WITHIN THE SUMMIT LIGHTHOUSE/ CHURCH UNIVERSAL AND TRIUMPHANT INTERPRETED THROUGH A POSTMODERN LENS

The postmodern conditions of relativization, globalization, hyper-pluralism, the domination of simulation, and the acceleration of time provide useful conceptual frameworks for interpreting developmental crises within another late-twentieth-century NRM, Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT). The church was founded in 1958 by Mark L. Prophet (1918–1973) as the Summit Lighthouse. Prophet was a student of such New Age forerunner movements as Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, New Thought, and the I Am Activity, and was particularly drawn to the teaching within the I Am Activity of an invisible hierarchy of "Ascended Masters" who oversee human spiritual evolution. It was Prophet's assertion that he had been chosen as the messenger for the ascended masters in the present era, and his Washington, D.C.-based group published the "dictations" he received from these exalted spiritual figures. Prophet also taught a method of verbal affirmation called "decreeing" that was designed to connect persons with their innate divinity and to transform negative conditions around them.[15]

The inner cadre of Prophet's followers during the early 1960s was known as the Keepers of the Flame Fraternity. This dues-paying group of students received a graded correspondence course that taught them the mysteries of the ascended masters, "decreeing," the special mission of the United States in the coming Golden Age of spiritual freedom, and other beliefs and practices derived from the Western Esoteric tradition. During a Boston lecture tour, Prophet met a young college student, Elizabeth Clare Wulf (b. 1939), whom he married in 1963. While Mark Prophet continued to give public dictations and to preside at weekly worship services, he privately began training Elizabeth Clare Prophet as co-messenger. The couple moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 1966 and found a new audience with counterculture youth. The Prophets lived in a mansion with their young disciples and slowly developed a collective lifestyle akin to other spiritual communities of the period. In the late 1960s, Summit Lighthouse sponsored seasonal retreats attended by students from around the world and began publishing books by the Prophets. It also created Summit University, which gave students an extended immersion in the group's esoteric teachings. In 1977, Summit University became "Camelot," a 218-acre "New Age Mystery School" on the grounds of a former Catholic seminary near Malibu, California.[16]

Major changes began occurring in the group following the sudden death of Mark Prophet in 1973. Elizabeth Clare Prophet renamed her community Church Universal and Triumphant in 1974 and retained Summit Lighthouse as the group's publishing arm. She expanded the

church's network of study groups and teaching centers around the world, increased the number of publications offered, and relocated to southern California. The Church Universal and Triumphant came to view itself as the true church of Ascended Masters Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ, and as a pivotal player in the dawning Aquarian Age.[17]

By the late 1970s, Elizabeth Clare Prophet was a rising star in New Age circles and a regular guest on popular television and radio programs. Her national tours, billed as "Stumping for Higher Consciousness," used state-of-the-art audiovisual media and featured live music, dramatic "dictations" from the ascended masters, backdrops worthy of a Hollywood set, and "cosmic initiations" that were a New Age version of evangelical altar calls. In style if not substance, Prophet's tours borrowed from the grandiose evangelical revivals of Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944).[18]

The messages received by the Prophets had always contained elements of apocalyptic warning and Cold War anti-Communism. As early as 1973, the church had secretly begun to stockpile food, gold coins, and weapons on property in Idaho and Montana in order to ensure movement survival should a global catastrophe occur.[19] As CUT began to garner unfavorable media scrutiny during the cult scare of the 1980s, apocalyptic themes assumed center stage in Prophet's teachings. In 1981, CUT acquired the 28,000-acre Forbes Ranch in Paradise Valley, Montana, and began turning it into a retreat center. Within two years Glastonbury, a private housing community for tithing members only, was inaugurated near the ranch. In 1986, a string of events, including an embarrassing lawsuit brought against Prophet by a former member, growing public opposition to the church's plans for expansion at its Malibu campus, and fears of imminent earthquakes in California, prompted the church to move its headquarters to the Montana ranch. The group grew much of its own food on newly acquired land in Paradise Valley, opened a children's school and restaurant, and relocated its publishing operations to nearby Livingston.

The "shelter cycle" began in response to messages from an ascended master indicating the likelihood of a Soviet first strike on the United States between 2 October 1987 and 2 October 1989. Members were admonished to prepare for nuclear war by building fallout shelters, storing food, and leaving coastal areas. The Church Universal and Triumphant began reallocating its resources on a massive scale to accomplish the speedy construction of fallout shelters for its own staff of 756. Prophet continued to adjust her apocalyptic pronouncements between 1988 and 1990, stressing a high probability of war between January 1988 and October 1991. In July 1989, CUT publicly announced that the new shelters were the "Western Shambhala," the location the ascended masters had selected for members to survive a nuclear war. It also encouraged local non-staff members to build their own shelters in

the Glastonbury housing community and to purchase survival equipment from CUT suppliers.[20] Members began pouring into Paradise Valley during early 1990 for a two-month prayer vigil, prompting the United States representative for the district to petition Montana's governor to take action against the church in the interest of public safety.[21] On the evening of 15 March, thousands of members were suddenly ordered into the shelters. Although many had the real expectation that nuclear war was about to begin, the exercise was later dubbed a practice drill.[22]

Throughout the shelter cycle, Prophet and CUT became the unwilling focus of sensational negative national and international press coverage. Matters were made worse when Prophet's husband, Ed Francis, was convicted of conspiracy to purchase high-powered weapons and ammunition under a false name.[23] The press represented CUT as a "doomsday" or "survivalist" cult, forcing the church to devote time and resources combating this image. When the expected apocalypse did not occur in the predicted time frame, press scrutiny intensified. Members who had sold homes and businesses and gone into debt in response to Prophet's warnings found that Paradise Valley offered few viable jobs. These members became disillusioned and began leaving Montana and CUT in large numbers.[24] Between 1990 and 1996, the church lost more than one-third of its membership and reduced its ranch staff from 600 to about 70. It was also forced to sell large parcels of its Montana property to raise operating funds.

After the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) revoked CUT's tax-exempt status in 1992 and the church was dubbed the "next Waco" in a CBS television piece in 1993, CUT began to de-emphasize its apocalyptic teachings and to recast itself as a benign, mainstream religious community.[25] This movement away from apocalyptic urgency toward mainstream status included an agreement with the IRS to dispose of its weapons, a reorganization of Summit University in the direction of a full-time, four-year accredited seminary, and the hiring of an international corporate consultant, Gilbert Cleirbaut, to restructure CUT's organization. Cleirbaut, who became the church's president in 1996, shifted CUT away from Prophet's tightly controlled charismatic leadership and toward a more open and responsive leadership style. He also shifted the group's ideological focus to the recorded teachings of the ascended masters and away from Prophet's contemporary pronouncements and dictations. The new mission statement developed under Cleirbaut's leadership proclaimed the church's intention to establish worldwide spiritual communities and to transmit the teachings of the ascended masters on a global scale using the latest electronic communications technologies.[26]

During the late 1990s, CUT began moving successfully in a more conventional direction and routinizing its charisma in the form of a canon of teachings, a corporate-model governing structure, and a professional

ministry. The movement also adapted itself to entrepreneurial currents in the New Age subculture. Its annual reports spoke of "fiscal balance" and of business plans that provide "integration" among all the organization's products, services, and communications. The group saw itself as having undergone "restructuring, downsizing, rightsizing, reengineering and outsourcing . . . to become leaner, more competitive, more responsive, and more aware" of its customers' needs.[27]

The three conditions of postmodernity mentioned earlier provide useful conceptual tools for interpreting CUT's development between 1965 and 2000. The movement's early history of steady expansion and growth took place during the tolerant and experimental 1960s and 1970s, when mainstream religious institutions began to lose their legitimacy, and conditions of hyperpluralism made myriad alternative religious options available to young seekers. Like many NRMs of the period, CUT teachings combined elements of Eastern and Western spirituality. The Prophets' claim that the great spiritual figures of the past were members of the Great White Brotherhood (ascended masters), and that the Prophets were this brotherhood's chosen messengers, actually took advantage of the period's hyperpluralism, since it allowed the movement to cast a wide net and to draw seekers who found wisdom in all the world's major religious traditions.

The public delivery of messages from such ascended masters as Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ enhanced the sense among devotees of immediate experiential contact with the spiritual world. In Berger's formulation, CUT members had chosen the inductive option, which depends on personal and collective *experience* as the primary ground for personal religious affirmation. As long as Mark and Elizabeth Clare Prophet continued to transmit their dictations from the ascended masters in live public settings, members felt they had a firm experiential foundation for their allegiance to the church's teachings. Even Mark Prophet's death did not shake members' convictions, since his wife was able to assume successfully his role as the movement's grand revelator.

This foundation for religious conviction was shaken in the late 1970s, however, when CUT was dubbed a "cult" by the anticult movement, and press coverage turned hostile. As the 1980s unfolded with a return to conservative values, Prophet's claim to be the sole messenger of the world's greatest spiritual teachers was viewed with open skepticism. Prophet's public "stumps" espousing right-wing political causes (such as a constitutional amendment banning abortion, a national missile defense system, and the pouring of public monies into civil defense initiatives) gave the impression that she was simply another claimant for moral and political influence in the nation's religious marketplace. Damaging media exposés of Prophet's failed marriages, lavish lifestyle, and purported manipulation of her wealthier followers only added to

the growing public impression of her as a dangerous "cult leader" whose true intentions were personal enrichment and aggrandizement.

The authoritative status of CUT's truth claims took a further blow during the shelter cycle of 1986–1991. National and international media, hungry for religious scandal, focused on all aspects of CUT's operations. During national interviews to clarify her prophecies, Prophet appeared to backpedal from apocalyptic pronouncements that had not come to pass, badly damaging her credibility as the era's spokesperson for the ascended masters. Her continued private warnings to followers throughout the early 1990s concerning the dangers of a surprise attack by the former Soviet Union—in the face of the revolutionary changes taking place in Eastern Europe during this period—gave outside observers the impression that Prophet was stubbornly clinging to a view of the world that was no longer based in geopolitical reality.[28] Such a refusal to admit the inaccuracy of her prophecies did little to inspire public confidence in CUT's larger worldview and truth claims.

The final blow to CUT's attempt to establish the authoritative status of its truth claims came in 1998, when Prophet announced that she had long suffered from epilepsy and was now battling Alzheimer's disease. For a skeptical public, these revelations cast a very damaging light on the status of her "dictations" from the ascended masters. It was now possible to dismiss her pronouncements as the fevered imaginings of a diseased brain. For wavering followers, the Alzheimer's diagnosis also undercut Prophet's proclaimed status as the Earth's most evolved spiritual master, who had "balanced her karma" and was due to rise like her husband Mark to ascended master status upon her death.[29]

The postmodern era's domination of simulation has posed severe challenges to CUT's survival over the past sixteen years. Beginning with lurid media exposés of Prophet's sex life, her manipulation of wealthy members, and her self-indulgent lifestyle that began in 1985 during the Gordon Mull trial and continuing through the shelter cycle, CUT was vilified by a frenzy of hostile press coverage. At its peak, this coverage included reports on satellite news networks, prime-time television news and interview programs, and articles in national news magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *People*, and in newspapers in Sweden, Germany, Canada, and Australia. These media representations of CUT were a mixture of accurate reporting, distorted facts, unsubstantiated accusations, half-truths, and biased editorializing. For many, CUT came to symbolize the worst excesses of "dangerous cults." The church's bumbling attempts to circumvent laws in the procurement of weapons in 1989 and its many environmental mishaps during the construction of its international retreat center in Montana only added fuel to this media blaze.[30]

To combat the corrosive impact of these negative representations, the church was forced to create a public relations apparatus that worked

non-stop to craft and transmit an attractive image using all available modes and outlets of communication. To influence public perceptions in a direct manner, CUT scheduled Elizabeth Clare Prophet to appear on such national television programs as *Oprah*, *Donahue*, *Larry King Live*, and *Nightline with Ted Koppel*. Prophet also gave a long interview to *Time* magazine, and she and other movement leaders frequently granted interviews to national and local newspapers. During the shelter cycle, CUT issued frequent press releases to "set the record straight" concerning the group's prophecies, weapons purchases, and survival plans. In 1991, the church published "Challenging the Media Myth," a booklet sent to press outlets around the country to combat misrepresentations of CUT in a 1990 *People* magazine exposé. This booklet, which included maps and attractive photos of ranch property, rebutted specific charges in the *People* article using alternate headings of "Myth" and "Fact."[31] In its early attempts to combat negative images transmitted by mass media, CUT represented itself in a manner congruent with its core values and beliefs in a kind of "damage control" necessitated by the intensity of the media's attacks.

During the Branch Davidian standoff in the spring of 1993, CUT once again became the unwilling focus of national and international media scrutiny. The story line during this period was that CUT bore a striking resemblance to the Branch Davidians, especially in its stockpiling of weapons, apocalyptic worldview, and isolation from the rest of the world. Articles in *U.S. News and World Report* and *Newsweek*, and a report on CBS's *48 Hours* all warned that CUT was another Waco waiting to happen.

To combat this new wave of negative media representations, CUT's public relations department swung into high gear. In an attempt to change its public image as a "doomsday cult," church press releases denied that Prophet had ever predicted the end of the world and said its members were "guardedly optimistic" about the future.[32] Prophet even sent David Koresh a message via a local Texas radio station asking him to surrender to federal authorities. On a second front, CUT invited a team of scholars funded by the Association of World Academics for Religious Education (AWARE), a non-profit research association, to visit its ranch during an annual conference in July 1993. The scholars were given open access to the church's archives and allowed to conduct random surveys and interviews with church members and leaders. The church hoped that research conducted by objective scholars would help combat its widespread negative public image. The resulting AWARE study, which for the most part cast the church in a favorable light, was sent to media representatives and government officials.[33]

During the summer of 1993, in response to rumors of an impending raid on its ranch by federal authorities, CUT invited agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF) for a visit during July

and August. The agents later reported to the press that CUT was not suffering from "paranoia" and that public hostility toward the group was "bred in ignorance." They also affirmed that federal law enforcement agencies had no plans to investigate or attack CUT's operations. This public relations coup greatly assisted the church's efforts to lessen tension with its Paradise Valley neighbors.[34]

CUT also began to address directly its own members' misgivings. In 1994, it hired a prominent national public relations firm to help solicit donations from members and to determine the best way to market its message.[35] The church also used its member publication, *Royal Teton Ranch News*, its church-sponsored website, and formal meetings with church officials to make its case. The *Ranch News* ran a series of articles in 1994 detailing the findings of the AWARE study.[36] During the rise of anti-government militias in the mid-1990s, member publications denounced right-wing Patriot groups and admonished members to eschew tax protests and obey laws, even unrighteous ones. At the height of the Montana Freemen standoff in the spring of 1996, Prophet publicly denounced the tax-protest group for its defiance of government authority.[37]

The CUT move toward a mainstream church identity culminated with its radical reorganization between 1995 and 1997. The group issued a public annual report detailing its finances and its shift from internal to "customer" focus. It also officially proclaimed its new mission: to publish and apply the teachings of the ascended masters, as delivered through Mark and Elizabeth Clare Prophet, for the spiritual liberation of humanity. The church jettisoned its apocalyptic past by announcing its new vision of the future: the coming of a Golden Age of peace, freedom, and enlightenment wherein 51 percent of the planet's population would be "Christed ones."[38]

The rapid-paced shift in self-representation from apocalyptic, gnostic movement to corporate, consumer-friendly New Age church caught significant segments of CUT's rank-and-file by surprise. Many members became confused as to what the church really stood for, especially following Elizabeth Clare Prophet's resignation from her temporal and spiritual leadership of the church. In private communications and in anonymous online chat rooms, members expressed their growing distrust of the church's media pronouncements. "Corporate types" such as Cleirbaut, church financier Ed Francis, and public relations director Murray Steinman were accused of leading the church away from its original mission and teachings for less-than-altruistic reasons. Many complained that Cleirbaut and his staff were turning CUT into a spiritless, corporate purveyor of New Age commodities and were stripping it of its authentic transmission of charismatic power through Elizabeth Clare Prophet. For these disgruntled members, the group's full-scale campaign to combat its negative media representation had been all too

successful. As a result, they were no longer content to belong to a group that had lost its revolutionary, charismatic, and cutting-edge spiritual focus and identity. CUT remains in the midst of an identity crisis, with members who want to return the church to its early focus on decreeing and initiatory spirituality in tension with members who see the church's future as a more mainstream institution with elected leaders, seminaries, and canons of sacred texts. Various factions have attempted to legitimate their authority either through obtaining Elizabeth Clare Prophet's blessings for their initiatives or through laying claim to Prophet's initiatory mantles.[39] Prophet's present status as retired and incapacitated past revelator leaves the church in a prolonged state of liminality, a state that will only be fully resolved at Prophet's death.

The church has also been very much influenced by the forces of globalization. Although the Prophets had shown an interest in international expansion, they kept their primary focus on the United States and viewed America's and CUT's destinies in the dawning New Age as intimately connected. Cleirbaut, the Belgian corporate consultant who became CUT's president during the mid-1990s, was the first to take the organization in a truly global direction. Under his leadership the church shifted its resources away from maintenance of the Royal Teton Ranch and toward the fostering of spiritual communities throughout the world. As Cleirbaut said in a presentation to CUT members on 4 July 1998:

> I have outlined a plan to create a global spiritual organization that will help us compete in the new global environment. This global organization will help us sustain and grow an international spiritual movement, spread the teachings on every continent and create a loving worldwide spiritual community.[40]

It was also under Cleirbaut that the church developed a carefully planned strategy to market its products internationally. It did this in several ways. First, it entered into agreements with foreign publishing companies to translate Prophet's books in different languages and to distribute them globally. Second, it committed significant resources to transmit the church's teachings and ritual activities around the world using satellite technology, the Internet, and phone patch-ins to conferences.[41] Finally, Cleirbaut and other church leaders made widely publicized tours in the late 1990s to foreign-based CUT study groups and churches, listening to the needs of local members and helping them create stronger communities. These leadership activities sent a clear signal to church members that theirs was a truly international community whose destiny was no longer so closely tied to that of the United States. Given its historical roots, whether the movement's center of gravity can truly shift beyond the United States remains to be seen, but theorists of globalization would predict that this shift must happen eventually if CUT is to survive.

CONCLUSION

The processes of conventionalization in sects noticed by H. Richard Niebuhr, Bryan Wilson, and Rodney Stark are seen to be initiated by such long-term factors as the rise in a group's socioeconomic status and the death of its founding generation. Thus, sect-like movements changed gradually into church-like denominations in the American context, but only after the passage of at least fifty to sixty years. It appears in the postmodern era that conventionalization or co-optation by dominant religious discourses may be taking place within the first generation itself. Moreover, the drivers of change may have more to do with the difficulties a new religion faces in establishing an authentic, consistent self-representation in the hyperpluralized, hyperaccelerated postmodern "domination of simulation," and with the near impossibility of creating sufficiently impermeable boundaries in an era of globalization. Without such boundaries, the preservation of a community's nontraditional system of beliefs, values, and practices—its very identity—becomes highly problematical.[42]

The attempt to sustain a compelling religious worldview and a cohesive community of the elect in changing cultural circumstances has been the common striving of many thousands of Americans throughout the nation's history. Such strivings range from the first Pilgrim settlement at Plymouth Rock, through the Oneida Perfectionists in upstate New York, to the Church Universal and Triumphant's "Western Shambhala" in the mountains of Montana. These efforts, beset by internal and external challenges to survival in the best of times, have failed far more often than they have succeeded. In the hyperpluralized, globalized, simulation-dominated, and hyperaccelerated cultural conditions of postmodernity, the millennial and utopian dreams of new religions have become more tenuous than ever.

ENDNOTES

[1] For a complete discussion of the paradigm shift occurring in sociology of religion, see R. Stephen Warner's article, "Work in Progress toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States," American Journal of Sociology 98 (March 1993): 1044–93.

[2] Peter Berger discussed this problem with regard to modernity and pluralism in *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969), and in *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1980). See also Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); and idem, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) for discussions of postmodernity's impact on identity formation for both individuals and institutions.

[3] For a fuller discussion of these themes, see Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (London: Sage Publications, 1994).

[4] For a complete discussion of these trends, see Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Phillip E. Hammond, *Religion and Personal Autonomy: The Third Disestablishment in America* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992); Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Amanda Porterfield, *The Transformation of American Religion: The Story of a Late Twentieth-Century Awakening* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual But Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[5] Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," in *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss and Paul Patton (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 1–79.

[6] To be sure, social commentators beginning in the late nineteenth century had noted the tremendous forces of change, revolution, and rapid growth unleashed by modern capitalism and industrialism. It is my contention that these forces of change have accelerated as a result of electronic information technologies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and have led to a more profound sense of impermanence and ephemerality in modern Western industrial countries. See Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

[7] Ruth Helen Blighton, unpublished personal memoir (n.d.); Holy Order of MANS, *Holy Order of MANS*, promotional booklet (1969), 1–12; *Uniting All Faiths*, promotional booklet (1973), 1–35.

[8] Blighton, unpublished personal memoir; Holy Order of MANS, *Holy Order of MANS*, 1–12; *Uniting All Faiths*, 1–35.

[9] Blighton, unpublished personal memoir; Holy Order of MANS, *Holy Order of MANS*, 1–12; *Uniting All Faiths*, 1–35.

[10] Holy Order of MANS, monthly enrollment totals, 1977–1985.

[11] Pangratios was arrested on 18 April 2002 in Queens, New York, on charges of sexually abusing a 14-year-old congregant in 1999. Sexual misconduct charges have plagued other Orthodox leaders who played an important role in the order's journey to Orthodoxy. Jacob Fries, "Defrocked After '68 Sex Case, Priest Faces New Accusation," *New York Times*, 19 April 2002, B3.

[12] Christ the Savior Brotherhood, *Tree of Life* (Fall 1988): 4–5; Herman Podmoshensky, interview with author, 8 June 1991, Forestville, California.

[13] Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 17–28.

[14] Vincent Rossi, "By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them: Proclaiming the Spiritual Authenticity of the HOOM in a Counterfeit Age," *Epiphany* 1 (Fall 1980): 2–40.

[15] J. Gordon Melton, "The Church Universal and Triumphant: Its Heritage and Thoughtworld," Syzygy, Special Issue (1994): 1–20; see also Mark L. Prophet and Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *The Science of the Spoken Word* (Malibu: Summit University Press, 1974).

[16] Melton, "The Church Universal and Triumphant," 15–16.

[17] Melton, "The Church Universal and Triumphant," 16.

[18] In an interview with the author in July 1993 at the Royal Teton Ranch, Elizabeth Clare Prophet said that Aimee Semple McPherson and Mary Baker Eddy were role models for her ministry.

[19] Scott McMillion, "Ex-Member: CUT's Been Stocking Guns," *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, 12 July 1989, 1, 8.

[20] Elizabeth Clare Prophet, "Royal Teton Ranch," communication to CUT members, 23 October 1989, 1–6.

[21] Letter from United States Representative Bob Raney (Montana) to Montana Governor Stan Stephens, 16 March 1990.

[22] Al Knauber, "CUT Members Go Underground," *Livingston Enterprise,* 16 March 1990, 1.

[23] Jess Walter, "More Gun Trouble for New Age Sect," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 17 October 1989, A–2.

[24] "Bargain Basement Prices Now Accepted for CUT Shelter Space," *Livingston Enterprise,* 15 May 1990, 1; "Danger Passes for CUT: Some Members Leaving Park County," *Livingston Enterprise,* 6 August 1990, 1.

[25] Karin Ronnow, "CUT's Tax-exempt Status Revoked," *Livingston Enterprise,* 30 October 1992, 1. The IRS took this action because CUT had amassed weapons, engaged in anti-Soviet political activities, and owned for-profit businesses.

[26] Church Universal and Triumphant, 1997 Annual Report, 14–15.

[27] Church Universal and Triumphant, 1997 Annual Report, 6.

[28] Murray Steinman, "New Book Sets the Record Straight," Summit University press release, January 1991; "Prophet: Attack Still Possible," *Livingston Enterprise,* 8 October 1991, 1.

[29] Not surprisingly, some members have interpreted Prophet's illness as a sacrificial act in which she has taken on the karma of the world to help prevent global catastrophe.

[30] Michael P. Harris, "Paradise Under Siege," *Time,* 28 August 1989, 61; Richard Lacayo, "Heading for the Hills," *Time,* 26 March 1990, 20; Al Knauber, "Ranch Kitchen Sewage System Did Not Fail, State Inspector Says," *Livingston Enterprise,* 5 July 1990, 1; Kenneth L. Woodward, "Cultic America: A Tower of Babel," *Newsweek,* 15 March 1993, 60–61.

[31] "Challenging the Media Myth: The Facts about Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Church Universal and Triumphant, and Royal Teton Ranch" (Corwin Springs, Mont.: Summit University Press, 1991).

[32] Murray Steinman, "Church Universal and Triumphant Not Like Branch Davidians," Church Universal and Triumphant press release, 11 March 1993.

[33] "Study Debunks Anti-church Myths: Church Members Are Extraordinary—and Normal," *Royal Teton Ranch News* (April 1994): 1, 11.

[34] Greg McCracken, "ATF Agent Discredits CUT Rumors," *Billings Gazette,* 14 September 1993, 1B, 3B.

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[36] See, for example, *Royal Teton Ranch News* (April 1994): 1, 11; and (November 1994): 1, 2, 7, 9.

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[38] Church Universal and Triumphant, 1997 Annual Report, 9.

[39] Murray Steinman, interview with author, Bozeman, Montana, 17 May 2004.

[40] Gilbert Cleirbaut, "Building Bridges to the Future," *Heart to Heart* (September 1998): 9.

[41] Scott McBride, "Now Appearing on the World Wide Web: The Teachings of the Ascended Masters: Church Goes On-line," *Royal Teton Ranch News* (Spring/Summer 1996): 12.

[42] It should be noted that factors other than these three cultural conditions played a part in the transformation of the Holy Order of MANS. Of particular significance, for example, were Rossi's own personality and background, and the changing demographics of the group. For a fuller discussion of these factors see Phillip Charles Lucas, *The Holy Order of MANS: From New Age to Orthodoxy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

Marks of the Beast

The *Left Behind* Novels, Identity, and the Internalization of Evil

Glenn W. Shuck

ABSTRACT: The *Left Behind* novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins have become a major publishing phenomenon in recent years. The novels have succeeded in part because they address the anxieties of their readers, using apocalyptic language to depict a future world in which evildoers are punished, and the faithful reverse the tables on their cultural marginality. The novels, however, also speak to the "here and now," articulating in narrative form the beliefs and actions that place one among either the saved or the damned. The novels accomplish this through the issuance of marks. Both believers and the followers of Antichrist have distinctive marks, which prove less than reliable. At stake, ultimately, is an evangelicalism open to the ambiguity and uncertainty of contemporary life, and a reactive fundamentalism that insists, metaphorically, on the rigidity of marks—a quest for certainty ill-advised in a world characterized by relentless change.*

By mythologizing these threats—by naming the Antichrist—they seek to push back the threat of chaos, restore order, and secure their sense of agency and well-being. The historical record seems to indicate, however, that apocalyptic name-calling has rarely functioned in ways that lead to a productive engagement with life.

—Robert C. Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist*[1]

American religious history bears witness to the periodic flare-up of doomsday beliefs, whether during times of plenty or poverty, on local, regional, or occasionally national scales. Prophets of doom appear every generation it seems, to capture the apocalyptic imagination

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of at least a small percentage of Americans. One thinks especially of the New York prophet William Miller and his ill-fated promises of the End in 1843 and 1844; or, more recently, the bestselling prophecy manual *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey, a student of evangelical theology.[2] Named the bestselling nonfiction title of the 1970s by the *New York Times*, Lindsey's dramatic account of the Last Days alternately fostered hope or struck fear in the hearts of many of his readers. Yet prophecy texts like Lindsey's—followed a generation later by the *Left Behind* novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins—succeed because they offer meaning, however stark and gloomy, to believers struggling to make sense of what they perceive as rapid cultural change.

This essay tracks the attempts of LaHaye and Jenkins to shape the cultural identity of American evangelicals through their depictions of the Apocalypse. If read with a measure of flexibility and openness, such literature may ease believers' anxieties and help them accommodate to the emerging world. If read too literally and unreflectively, however, apocalyptic belief may instead trap believers within a fatalism that threatens their evangelical identity, encouraging them to embrace a rigid, pre-determined world of moral irresponsibility.[3] Unreflective readings may also undermine the ability of believers to adjust adequately to the contemporary world, making it more likely—culturally speaking—that they will be left behind. Before returning to these issues, however, I offer a brief look at the *Left Behind* novels and their cultural background, along with the theological assumptions that inform them.

OVERVIEW OF THE *LEFT BEHIND* SERIES AND ITS THEOLOGY

The *Left Behind* novels, co-authored by long-time evangelical activist Tim LaHaye and his writing partner Jerry Jenkins, surprised many cultural observers by becoming a major publishing franchise during the 1990s—a cottage industry of despair which has continued into 2004.[4] The novels have even surpassed Lindsey's 1970's popularity, bringing a vision of cultural pessimism to a new generation of American readers. The series, which features fast-paced tales of intrigue and destruction, has sold between 35 and 55 million copies, according to various estimates, and includes twelve titles. In addition, LaHaye and Jenkins have designed a parallel series called *Left Behind: The Kids*, targeting an existentially anxious audience of children and adolescents. The *Left Behind* franchise has also spawned two feature films—albeit without the explicit approval of the authors.[5] Finally, *Left Behind: The TV Series* is scheduled to debut in 2004.

The *Left Behind* series features simple plots that correspond to a particular evangelical theology of the End-Times called dispensational premillennialism. Dispensational theology, as it is known by historians of

Christianity, is a remarkably intricate method of explaining how God acts in history—especially the end of history.[6] In contrast to the more optimistic versions of apocalypticism found in postmillennial theologies, which dominated much of American religious history, dispensationalism represented a much more pessimistic strand, arguing that world conditions would deteriorate until Christ's return.[7] Humans could do nothing to forestall God's imminent judgment. Formalized by a dissenting Anglican priest named John Nelson Darby during the mid-nineteenth century, dispensationalism grew in popularity after the Civil War owing to numerous prophecy conferences and the efforts of figures such as Bible editor and frequent prophecy speaker Cyrus I. Scofield. Clarence Larkin contributed a book of elaborate charts in 1918, *Dispensational Truth*, which showed in minute detail the progression of End-Times events.[8] Finally, Bible colleges such as Dallas Theological Seminary provided academic settings for the development of dispensational theology.

Scofield's *Reference Bible*, which first appeared in 1909, inserted margin notes containing dispensational principles into the Biblical text to make dispensational ideas seem more plausible among readers who tended to view the Bible *and* Scofield's notes as the literal word of God.[9] Larkin's charts, which prophecy believers continue to use, added colorful illustrations to an already graphic vision of the End. The Bible colleges and seminaries ensured the survival of dispensational belief among pastors and teachers. Still, dispensationalism remained poorly understood among the rank and file of evangelical believers during much of the twentieth century, remaining a largely academic movement owing to the legendary complexity of its schemas—even when illustrated by Larkin's baroque charts.

Left Behind does not present dispensational theology in an academic sense, however. Instead, LaHaye and Jenkins follow the course opened by Hal Lindsey during the 1970s. Lindsey took the complicated theories of his teachers at Dallas Theological Seminary and reduced them to several easily accessible themes. Lindsey's work introduced a generation to terms such as "the Rapture," "the Tribulation," "Antichrist," "False Prophet," and the "Mark of the Beast," to name a few. For Lindsey, the present dispensation, known as the Church Age, will, for all practical purposes, end when God "raptures," or instantly removes all believers in good standing to heaven. Those left behind can look forward to the Tribulation—seven years of unprecedented torment and persecution under Satan's puppet dictator, Antichrist. During this time believers will receive one last chance to pick the winning side in the cosmic battle between Christ and Antichrist. Antichrist, suspecting he may have an image problem, also benefits from the services of his False Prophet, Hell's version of a spin doctor who attempts to convince the world to worship Antichrist. Finally, those who side with Antichrist will accept a visible mark of loyalty—probably an implanted computer chip that contains

the number "666." All those bearing the Mark of the Beast will merit eternal damnation when Christ returns to establish his literal, one-thousand year kingdom after defeating the forces of Evil at the battle of Armageddon. In Lindsey's popularized version of dispensational theology, Evil is well known, and the choices one faces are remarkably clear.

Left Behind, like Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, does not often bog the reader down in formal theological debates. *Left Behind* promotes instead what historian George M. Marsden has dubbed "folk piety."[10] Moving through informal networks such as Christian bookstores and television programs rather than denominational pulpits, *Left Behind*'s brand of End-Times belief pervades evangelically-oriented folk religion, overstepping formal denominational barriers. Popular versions of dispensationalism have flourished within the grassroots of American folk religion, perhaps owing in large measure to its populist appeal and relative lack of theological rigor. Nothing if not protean, the theology of books like *Left Behind* traces its direct antecedents to the nineteenth century, but its interpretations remain as current as yesterday's headlines. Always promising the imminent End but never setting a firm, falsifiable date, dispensationalism retains plausibility by encouraging believers to find "signs of the times" that undergird doomsday beliefs, maintaining a consistent intensity of apocalyptic expectation. Dispensationalism makes itself anew in every generation, adapting its appeal to help uncertain and insecure believers search for firm foundations in a world increasingly reluctant to grant such guarantees.

Left Behind has popularized dispensational theology for another generation of uncertain and anxious believers. The novels, in fact, read like fast-paced, action-packed catechisms for dispensational belief. After all, those left behind are excluded for a reason: they are not *true* Christians. They fall short of embracing what LaHaye and Jenkins consider a normative evangelical identity, and instead value the world and its sinful temptations and material delights over a disciplined relationship with Jesus. *Left Behind*, at its core, speaks to a basic evangelical anxiety: "Am I a true Christian? Will I be left behind?" The authors inform readers what they must believe and how they ought to behave, attempting to defend the symbolic boundaries of evangelical identity.[11]

Left Behind begins with the Rapture.[12] Panic breaks out aboard a transatlantic flight as passengers suddenly realize that their pious loved ones have vanished, leaving behind only their clothing and jewelry. The plane's captain, Rayford Steele, quickly realizes what has happened. His wife Irene recently joined an evangelical church, but he refused to attend, professing agnosticism. Other protagonists on board include Cameron "Buck" Williams, an Ivy League-educated journalist, who subsequently investigates the disappearances and recognizes that all of his elite education could not save him from the consequences of his stubborn unbelief. Hattie Durham, a coquettish flight attendant, serves as a

constant irritation to the other protagonists before converting late in the series. On the ground, Rayford's rebellious teen daughter remains, as does the associate pastor of Irene's church. Pastor Barnes, it seems, never accepted Jesus. Together, this tiny remnant forms the Tribulation Force, which begins as a prayer group bent on survival but eventually develops throughout the series into an evangelical paramilitary outfit.

They form in opposition to Nicolae Carpathia, a hard-charging European businessman who becomes the president of Romania, then the leader of Europe, and finally the Supreme Potentate of the newly formed Global Community. His ungodly traits include a silver-tongue, a handsome face, and a devilish charm that he uses to soothe the world during its time of crisis.[13] To unbelievers he seems like a saint or even the Messiah. He works to correct economic inequalities, attempts to end poverty and cure dreaded diseases, and leads the world onto a path of total disarmament. Believers, however, see through his ruse. To the faithful, he is nothing more than history's most notorious confidence-man. The members of the Tribulation Force make it their mission to expose Carpathia as Antichrist and save as many souls as they can.

Their ensemble cast shifts throughout the series as key characters find martyrdom only to be replaced by figures that perform similar roles. For example, although Pastor Barnes soon dies—poisoned by Antichrist—a replacement quickly appears: a Jewish convert and biblical scholar named Dr. Tsion Ben-Judah. The Tribulation Force also has computer experts always at hand, starting with Donnie Moore, who acts as a technical consultant until a tree falls on him during an earthquake. New converts, including David Hassid and Chang Wong, assume and extend Moore's work, however. The medical staff includes Dr. Charles, replaced after his demise by Leah, a registered nurse. Later in the series, membership in the Tribulation Force appears to require piloting and/or paramilitary skills. The characters LaHaye and Jenkins create often resemble ordinary churchgoers one might expect to meet at a bake sale or potluck dinner—except they fly cargo aircraft and demonstrate expertise in weapons systems and complicated electronics that many governments would envy.

One discovers a progression of themes within the series. The earliest novels emphasize piety and passive resistance, while an increasingly strident tone dominates the later editions, along with a marked air of militancy. This also corresponds to how the evangelical protagonists view themselves over against non-evangelicals. Whereas the first novel, *Left Behind*, even includes the Pope among those taken to heaven in the Rapture, later novels tighten the distinction between "us" and "them" so significantly that only the most rigid evangelical believers can join the blessed.[14] Such rigid distinctions, if adopted by readers, may ultimately threaten the integrity of evangelical identity more than preserving it.

READING *LEFT BEHIND*: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although the work of a number of cultural theorists informs my study, I lean most heavily upon the interpretive framework suggested by literary theorist Stephen O'Leary in his *Arguing the Apocalypse.*[15] O'Leary discusses the rhetorical power of apocalyptic language, and offers terminology useful for assembling a methodological framework with which to read evangelical prophecy belief. O'Leary argues that prophecy texts speak in the "prophetic present." The texts may ostensibly discuss the future, but they also reflect the writers' anxieties about the present. Prophecy texts in a sense "transcend time," bringing the images of a contested future into a troubling present. Moreover, "the audience experiences the 'not yet' as 'now,' however fleetingly, in the mimetic process that enacts the vision as it now proclaims it."[16]

Put differently, prophecy literature does not merely discuss the future, but also seeks to shape it through the rhetorical appeal of apocalyptic language. Evangelical prophecy writers attempt to create an imagined, narrative space in which their visions of the future and its possibilities can be explored in a time much like our own. This has the dual effect of giving readers insight into contemporary developments, along with tactics for altering them. In sum, the reader can acknowledge such texts as future-oriented, while still experiencing them as intense reflections of contemporary and not merely future concerns. Even those who expect to forego the Tribulation, in other words, must still face the issues presented in the texts. For the evangelical reader, the Tribulation is both now *and* yet to come.

My argument also makes use of what O'Leary calls the "tragic and comic frames" of apocalyptic language. O'Leary describes the tragic and comic frames with references to classical Greek and Latin texts, but finds that the categories offer almost as much insight into evangelical figures like Hal Lindsey and William Miller as they do for the works of Augustine, Euripides, and Sophocles. O'Leary writes:

> Tragedy conceives of evil in terms of guilt; its mechanism of redemption is victimage, its plot moves inexorably toward sacrifice and the "cult of the kill." Comedy conceives of evil not as guilt, but as error; its mechanism of redemption is recognition rather than victimage, and its plot moves not toward sacrifice but to the exposure of fallibility.[17]

O'Leary notes further that comedy presents fate as open-ended, while tragedy puts forth a deterministic scenario that denies the value of human freedom, making humans instead into passive actors and actresses in a play written long before.

The *Left Behind* novels and their close cousins in evangelical prophecy fiction do not correspond precisely to either the comic or

tragic modes of interpretation. *Left Behind*, however, although moving on a continuum of interpretive possibilities, leans heavily toward the tragic side.[18] Moreover, O'Leary's understanding of the comic frame does not quite fit evangelical understandings of Apocalypse. *Left Behind* does have elements of what O'Leary calls the comic, with certain sections suggesting more open-ended possibilities rather than fatalistic outcomes, but *Left Behind* does not quite meet the criteria for comedy either in the modern or in the classical sense, the latter of which O'Leary deploys. *The Oxford English Dictionary* includes in its definition of classical comedy: "A stage-play of a light and amusing character, with a happy conclusion to its plot."[19] As I have noted, parts of *Left Behind* suggest greater flexibility in interpreting the End, but even its most flexible understandings lack "a light and amusing character" or even a "happy conclusion," save for the blessed few. *Left Behind* corresponds well to O'Leary's understanding of the tragic, but the evangelical situation does not quite fit his comic frame. Still, I find his methodological framework helpful for reading *Left Behind*, albeit with qualifications.

Further, in reading the *Left Behind* novels I share literary theorist Paul Ricoeur's assumption that novels, as narratives, often take on lives of their own.[20] The authors may intend a certain reading, but they cannot help but place their doubts and tensions into the words of their protagonists. *Left Behind*, at its core, uses apocalyptic language to address what it means to be an evangelical. The *Left Behind* novels demand that believers draw lines between the saved and the damned. But the balance is a delicate one. When anxiety and the drive toward security allow the tragic to dominate, identity, rather than adapting dynamically to contemporary conditions, may harden, enacting what a community most fears instead of opening it to an exciting, dynamic, if occasionally traumatic future. What makes *Left Behind* remarkable, however, is the juxtaposition of doubt and insecurity amid the familiar displays of moral certainty and spiritual chauvinism.

MARKS OF IDENTITY

The *Left Behind* novels struggle to identify and root out enemies, but also suggest that in a world dominated by Antichrist, the master of deception, nothing is ever as it seems. LaHaye and Jenkins nevertheless attempt to provide a foolproof method of separating good from evil through the assignment of visible marks. Those left behind must choose sides. Most obviously, those who side with Antichrist will take the Mark of the Beast, either on their right hand or forehead.[21] The authors describe the mark as a tiny microchip, a miracle of technology permanently inserted under the skin. They attribute to the mark a number of functions. First, it permits believers to participate in Antichrist's economy, using their implanted chips as debit cards which eliminate fraud

and speed transactions. Second, the mark gives its bearer a sense of place, specifying one of ten regional kingdoms as the bearer's homeland. Third, it conveys a permanent identity which cannot be effaced. It instantly identifies one to authorities, and suggests where one belongs, allowing Antichrist's forces to track citizens and make his kingdom more secure. Fourth, every mark bears the name of Antichrist. Finally, Antichrist displays a remarkable knowledge of consumer preferences, making provision for those who want a customized, vanity design. The content, however, remains identical.

But why do the authors describe the Mark of the Beast in such graphic detail when most of their readers would presumably know better than to accept a computer chip embossed with "666?" Precisely because the Mark of the Beast metaphorically encapsulates much of what LaHaye and Jenkins find problematic about the world, and potentially alluring.[22] The mark tempts believers because it represents a stable source of meaning in an increasingly uncertain world. It offers, literally and figuratively, a place in the world, including economic standing and an accepted social identity. It ends the tension many believers experience between the evangelical injunction to remain "in but not of the world," and the materialistic temptations of American consumer culture.

Significantly, believers have their own mark. Although anyone can detect the Mark of the Beast, the Mark of Christ is subtler, visible only through the eye of faith. The Mark of Christ, in contrast to the Mark of the Beast, appears in relief, a subtle yet profound holographic image. Moreover, it offers believers a sense of certainty and identity, seemingly offering them a place in this world, and in the next.[23] Finally, because only believers can see the Mark of Christ, their true identity remains invisible to Antichrist—a less risky proposition.

LaHaye and Jenkins insist that once one receives a mark, one's eternal fate is sealed with the mark serving as one's boarding pass to either eternal bliss or damnation. Regarding the Mark of the Beast, the authors write in their accompanying commentary to the *Left Behind* series: "For the Bible is quite clear that a person *cannot* take the mark of the Beast accidentally. In fact, it will become the external sign of a *deliberate decision* to give one's *self* to the devil [italics added]."[24]

Yet what makes *Left Behind* interesting, I argue, is the difficulty the authors display retaining the certainty of the marks. The Bible may be "quite clear," but the authors repeatedly insert significant doubt into their novels. Specifically, despite their claim that receiving the Mark of the Beast validates one's ticket to Hell, they introduce, in the figure of a teenaged computer genius named Chang, profound uncertainty. Chang, already a believer, takes the "Mark of the Beast" to continue his work as a Tribulation Force mole within Antichrist's computer center. More immediately, however, he takes the mark to avoid execution. Is he

an "undercover Christian," the text appears to ask, or is he just deceiving himself? The authors dangle the question throughout the eighth novel of the *Left Behind* series, *The Mark.*

Chang's mentor within Antichrist's palace, David—also a Christian—chooses to leave rather than accept the mark. For David, the choice is obvious. Anyone who takes the Mark of the Beast is consigned to perdition without exception. Such a stance, however, presents difficult questions. To a believer, Chang appears to have *both* marks. The ambivalence of Chang exposes a significant rift in the authors' thinking. LaHaye and Jenkins express their doubts through David's questioning of Chang:

> "I'm just wondering what's really inside you, Chang."
>
> "What do you mean?"
>
> "Spiritually . . . Do you know who you are and who you're not?"[25]

Presumably Chang has been saved—he has the Mark of Christ—but he also bears the Mark of the Beast. On one hand the authors suggest that Chang's mark does *not* serve "as an external sign of a deliberate decision to give one's *self* to the devil." Chang, after all, also bears the Mark of Christ. Yet how does one account for the sign? Which sign? Can we trust that the Mark of the Beast means what it indicates? The answer remains dubious. The marks, which promise to validate and preserve evangelical cultural identity, just lead to greater confusion.

Such an attitude of confusion and uncertainty suggests elements of O'Leary's comic frame. The future, and even the present, remains uncomfortably open-ended. Characters who seek certainty in this existential morass find themselves upbraided for their lack of faith. Rayford, the airline pilot and titular head of the Tribulation Force, attempts to end the uncertainty by deploying an awkward method of validating the Mark of Christ. When he suspects a traitor, he presses a moistened finger against the forehead of Ernie, a self-proclaimed believer:

> No wonder Ernie's mark had appeared so prominent. He had refreshed it with whatever he had used to create it in the first place . . . Ernie paled and tried to pull away, but Rayford grabbed the back of his neck and with his free hand pressed his thumb against Ernie's bogus mark. The smudge rubbed off.[26]

After Rayford discovers Ernie's treachery, Tribulation Force members begin to validate each other the same way one might inspect a debased coin or questionable currency. Such procedures, however, would seem to undermine the certainty the Mark of Christ purportedly offers.[27]

Moreover, Rayford's paranoia vis-à-vis the other protagonists and his single-minded zealotry against Antichrist threaten the integrity of the

Tribulation Force and seem, if anything, to incorporate the machinations of Antichrist in their midst. A mysterious, prophetic figure within the Tribulation Force called "T" fulminates against Rayford's tragic turn, calling the madness of the marks into question and convicting Rayford of his error, arguing that Rayford is incorporating the tactics of his enemies:

> "He's the enemy, sure, but he's not one of those we treat like scum to make sure they don't find out who we really are. He already knows who we are, bro . . . We don't play them, lie to them, cheat them, steal from them, blackmail them. We love them. We plead with them . . . What you did sure didn't feel loving and Christian to me . . . You were as bad as he was."[28]

T adds, echoing David's questioning of Chang, that he is "beginning to wonder who you are."[29] T reminds Rayford that deliverance lies in trust, and that any attempt to find certainty this side of the millennium may prove tragic.[30]

If prophecy believers learn to reflect on the dubious quality of outward appearances or any other promises of rigid, unchanging moral foundations against which to measure themselves and others, they may find themselves more capable of accommodating to an increasingly complicated world. The middle novels in the *Left Behind* series—from *Soul Harvest* (#4) to *The Mark* (#8)—suggest that the preservation of evangelical cultural identity may require a higher tolerance for ambiguity than many readers (and the writers, too) might prefer. Apocalyptic language in these sections—in spite of the claims and intentions of the authors—takes on a mildly prophetic tone, reminding readers that even what seems certain may ultimately prove deceptive.

BEAST, INCORPORATED

LaHaye and Jenkins cannot resist the re-introduction of certainty and rigid distinctions, however. Their four most recent novels, *Desecration* (#9), *The Remnant* (#10), *Armageddon* (#11), and *Glorious Appearing* (#12), turn away from a more open-ended version of the Apocalypse and instead embrace a tragic framework in which both identity and outcomes are fixed. Referring again to O'Leary's notion of the tragic frame, the protagonists appear less interested in internal struggles against error, and focus instead on guilt, punishment, and an unremitting, inflexible fatalism. The characters act with a sense of moral and existential certainty not always available to them in previous novels, but the price demands the annihilation of much of what makes them evangelical, along with much of their humanity. They view their existential status as permanently fixed; and, just as importantly, view others the same way. Believers cannot help those who have taken the Mark of the

Beast, as much as they want to. The prophecies have spoken, and believers must simply obey.

LaHaye and Jenkins display such fatalistic assumptions in book ten of the *Left Behind* series, *The Remnant.* They discuss the martyrdom of one of their undercover Tribulation Force operatives, Steve Plank. Plank infiltrates the Global Community and joins Antichrist's military, but Global Community officials soon raise suspicions about his true identity. When Plank's junior officer, Lt. Vasily Medvedev discovers that Plank has not taken the mark, the younger officer suggests that Plank rectify the situation at once. Plank refuses to accept the mark. He does, however, reveal his identity to Medvedev. LaHaye and Jenkins describe their conversation:

> "Vasily, I only regret that when you came to me it was already too late for you. You had taken the mark, and proudly."
>
> "I'm not so proud of it anymore."
>
> "That is the tragedy of where we find ourselves."
>
> "I know."
>
> "You do?"
>
> "You think I do not sneak a look occasionally at the Ben-Judah Web site? I know my decision is irreversible."
>
> "You wish it wasn't?"
>
> "I don't know. I am not blind, not deaf. I can see what's happening. If I had to say right now, I would say I envy you."[31]

To Plank's surprise, the Russian expresses openness to his testimony. But it is too late for Medvedev. He has already taken the Mark of the Beast. Although he reads Dr. Ben-Judah's online sermons and affirms the witness of Steve Plank, he cannot accept Christ, as much as he wants to. He has already been marked. Plank never bothered to witness to Medvedev—that is, he never bothered to *be* an evangelical because of the prejudice promoted by the acceptance of visible marks. In his quest for certainty Plank, like the other protagonists in the series, surrenders critical components of his evangelical identity, namely the reliance on faith, the call to witness (the attempt to bring others to the faith), and the moral responsibility of each individual to choose for or against God. After Medvedev protests the pointlessness of it all, Plank can only respond by saying, "That is the tragedy of where we find ourselves." Out of choices, Medvedev commits suicide. It is indeed tragic, as the authors suggest, but in more ways than they realize.

Even Rayford, the steadfast leader of the Tribulation Force, questions the senselessness of the tragic apocalypse in *Armageddon* (#11), finding

many suffering souls he wishes he could help, but cannot. The authors describe Rayford's anguish:

> Rayford knew the prophecy—that people would reject God enough times that God would harden their hearts and they wouldn't be able to choose him even if they wanted to. But knowing it didn't mean Rayford understood it. And it certainly didn't mean he had to like it. He couldn't make it compute with the God he knew, the loving and merciful one who seemed to look for ways to welcome everyone into heaven, not keep them out.[32]

Rayford cannot quite reconcile the developments of prophecy with what he knows of God and his own identity as an evangelical. Ultimately, the tragic apocalypse overpowers the humanity of Rayford and the rest of the Tribulation Force, reducing them to automatons paralyzed by their own assumptions.

By embracing the tragic frame, the *Left Behind* protagonists inadvertently do to themselves what Antichrist cannot, surrendering vital components of their evangelical identity—along with their humanity—in their often violent attempts to resist Evil. They hurl themselves into a desperate, predetermined world of moral irresponsibility in which their identities are fixed by unreflective readings of ancient prophecies. Despite the occasional protests of figures like T, the narrative seems to incorporate the designs of Antichrist without the authors ever recognizing it. Such lack of awareness—not so much the predetermined script—seems most tragic.

CONCLUSION

It is not all that remarkable to suggest that evangelical prophecy literature promotes despair and fatalism. Studies continue to appear that make this point.[33] What *is* remarkable is that post-Cold War variants such as the *Left Behind* novels stop to consider the dilemma from *within* the context of evangelical discourse. The texts begin by offering empowerment, and even promote a kind of accommodation to the world. But as the protagonists insist upon rigid distinctions between themselves and others, the novels take a familiar, desperate turn. As the texts themselves remind us, however, any visible sign can be deceptive during the Tribulation. Nothing is ever as it seems. Even within the most tragic of pre-determined fates, such as that of Lt. Medvedev in *The Remnant*, a remarkably human voice remains that suggests the protagonists have become aware of the ambiguity, even troubled by the easy determinacy that surrounds them. Trusting the prophecies and their ability to dissolve ambiguity, along with a concomitant loss in human freedom, leads not to internal security, *Left Behind* whispers, but rather *infernal* security.

Granted, such voices quickly disappear in the texts, just as many of the undecided find themselves swallowed up by the ground in *The Remnant*. God responds to a group of dissenters who question God's spiritual representative, Dr. Tsion Ben-Judah:

> As soon as [Dr. Ben-Judah] finished speaking, the ground under hundreds of rebels opened and swallowed them. They went down into the pit, screaming and wailing as the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation.[34]

But their voices (screams, really) *are* heard, metaphorically speaking. Even within the most deterministic and predictable sections of the novels one finds something quite remarkable: not everyone agrees with the proceedings and outcomes of the tragic apocalypse.

Contemporary evangelicalism features a notion of identity influenced as much by an Enlightenment emphasis upon human choice and moral responsibility as by ancient biblical writings. Faith, the need to witness, and moral responsibility all emerge as vital aspects of evangelical identity in the novels. All are valorized at some point in the *Left Behind* series, and all are, ultimately, threatened by rampant fear, insecurity, and a quest for scapegoats and easy answers. *Left Behind* presents scholars, however, not only with pre-determined, albeit implicit, policy statements on matters of culture and politics, it also exposes many profound existential uncertainties lurking within evangelical prophecy circles.

LaHaye and Jenkins suggest through their novels that evangelicals stand on the brink of monumental cultural change. Granted, the belief that one's own generation will witness the events of the Last Days extends to antiquity. The question, however, is not so much the empirical validity of prophecy writers' claims, but how they conceptualize their present and future existence as evangelicals. *Left Behind* suggests a continuum of possibilities bound by two notable poles. On one side, the protagonists respond to contemporary uncertainties by adapting to them, however reluctantly, with greater openness and self-reflection. On the other side, one finds a recurring temptation to harden identity and draw sharp distinctions between good and evil. *Left Behind* leans much closer to the tragic, fatalistic understanding, although not without lingering doubts. The future of evangelical identity may depend on which option it more closely favors. The price of embracing change and uncertainty is a high one, but the cost of oversimplifying the complexity of their cultural situation may prove higher still.[35]

Finally, evangelical prophecy literature may also influence cultural and political attitudes within the American mainstream, as studies by Paul S. Boyer, Robert C. Fuller, and Susan Harding, among others, have argued.[36] Evangelical literature directly addresses issues of importance to the New Christian Right, reflecting their highly conservative agenda. In keeping with my thesis, however, I argue that prophecy literature may

also encourage believers to bury their insecurities about the contemporary world beneath a drive toward certainty and a quest for rigid distinctions between "us" and "them." Such moves may backfire in a world in which evil can move in clandestine networks, and friends are not always easy to separate from enemies. It must be noted, however, that evangelical readers are not beholden to the opinions voiced by prominent figures such as Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins.[37] Evangelical readers will draw their own assessments of the texts. Even while assessments of the novels' ultimate impact may be premature, one cannot ignore their prominent themes and massive success.

In conclusion, the predominant, tragic use of apocalyptic language in the *Left Behind* novels may influence prophecy believers to unreflectively chase shadows rather than face the demons within. As Robert C. Fuller suggests, attempts to preserve cultural identity by demonizing others—or *marking* them—do not appear helpful. If those Americans influenced by prophecy belief pursue the evil in their midst without sufficient reflection and soul-searching, they may ultimately discover that the face of the enemy bears an uncanny resemblance to their own.

ENDNOTES

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[1] Robert C. Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 200.

[2] Hal Lindsey, with C.C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1970).

[3] "American evangelical" is a much-misunderstood descriptor, owing in large measure to the many different ways it has been used. Across American history it has indicated related but politically and culturally dissimilar groups. This essay understands an evangelical in a more popular sense as a conservative Protestant who holds the Bible as a guiding authority; believes that one must have a personal, saving experience of Christ (often called a "born-again" experience); understands "witnessing," or the need to share one's experience of Christ with others, as an important responsibility for the believer; believes that each individual must freely choose to either accept or deny Christ; and, finally and perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this essay, one who believes that Christ will return soon to establish his literal, millennial kingdom on earth. Prophecy belief, however, is by no means a universal characteristic of American evangelicals, although it is definitely a pervasive one at the popular level.

[4] The *Left Behind* series currently includes 12 novels. A prequel is scheduled to appear in March 2005, with a sequel to follow in March 2006. Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1995). Tyndale House

published all of LaHaye and Jenkins' subsequent novels: *Tribulation Force: The Continuing Drama of Those Left Behind*, 1996; *Nicolae: The Rise of Antichrist*, 1997; *Soul Harvest: The World Takes Sides*, 1998; *Apollyon: The Destroyer is Released*, 1999a; *Assassins: Assignment: Jerusalem, Target: Antichrist*, 1999b; *The Indwelling: The Beast Takes Possession*, 2000; *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World*, 2000b; *Desecration: Antichrist Takes the Throne*, 2001; *The Remnant: On the Brink of Armageddon*, 2002; *Armageddon: The Cosmic Battle of the Ages*, 2003; *Glorious Appearing: The End of Days*, 2004.

[5] Michael R. Smith, "Author LaHaye Sues *Left Behind* Film Producers," *Christianity Today*, 28 March 2001, at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/006/14.20.html>, accessed 5 August 2004.

[6] Excellent secondary sources for dispensational theology include, but are by no means limited to: George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1900–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[7] Postmillennial thinking predominated among evangelicals throughout much of the nineteenth century. Postmillennialism encouraged believers to remake the world through social programs and moral crusades, to prepare the world for Christ's arrival. Premillennialism, by contrast, claims only Christ's return can stop humanity's desperate plunge into disaster. Premillennialists, in fact, may even regard the actions of postmillennialists as heretical attempts to usurp authority that properly belongs to God.

[8] Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth, or, God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages* (Philadelphia: Clarence Larkin, 1918).

[9] Cyrus I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible: King James Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945).

[10] George Marsden, ed., *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdman's, 1984), x.

[11] Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist*, 13. In a similar vein, Fuller writes that, "By projecting Americans' doubts and uncertainties onto a demonic 'other,' the act of naming the Antichrist protects their personal and collective sensibilities from the frailties of human existence."

[12] Prophecy writers use I Thessalonians 4:17 as their prooftext for the Rapture, which reads in the *Scofield Reference Bible*, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Although prophecy writers almost always adhere to the so-called "pre-tribulational rapture"—meaning believers are evacuated to heaven *before* the Tribulation, a minority of writers hold other views. One also finds the idea of a "mid-tribulational rapture" and a "post-tribulational rapture," with believers removed halfway through the Tribulation and at its conclusion, respectively.

[13] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind*, 270.

[14] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 53. The raptured pope, however, issues decrees that are remarkably commensurate with Protestant teachings.

[15] Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[16] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 70.

[17] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 68.

[18] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 204.

[19] *Oxford English Dictionary* (Online edition), Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library (Alexandria, Va.: Chadwyck-Healey, 1993).

[20] Paul Ricoeur, *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. David Wood (New York: Routledge, 1991), 21–5.

[21] See also Peter and Paul Lalonde, *Racing Toward the Mark of the Beast* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1994).

[22] Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist*, 9.

[23] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Soul Harvest*, 178–79.

[24] Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Are We Living in the End-Times? Current Events Foretold in Scripture and What They Mean* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1999), 197.

[25] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Mark*, 358. All ellipses in quotations from the *Left Behind* series appear in the original novels.

[26] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon*, 311–12.

[27] See Mark C. Taylor, *About Religion: Economies of Faith in Virtual Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 7–28.

[28] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon*, 239–40.

[29] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon*, 238.

[30] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon*, 238–40.

[31] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Remnant*, 248.

[32] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Armageddon*, 17–18.

[33] See especially Paul S. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992); Robert C. Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdman's, 1995).

[34] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Remnant*, 316.

[35] I owe much to theorist Mark C. Taylor's work on complexity theory in this section. See especially Mark C. Taylor, *The Moment of Complexity: Emerging Network Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[36] Paul S. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*; Robert C. Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist*; and Susan Harding, "Imagining the Last Days: The Politics of Apocalyptic Language," in *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 57–78. Boyer studies the problematic impact of prophecy belief upon American attitudes toward large-scale issues, including nuclear proliferation. Fuller suggests that that any desire to "name the enemy" may result in movements of violence and hatred. Finally, Harding offers similar observations, but focuses more specifically on the rhetorical strategies of prophecy writers.

[37] See Christian Smith, *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 7–9. Sociologist Christian Smith dubs as the "representative elite fallacy" the assumption among many observers of American culture that Evangelicals always follow their "leaders."

God, Guns, and Grist for the Media's Mill

Constructing the Narratives of New Religious Movements and Violence

Douglas E. Cowan and Jeffrey K. Hadden

ABSTRACT: It is axiomatic that what North American mass media present as "news" represents only a fraction of what occurs on any given day. Because what is represented as news will be for the vast majority of news consumers the only information they receive on specific events, the manner by which newsworthiness is determined is of some importance. This is especially so in terms of new religious movements, which already suffer from a degree of cultural marginalization and social stigma. Working from the well-known model of newsworthiness first proposed by Johann Galtung and Mari Ruge, we offer a more parsimonious, value-added refinement that demonstrates that the very constituents of media newsworthiness actually contribute to and reinforce the continued misrepresentation of new religious movements.

INTRODUCTION[1]

In the cultural conversations taking place on almost any issue—from the (il)legitimacy of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 and 2004 to who will be the next person voted off the island or out of the house in the seemingly endless round of "reality" television—few would contest that mass media now play the commanding role. It has become self-evident that these media provide the lenses through which we learn about and come to understand events in the world

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around us. Not only do the media determine where a particular lens will be trained and at what time, they also determine how that lens will be focused, how long the camera behind it will roll, and, perhaps most importantly, what aspects of the story will be left outside its field of view. Continuing attempts to understand how this lens functions, then, and how it contributes both to our perception of events and to our social action in response to those events is of paramount importance if we are to participate meaningfully in society.

In this paper, we examine one dimension of the cultural construction of knowledge to which media so prominently contribute—the manner in which mass media cover situations of violence when they occur within the context of new religious movements (NRMs). More specifically, we are interested in parsing some of the structural issues of "newsworthiness" that appear to determine how media decide what events to cover, and, by extension, how coverage shapes public perception of NRMs when religion and violence clash in what David Bromley calls "dramatic denouements."[2] While it is clear that media rarely show an interest in any religious group until there is some significant tension to attract their notice—the election of a gay bishop, the struggles within denominations over homosexuality, the fall from grace of a prominent televangelist—we would like to focus on new religious movements because with a few exceptions[3] the only time media consumers learn about these groups is when something has gone wrong. In North America, for example, the complete cultural picture of the Episcopal Church is not painted by the election of Gene Robinson, nor the evangelical church by the dalliances of Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker. On the other hand, however, the only information media consumers often have of new religious movements usually occurs in the context of what James Beckford has called the "threatening, strange, exploitative, oppressive and provocative."[4] This rather skewed representation requires a more careful investigation of the mechanisms by which media decide when new religious movements are newsworthy and how those decisions contribute to the continued *mis*representation of these groups to news consumers.

We have seen a growing interest in the role mass media play in shaping our understanding of contemporary religion, both as a general phenomenon[5] and in terms of specific religious traditions.[6] Moreover, a number of conceptual mechanisms have been offered to explain mass media influence in society, including "media frames"[7] and "frame analysis,"[8] "landmark narratives,"[9] a "propaganda model,"[10] a "stream of controversies" approach,[11] and the concept of a "cultural stock of knowledge."[12] Though their explanatory agendas vary, each of these asserts that the dominant media in a particular society determine in large measure the directions relevant cultural conversations take, the tenor with which they are conducted, and the ends toward which they

appear directed. This is not the case because the media control the substance of the various conversational components they re-present. Obviously, they don't. But therein lies precisely the problem. Because the majority of public participants in any cultural conversation—whether they are merely consumers of news in general or more intentionally interested in particular stories—are unlikely to have direct experience with persons, events, or phenomena in question, the media become by default the major (if not the only) source to which these participants turn for information. And, in turn, consumers reinvest this information and their comprehension of it (such as it may be) in the larger cultural stock of knowledge that informs the processes of decision-making and social action. Since media consumers make sense of news items in the context of the norms, customs, and understood constructions of reality in which they participate—what Berger and Luckmann call the "recipe knowledge" of a particular culture[13]—there is a reciprocal process of reality construction in play, a feedback loop, as it were. Media producers both depend on and contribute to the cultural stock of knowledge in which they operate. Media consumers make sense of what these media offer as "news" according to the substance of that same knowledge base. In framing their stories, media seek to reflect the common understanding of those new consumers they are trying to reach, searching, as established journalists themselves have noted, for "ideas resonating with [the] embedded cultural values"[14] of their target audience.

This overarching principle of connection to the target audience provides a framework within which media personnel evaluate the newsworthiness of an event, which in turn determines how media select and deselect items for inclusion in what becomes the "news." While particular aspects of events and phenomena may be emphasized or de-emphasized according to journalistic perception and prejudice, and authority assigned to the various social actors within those events according to patterns that are established by and located within the cultural stockpile, in many cases media serve merely to reinforce what their target audience already believes about those events.

This process seems especially obvious in cases of violence between controversial religious groups and either official or unofficial agents of the dominant social order. Some incidents generate massive coverage (e.g., the 1993 siege of the Branch Davidian residence near Waco, Texas), while others disappear from the media radar with astonishing rapidity (e.g., the forcible removal of children in 1984 from the Northeast Kingdom Island Pond Community (now the Twelve Tribes),[15] or the 2000 murder-suicides of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Uganda.[16] Whereas some stories are framed as "religious,"[17] crucial religious components of other events are relegated to the sidelines in favor of more easily managed conceptualizations.

Thus, Waco becomes a "cop story" (though with definite military undertones), the Aum Shinrikyo attack on the Tokyo subway a tale of "terrorism," and Northeast Kingdom Island Pond experience a journalistic problem of "child abuse."

These issues suggest particular patterns of media behavior when violence (or perceived violence) and religion intersect in the NRM context, patterns that illuminate the concept of *newsworthiness.* What makes a story newsworthy? What hierarchy of concerns determines whether an event will appear on mass media radar, how that event will be treated once it has appeared, and how long it will last before disappearing from the screen? And, quite apart from the content or circumstances of particular events, do the criteria of newsworthiness themselves contribute to the ongoing reinforcement of cultural stereotypes, misinformation, and social opprobrium when new religious movements are involved? Do they contribute to the escalation of potential conflict, even to the level of a dramatic confrontation?

Since few who watch media closely and critically would question at least the validity of these questions, the more important issue becomes the underlying mechanisms by which the cultural stock of knowledge is managed and manipulated in situations of religio-civil conflict. Inspired by the pioneering work of Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge,[18] though recognizing the significant structural changes that have taken place within mass media since their typology was developed a generation ago (e.g., the concentration of media into fewer and fewer commercial holdings while the range of broadcast media outlets—channels—has increased substantially), we would like to present a value-added model of newsworthiness, illustrated through particular intersections of religion and violence in the NRM context. Though the Galtung and Ruge model is, in our opinion, unnecessarily long, with often confusing, ambiguous, and overlapping categories, it remains the conceptual basis on which many later typologies of newsworthiness—including this one—have been developed.[19]

BUILDING THE NARRATIVE: A REFINED MODEL OF NEWSWORTHINESS

Since news reports do not emerge fully formed, but evolve as events develop, the cultural stock of knowledge to which media contribute assumes a somewhat sedimentary formation. That is, cultural conceptions and understandings build in layers the way sediment gathers in the delta at the mouth of a river. And, like the silt and mud at the river's mouth, that which is caught and held by this sedimentary effect appears notoriously difficult to dislodge.

This observation is powerfully illustrated in the language used by media to describe new or controversial religious movements. Notwithstanding

repeated social scientific attempts at resuscitation and clarification, "cult," for example, remains unequivocally pejorative in the cultural narrative and incorporates presuppositions which simply do not stand up to empirical scrutiny.[20] Thus, while evidence offered by claimsmakers for the alleged crimes of "cult members" is often notoriously weak,[21] the veracity of the claims is rarely called into popular question because of the authority granted claimsmakers by the media, the lack of familiarity and the unavoidable cultural biases of reporters themselves, and the commercial drive to secure a profitable market share of news consumers. Oft-repeated rumor and unsubstantiated allegation, then, become part of the sedimentary layers upon which cultural facts are eventually laid.

Based on their analysis of media coverage of a number of international crises in the 1950s and early 1960s, Galtung and Ruge developed a "famously perceptive"[22] set of twelve indicators by which an event's newsworthiness could be determined. Their typology becomes even more complicated (and analytically unwieldy), though, when one considers that the sub-categories they included raise the total number of interrelated variables to twenty, many of which are unclearly differentiated from the others. By collapsing, rearranging, and clarifying their typology, we have sought to render a considerably more parsimonious model for understanding media choices. As with all attempts to interpret social phenomena typologically, however, the constituent components are heuristic and can rarely be considered as discrete entities; each interpenetrates, informs, and influences the others.

Galtung and Ruge hold as a "truism" that "there is a threshold the event will have to pass over before it is recorded at all,"[23] that is, before it becomes "news." Whereas the media might find the thundering orations or cryptic apocalypticism of a fundamentalist preacher of little value as news in and of itself, when official agents of the state are locked in siege with that same preacher, the threshold of significance has been breached. It becomes *newsworthy*. Similarly, the peculiar ideas of a confessed *Star Trek* fan and the bizarre theology he taught his followers might attract the interest of a local religion reporter for purposes of an occasional human interest story, but it would not generally be considered of national import. When thirty-nine of those people choose to commit ritual suicide as the ultimate embodiment of their beliefs, however, the attention of the media (and the country) is galvanized for days on end.

Whereas the actual conflict is regarded as significant, all that preceded it, all that created the conditions for the conflict to manifest is considered significant only in relation to the conflict itself. Conceptually, preceding and precipitating events may fall into the lesser domains of Bromley's model of conflict escalation,[24] but they rarely breach the threshold of media significance. We become concerned, then, with what structural factors determine which events will breach the

threshold of significance, and which will not. We have arranged what we consider the four most influential factors into a working typology of newsworthiness.

Value-Added Model of Newsworthiness

1 Event negativity
2 Resonance of the event with target news consumers
3 Rarity of the event in the experience of target news consumers
4 Conceptual clarity or simplicity with which the event may be portrayed

Because "journalists must decide if the potential news story deals with something people know about or will find interesting once it is explained quickly and compellingly,"[25] the search for significance underpins the hierarchy of newsworthiness. All the components of the model work together to drive particular events onto the media radar while keeping others from making any appearance at all.

Event negativity

A fundamental axiom in the selection and production processes of mass media is "if it bleeds, it leads." Indeed, this is the title of a recent emic analysis of television news.[26] In terms of newsworthiness, the socially negative nature of an event is the primary factor in determining whether it will breach the media's threshold of significance. Train wrecks warrant news coverage; the design and construction of safer trains and collision-avoidance technology do not. Only when that technology fails does it breach the threshold of newsworthiness. Similarly, while the dramatic intersections of violence and new or controversial religious movements often draw intense media scrutiny, the various negotiations, escalations, and rapprochements leading up to the "dramatic denoument" do not. Public awareness of most new religious groups is minimal until something draws those groups into relief against the quotidian flow of society.[27] Indeed, because it so shatters the norms by which religion and late-modern North American culture are often understood to interact, nothing breaches the threshold of media significance like an intersection of religion and violence. In this moment it becomes significant; it becomes *newsworthy*. In the case of controversial religious groups, Mark Silk points out that a story "is usually framed in terms of whether some kind of *sufficiently newsworthy abuse* has occurred."[28] His reason is clear: "No abuse, no story."

Thus, the first criterion journalists and their editorial management use to determine newsworthiness casts the group in question in a pejorative light. Although there may be other factors at work in the particular situation—misleading information provided by professional anticult

activists or apostate members, or prepared press releases distributed by official actors in the drama and aimed at legitimizing and authorizing their role in the conflict—these enter into the media frame less obviously because these factors have the capacity to reduce the intensity of the story and, thus, its significance. If there are other plausible explanations offered for particular events and phenomena, they may dilute an event's newsworthiness to the point where it drops from the media screen entirely. Indeed, the possibility of dilution is one of the "less innocuous" explanations Silk offers for the absence of social science input into stories about new religious movements. For a variety of reasons, including competition from other media sources that may not choose to access that kind of input,[29] journalists are reluctant "to permit cold water to be poured on a great story."[30]

Galtung and Ruge noted that negative news, while seemingly ubiquitous in mass media presentation, is far rarer than the more normal, positive flow of life. John Dart echoes this, stating that "the consumer who encounters a steady diet of good news may interpret that information as uneventful,"[31] and, by inference, spend their news dollars elsewhere. Dart continues:

> New religious movements and older sects often break into the news when something has gone wrong. While these groups may have a reasonable explanation, often their public relations arms are non-existent or they have abandoned organizational efforts to influence the media. Thus many stories in this vein originate outside their ranks with government actions or complaints from anticult groups, parents, or news releases from defector groups.[32]

Notwithstanding Dart's suggestion that targeted groups somehow share in the responsibility for ensuring accurate news reporting, and that journalists are aware that the sources on which some stories rely might be viewed as tainted, we could rephrase his comments to say that "new religious movements and older sects" rarely if ever break into the news *unless* something has gone wrong. Thus, the long history of the Branch Davidians, from their Adventist origins in the nineteenth century to the leadership struggles in the 1980s, only became newsworthy (and then only peripherally so) after the events of February 1993. Likewise, few people knew of the Heaven's Gate UFO group until medical and law enforcement personnel began removing bodies from the group's rented Rancho Santa Fe mansion in March 1997.

"Conflict tends to explain why a story is newsworthy,"[33] writes Dart in an almost tautological defense of journalistic treatment of new religious movements. However, a review of what Noam Chomsky has called the elite, or agenda-setting print media, by which he means newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*,[34] reveals that none

of the groups involved major intersections of religion and violence since 1980—Branch Davidians, Aum Shinrikyo, Heaven's Gate, the Solar Temple, and the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God—appeared in these papers until a*fter* the precipitating event.[35] While this is not to say that significant local coverage of controversial religious groups is lacking, especially when one establishes a communal residence of some kind in the vicinity or there are allegations of abuse within religious communities,[36] this does not change the role played by negativity. Whether on a local, national, or international level, not only do conflicts explain *why* a story is newsworthy, it is controversy that specifies *whether* a story is newsworthy. A primary generator of newsworthiness vis-à-vis new religious movements, then, is not their existence, beliefs, or practices, but the controversies surrounding their interaction with members of the dominant society. The very mechanism by which newsworthiness is determined serves to legitimate and reinforce negative stereotypes about new and controversial religious movements, conventional beliefs already extant in the target audience. This leads to the second component of the model.

Resonance of the event with target news consumers

Negativity alone is not enough to breach the media threshold. After all, far more bad things happen than are reported in American mass media. Put simply, the second criterion of newsworthiness declares that a negative event has a much greater chance of being reported (or reported widely) if it can be located in or connected to the cultural framework of the media consumers for whom the reports are being produced. Does it resonate with those who will purchase newspapers or watch television news? While Antonio Gualtieri may write passionately of the repression suffered by Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan under the government of Zia ul-Haq,[37] events such as these rarely, if ever, show up on North American media radar. For the majority of news consumers in the United States and Canada, they are simply too far removed, both geographically and culturally, for the struggle to be of interest. Alleged "cultists" locked in confrontation with elements of national law enforcement barely one hundred miles from the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, on the other hand, resonate deeply with those news consumers—because of the parties involved, because of the cultural values of law and order that appear to have been breached, and because of the proximity of the event to major news markets.

In the highly competitive world of mass media, newsworthiness—which translates into the ability to catch and hold the interest of a target audience—requires resonance with that audience. The substance of potentially newsworthy events, as well as the way in which these events

are reported, must in some way align with the cultural expectations and norms of those for whom the media produce the "news." The social construction of reality in which particular news consumers participate establishes the cognitive boundaries by which information is evaluated and either assimilated or rejected. The permeability of these boundaries is determined by resonance. The more that potential news material resonates with established norms and expectations, the more easily that material passes through the audience's cognitive filters and is accepted as newsworthy. Conversely, less resonant material is resisted, so assimilation and acceptance occur less easily.

A crucial aspect of this criterion is that resonance with target news consumers is a function of the cultural stock of knowledge on which those consumers can be expected to draw in their attempts to understand particular events and phenomena. If an event or its explanation is too far outside the social construction of knowledge shared by target consumers, interesting them in the story will be more difficult; there will be no cultural "peg" on which to hang the narrative. This dynamic has not escaped media commentators such as Silk and Dart, and its importance for already stigmatized groups such as new religious movements cannot be overstated.

As Silk notes, the task of media is to shape "the information at their disposal into culturally significant narratives."[38] In this context, that significance is a function of resonance, what Silk refers to as "general acculturation."[39] If such shaping cannot be managed, a potential story's newsworthiness drops. Dart concurs, noting that "journalists proceed from what they think are familiar contexts to the public."[40] When framing a story, they ask, "What do most people think is true about something?" The possibility that what *seems* "true" about a particular situation may very well *not* be does not appear to enter into the discussion. Silk continues, "If the media sacrifice NRMs 'on the altar of competitive journalism,' it is because the reality they construct fits popular prejudices."[41] Though this conceptualization arguably defines "propaganda" more accurately than "journalism," neither Silk nor Dart discusses the rather considerable implications of these observations. No comment, however, more clearly repudiates whatever notions of "objectivity in journalism" we might vainly have harbored.

Resonance functions on a number of different levels, many of which are parsed in Galtung and Ruge's initial typology, including the "elite" nature of persons or groups involved (which now must be considered in terms of more concentrated media ownership and the corporate control of both news and entertainment media) and the "elite" nature of nations involved. In a resource-dependent country like the U.S., for example, stories from oil-rich countries are intrinsically more newsworthy than from those that are petroleum poor. In terms of NRMs and in the context of the three major print media sources surveyed for this

essay (the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*), the farther away from what might be considered "cultural centers," the less total coverage specific intersections received and the quicker they dropped below the horizon of media attention altogether.

Consider, for example, the reporting rates of three major print media sources for five major intersections of violence and religion, in terms of the number of articles over one year from the threshold event.

Group	**Coverage Dates**	***NY Times***	***Washington Post***	***LA Times***
Br. Davidians	03/93–02/94	401	225	211
Aum Shinrikyo	03/95–02/96	114	68	105
Heaven's Gate	03/97–02/98	126	45	114
Solar Temple	10/94–09/95	32	8	114
MRTCG	03/00–02/01	20	10	N/A[42]

In the twelve months following the siege at Mt. Carmel media coverage was between two and four times that of the nearest competitor, the Aum Shinrikyo attack on the Tokyo subway system. Given that the siege and conflagration at the Branch Davidian residence took place on American soil, and involved both American citizens and official agencies (up to and including the executive branch), this ratio of coverage should not surprise. While deadly (and potentially much more so than Waco), and while the Aum attack took place in an allied nation, it involved neither Americans nor official agents of the Japanese state. Heaven's Gate received roughly the same amount of coverage as Aum. This, too, is easily explained. While an American incident, the "violence" was directed entirely inward and transpired as benignly as possible; fears of Internet cult recruiting notwithstanding,[43] there was no "conflict" to speak of. Its geographic proximity to the target audience was offset by the lack of impact on the community at large in terms of official intervention or externally directed violence. Finally, located furthest from the "cultural centers" of U.S. mass media interest, the murder-suicides of both the Order of the Solar Temple and the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God received the least amount of coverage, despite the significantly higher death toll in the latter case. Once again, though, involving no one who might be considered of "elite" or official status, and occurring in Switzerland, Canada, and Uganda, these events dropped quickly and easily below the threshold of American audience resonance and, therefore, lacked media significance.

Resonance increases when new or controversial religious groups are alleged to be in violation of emotionally charged cultural taboos of the target audience. Physical abuse, for example, especially physical and sexual abuse of children, has long been part of the stock-in-trade of those who challenge the legitimacy of new and controversial religious movements, resonating easily with the social opprobrium attached to such acts.[44] When these accusations form part of the media narratives about

a particular event, as they did at the Island Pond raid, the siege at Mt. Carmel, and various raids on The Family, cultural resonance both *increases* the newsworthiness of the item and *limits* the manner in which the item will be reported.

Resonance with established cultural norms also affects the ability of accused groups or individuals to counter allegations such as child sexual abuse. That there may be other, more complex factors at work—for example, one parent has either left or did not join the group, and is bringing allegations of abuse in order to secure custody—will not effect the cultural resonance required by newsworthiness as easily as simple accusation. As James Richardson points out, these allegations now constitute part of the arsenal of de-legitimization and social control of new religious movements.[45] When media align such accusations with intervention on the part of social agencies charged with protecting the children alleged to be at risk, the suspect groups have a far more difficult time arguing for their own legitimacy. Their ability to speak as social actors has been impaired from the beginning by the very criteria used to determine whether there is anything worth shouting about.

Rarity of the event in the experience of target news consumers

As David Bromley notes, "dramatic denouements"—what we are calling intersections of religion and violence—"are rare events."[46] If a news consumer expects to see a particular thing in the normal course of daily events, then sees it, that thing is less likely to be considered newsworthy. There is a negative correlation between the predictability of events and their newsworthiness. Whereas the safe arrival of a ferry at its usual terminal is not considered news, the sinking of that ferry in mid-crossing is. However appalling, child abuse that happens in the routine course of social life is no longer considered newsworthy; there must be other significating factors attached to it. When such abuse is alleged in the context of a closed religious community toward which there might already be antipathetic feelings, or when it is alleged to involve activity such as Satanic ritual abuse, then it appears in the full glare of the media spotlight. While there are certain understood parameters within which the reporting of such news is expected to fall—the sinking of a ferry is a tragedy, child abuse an atrocity—only when these events transgress the boundaries of the "normal" and the "expected" are they considered newsworthy. Thus, negative events that resonate with the cultural expectations of the news consumer and occur outside the normal course of events for those consumers increase in newsworthiness, a situation that fits intersections of violence and new religious movements rather well.

Anson Shupe and Jeffrey Hadden point out, "Few Americans had ever heard of a sectarian group called the Branch Davidians until the last day of February 1993."[47] "Fully 96 percent of the residents of the

Waco area," they continue, "reported that they knew 'little' or 'nothing at all' about the Branch Davidians prior to the publicity surrounding the shoot-out."[48] When the "dramatic denouement" occurred, it came as a surprise. While most of Japan knew of Aum Shinrikyo—many had tried to extract friends and relatives, and the group was suspected in several disappearances[49]—the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway took both the authorities and the public by surprise. Similarly, the suicides and suicide/murders of the Heaven's Gate, Solar Temple, and MRTCG groups appeared on media radars as events conforming to cultural expectations of bizarre religious behavior, but surprising enough to warrant media coverage.

While the beliefs and practices of many new religious groups might appear "rare" in the experience of news consumers—distinctive dress, communal living arrangements, rejection of particular cultural values, in-group language that ranges from quaint to impenetrable—unless they can be connected in some way to a larger, more "significant" story, few of these show up in the media as more than occasional human interest pieces in weekend magazines or tucked into the "Faith" section of the newspaper among the hundreds of advertisements for Sunday worship services. In terms of the canons of newsworthiness, they have little intrinsic value. Communal living arrangements, for example, become newsworthy when they are implicated in ongoing child abuse or armed reclusion, distinctive dress and unfamiliar language when they are portrayed as indicators of "brainwashing," and rejection of cultural norms and values when such rejections bring groups into conflict with members or agents of the dominant society.

Conceptual clarity or simplicity with which the event may be portrayed

Whether Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker actually perpetrated the various crimes and abuses of which they were accused in the Praise The Lord (later the People That Love) scandals did not become clear for several months after the Jessica Hahn story broke in March 1987,[50] and then only through the course of intense investigation. As such, over time the story began to look less like breaking news than an ongoing, vaguely embarrassing religious soap opera. There was sufficient ambiguity in the case that media perception of the events was clouded, and public discussion and response obscured. Put simply, too many people were unclear precisely as to who the "bad guys" were.

In this sense, what makes an event news is its ability to galvanize public attention quickly and unambiguously. Given the structural constraints under which mass media function, the space, time, and resource limitations imposed on them by conglomerate acquisition and downsizing,[51] this too is hardly surprising. On a front-page column, for example, with only a few inches and perhaps a headline to use, the reporter

must capture the news consumers' attention quickly and surely. The lead must hold that attention long enough to convey the message that this is a newspaper worth purchasing.

When the "dramatic denouement" at Mt. Carmel began on 28 February 1993, for example, the leads in three major newspapers ran as follows:

> Four federal agents were killed and 16 other agents were injured yesterday during a gun battle that erupted when more than 100 law enforcement officers began a long-planned raid on the compound of a heavily armed religious cult near Waco, Tex. (*Washington Post*, 1 March 1993, A1).

> Federal agents attempting to serve search warrants on a heavily armed religious camp near here were ambushed by raging gunfire that left four of them dead and 15 others injured, several seriously (*Los Angeles Times*, 1 March 1993, A1).

> A raid on the heavily armed compound of a religious cult here erupted into a bloody gun battle on Sunday, leaving at least four Federal agents and two cult members dead and at least 15 agents injured (*New York Times*, 1 March 1993, A1).

In each of these leads, the conceptual lines of the conflict are drawn clearly and unambiguously—a situation that did not change throughout the standoff. On the one hand, the news consumer is presented with official agents of law enforcement in the state-sanctioned performance of their duties. On the other hand, the Branch Davidian residence and its occupants are described variously as "a heavily armed religious camp," "the cult's armed fortress,"[52] and "a heavily armed religious cult." Such characterizations clearly invoke what Robin Wagner-Pacifici has termed "the discourse of war,"[53] and patently exclude the possibility that there can be a peaceful resolution to the crisis. David Koresh was portrayed as delusional, a dangerous and unstable religious fanatic—another characterization that did not change. This ability to portray the two sides in such unequivocal terms increased the newsworthiness of the story because, recalling John Dart's comments above, it allowed for events to be "explained quickly and compellingly"[54] to target news consumers, in ways that "most people think is true."[55] If it was included at all, any complexity, any nuance that might "permit cold water to be poured on a great story,"[56] was relegated to a subordinate position in the reports.

More significantly, however, especially in terms of groups that are already socially stigmatized, the "clarity" with which new reports such as these are presented also separates the actors into clear and distinct moral categories. Journalists do not simply report events, they *interpret* (and not infrequently sensationalize) them according to prescribed cultural norms. Thus, this is not an armed stand-off between two groups of social actors

with drastically different perceptions of the situation.[57] It is almost a Manichean conflict between order and chaos, between the forces of good (the BATF, the FBI, and the Attorney General's Office) and those of evil ("the heavily armed religious cult"). This monochromatic characterization changed very little over the course of the fifty-one days, and reinforced the negativity of the situation (the dead and wounded Branch Davidians and federal agents), its resonance with the target audience (it involved official agents of the state and was proximate to major media markets), and its rarity (the continuing stand-off), as well as reflexively reinforcing the reductionist nature of the portrayal. All of which adds up, as Stuart Wright has noted, to "no good news" for new religious movements.[58]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

"News" is not that which happens in the world, but that which is deemed "newsworthy" by the various media stakeholders. These stakeholders—primarily news producers, news consumers, and news advertisers (an important cohort that would be worth serious consideration in any development of this model)—share a common construction of reality that allows for media to report news quickly, easily, and with a minimum of confusion for its target audiences. Newsworthiness is evaluated according to an event's ability to meet these journalistic criteria. Unfortunately, as we have shown here, though there is also the critical issue of journalistic bias and editorial stance[59]—reporters and editors are human beings after all, and subject to the same prejudices and partialities as all of us—it is very often the criteria of newsworthiness themselves that impede the full development of a story and impair the level of cultural understanding about an event.

Writing about religious movements, John Dart and Mark Silk have recognized the presence and influence of the criteria of newsworthiness explored in this paper. Neither, however, considers the conclusion that the structure of newsworthiness itself contributes to the negative reporting of new and controversial religious movements. Rather, both claim the problem is that most journalists know very little about religious groups,[60] and that resolution of this problem lies in educating journalists to the nuances of religious studies. While the former is undoubtedly accurate—as Wright notes, "religious illiteracy among journalists is an acknowledged problem[61]—the latter ignores the more fundamental problem of newsworthiness itself.

Silk continues that the solution has at least something to do with the nature of the stories reporters have brought to them. "Rather than curse the darkness," he writes, "I would advise the scholar to convince the reporter that there is another story to be done, one which does not turn on the question of abuse."[62] That is, one that does not hinge on the

intersection of religion and violence. As Silk himself notes in his preceding paragraph, however, if a scholar "successfully convinces the reporter" that allegations of abuse are false, the such-and-such a group is not a "cult," "there will be no story at all."[63] And we are back, once again, to the first criterion of newsworthiness.

There are a number of problems with Silk's approach, many of which turn on these questions of newsworthiness. First, as Silk notes, "journalists do not tend to do stories on religious groups because they just happen to be there."[64] If a group has not breached the threshold of newsworthiness as understood by those who produce the news, it has little chance of competing with events that have breached it. Unless a story can be sold up through the editorial chain as "newsworthy," any personal interest a reporter has is for naught.

Second, while we believe that scholars do have a responsibility to address issues of social concern, to suggest that it is the role of academics to find more interesting stories for the media to tell seriously misunderstands the social function of scholarship. It seems that Silk is suggesting that scholars "chase" news stories about particular religious movements for journalists in order to preempt negative reporting and stereotyping when only a very few of these stories breach the threshold of media significance.

Third, while Silk suggests that scholars should "try to convince reporters that there is another story to be done,"[65] he also claims that "religion scholars have acquired a certain reputation among journalists as being apologists for NRMs."[66] Dart, too, writes of scholars needing to "overcome journalists' suspicions" regarding their objectivity, though he opines that this may be one subtle outcome of scholars' need to have "continued access to the groups for research purposes."[67] While it is not the point here to quarrel unduly about the accuracy of these perceptions, it seems that by following Silk's own advice about "another story" that does not "turn on the question of abuse," scholars actually increase the risk of being characterized as "cult apologists" by the very journalists they are trying to educate.

In terms of the criteria by which newsworthiness is evaluated and assessed, it appears that academics and journalists are talking past one another and there is considerable room for more serious dialogue. The problem with respect to the intersection of new religious movements and violence, of course, is that the media influence far more people than does the academy. The media are not merely reporters of "dramatic denouements," silently mirroring events as they unfold. Rather, they are onstage with the rest of the actors, helping to write the emerging cultural script about those events. And, as long as the current structural criteria of newsworthiness remain in place, with regard to new and controversial religious movements, those cultural scripts will continue to be overwhelmingly negative.

ENDNOTES

[1] This essay is dedicated to the memory of Jeffrey K. Hadden (1936–2003), mentor, colleague, and friend. Douglas E. Cowan would also like to thank the five peer reviewers for *Nova Religio* for their insightful and uniformly helpful suggestions.

[2] See David G. Bromley, "Dramatic Denouements," *Cults, Religion, and Violence*, eds. David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11–41.

[3] Rather than treat them as a "dangerous cult," for example, the *Kansas City Star* published a very sympathetic article on the opening of the Rupanuga Vedic College, a Hare Krishna seminary, in 2000. See Alan Bavley, "A Higher Degree," *Kansas City Star Magazine*, 25 October 2000, 8–9.

[4] James A. Beckford, "The Media and New Religious Movements," in *From the Ashes: Making Sense of Waco*, ed. James R. Lewis (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), 143.

[5] For a variety of perspectives on this, see Judith M. Buddenbaum and Debra L. Mason, eds., *Readings on Religion as News* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 2000); John Dart and John Allen, *Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media* (Arlington: The Freedom Forum, n.d.); Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber, eds., *Religion and Media* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Tona J. Hangen, *Redeeming the Dial: Radio, Religion, and Popular Culture in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Stewart M. Hoover, *Religion in the News: Faith and Journalism in American Public Discourse* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1998); Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark, eds., *Practicing Religion in the Age of Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Stewart M. Hoover, Barbara M. Hanley, and Martin Radelfinger, *The RND-Lilly Study of Religion Reporting and Readership in the Daily Press: Final Report* (Philadelphia: School of Communications and Theater, Temple University, 1989); Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby, eds., *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997); Mark Silk, *Unsecular Media: Making News of Religion* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Daniel A. Stout and Judith M. Buddenbaum, eds., *Religion and Mass Media: Audiences and Adaptations* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996), and idem, *Religion and Popular Culture: Studies on the Interaction of Worldviews* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 2001).

[6] See, for example, Shakil Akhtar, *Media, Religion, and Politics in Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); John Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion: A Reporter's View," *Review of Religious Research* 39, no. 2 (1997): 144–52; Dart and Allen, *Bridging the Gap*; Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, eds., *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); Kai Hafez, ed., *Islam and the West in Mass Media: Fragmented Images in a Globalizing World* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2000); Marvin Olasky, *Prodigal Press: The Anti-Christian Bias of the American News Media* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1988); Susan J. Palmer, "Frontiers and Families: The Children of Island Pond," in *Children in New Religions*, ed. Susan J. Palmer and Charlotte Hardman (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999): 153–71; James T. Richardson, "Manufacturing Consent about Koresh: A Structural Analysis of the Role of Media in the Waco Tragedy," in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 153–76; James T. Richardson and Barend van Driel, "Journalists' Attitudes toward New Religious Movements," *Review of Religious Research* 39, no. 2 (1997): 116–36; Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1997); M. A. Siddiqi, *Islam, Muslims, and Media: Myths and Realities* (Chicago: NAAMPS Publications, 1997); Mark Silk, "Journalists with Attitude: A Response to Richardson and van Driel," *Review of Religious Research* 39, no. 2 (1997): 137–43; Stuart A. Wright, "Media Coverage of Unconventional Religion: Any 'Good News' for Minority Faith?" *Review of Religious Research* 39, no. 2 (1997): 101–15.

[7] Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).

[8] Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1974).

[9] Lawrence T. Nichols, "Social Problems as Landmark Narratives: Bank of Boston, Mass Media, and 'Money Laundering'," *Social Problems* 44, no. 3 (1997): 324–41.

[10] Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

[11] See Beckford, "The Media and New Religious Movements," *From the Ashes*, and James A. Beckford, "The Mass Media and New Religious Movements," in *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*, ed. Bryan Wilson and Jamie Cresswell (London and New York: Routledge), 103–22.

[12] Anson Shupe and Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Cops, News Copy, and Public Opinion: Legitimacy and the Social Construction of Evil in Waco," in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 177–202. See also Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1966).

[13] Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 56.

[14] Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion," 146.

[15] See Palmer, "Frontiers and Families"; Wright, "Media Coverage of Unconventional Religion."

[16] See Jean-François Mayer, "The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God" *Nova Religio* 5, no. 1 (2001): 203–10.

[17] See, for example, Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark, "Event and Publicity as Social Drama: A Case Study of the Re-Imagining Conference 1995," *Review of Religious Research* 39, no. 2 (1997): 153–71.

[18] See Johan Galtung and Mari H. Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News: The Presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crises in Four Foreign Newspapers," *Journal of International Peace Research* 1 (1965): 64–90; "Structuring and Selecting News," in *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance, and the Mass Media*, ed. Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (London: Constable, 1973): 62–72.

[19] Judy McGregor recognizes the general salience of Galtung and Ruge's typology, though she too suggests that changes in media structure require adjustments to the typology; see her "Restating News Values: Contemporary Criteria for Selecting the News," paper presented at the 2002 Australia and New Zealand Communication Association Conference, retrieved online from <http://www.bond.edu.au/HSS/communication/ANZCA/papers/JmcGregorPaper.pdf>, accessed on 21 November 2003. Mark Borchert, through Hartmann and Husband, clearly relies on the Galtung/Ruge typology to intepret the newsworthiness of the Southern Baptist controversy in "The Southern Baptist Controversy and the Press," in *Practicing Religion in the Age of Media*, ed. Stuart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 188–200. See also Paul Hartmann and Charles Husband, "The Mass Media and Racial Conflict," *Race* 12 (1970): 435–55.

[20] See, for example, Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing?* (London: Blackwell, 1984); James A. Beckford, "The Media and New Religious Movements," *From the Ashes*, 143–49; Lorne L. Dawson, *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998); Barend van Driel and James T. Richardson, "Categorization of New Religious Movements in American Print Media," *Sociological Analysis* 49, no. 2 (1988): 171–83; James T. Richardson, "Definitions of Cult: From Sociological-Technical to Popular-Negative," *Review of Religious Research* 34 (1993): 348–56.

[21] See, for example, Robert W. Balch and Margaret Gilliam, "Devil Worship in Western Montana: A Case Study in Rumor Construction," in *The Satanism Scare*, ed. James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley (Hawthorne: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991), 249–62; Christopher G. Ellison and John P. Bartkowski, "'Babies Were Being Beaten': Exploring Child Abuse Allegations at Ranch Apocalypse," in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 111–49; Palmer, "Frontiers and Families," 153–71; Robin Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction: The City of Philadelphia versus MOVE* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[22] McGregor, "Restating News Values," 1.

[23] Galtung and Ruge, "Structuring and Selecting News," 64.

[24] Bromley's model organizes conflict processes into four heuristic "levels of historically situated disputation": Latent Tension, Nascent Conflict, Intensified Conflict, and the Dramatic Denouement, each of which is characterized by increasing levels of entrenchment and hostility between groups. See Bromley, "Dramatic Denouements," 11–13.

[25] Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion," 148.

[26] Matthew R. Kerbel, *If It Bleeds, It Leads: An Anatomy of America's News Hour* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000).

[27] On public perception of the Branch Davidians prior to February 1993, for example, see Baylor Center for Community Research and Development, "Waco Area Opinions on the Mt. Carmel Raid and Siege," Poll #45 (Waco: Baylor University, 1993).

[28] Silk, "Journalists with Attitude," 138; emphasis added.

[29] Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion," 144.

[30] Silk, "Journalists with Attitude," 140.

[31] Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion," 146.

[32] Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion," 148.

[33] Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion," 146.

[34] See Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick, *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* (New York: Zeitgeist Films, 1993).

[35] According to Lexis®-Nexis®, prior to the mass suicide at Jonestown, two stories appeared in the *New York Times* about the Peoples Temple, one when their San Francisco building was damaged in a string of church arsons (1973), another when ten busloads of parishioners picketed the Fresno County courthouse to protest the arrest of four journalists who refused to name their sources (1976).

[36] See, for example, Palmer, "Frontiers and Families"; Barend van Driel and Jacob van Belzen, "The Downfall of Rajneeshpuram in the Print Media: A Cross-National Study," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29, no. 1 (1990): 76–90.

[37] Antonio R. Gualtieri, *Conscience and Coercion: Ahmadi Muslims and Orthodoxy in Pakistan* (Montreal: Guernica, 1989).

[38] Silk, "Journalists with Attitude," 137.

[39] Silk, "Journalists with Attitude," 139.

[40] Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion," 148.

[41] Silk, "Journalists with Attitude," 141.

[42] The *Los Angeles Times* now only maintains a six-month database of articles on the Lexis®-Nexis® Academic Universe database, the database service used to tabulate these results.

[43] On this, see Douglas E. Cowan and Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Virtually Religious: New Religious Movements and the World Wide Web," in *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, ed. James R. Lewis (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 119–40; Lorne L. Dawson and Jennifer Hennebry, "New Religions and the Internet: Recruiting in a New Public Space," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 14, no. 1 (1999): 17–39.

[44] See, for example, Joel Best, "Endangered Children in Antisatanist Rhetoric," in *The Satanism Scare*, ed. James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley (Hawthorne: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991), 95–106; Ellison and Bartkowski, "Babies Were Being Beaten"; Debbie Nathan, "Satanism and Child Molestation: Constructing the Ritual Abuse Scare," in *The Satanism Scare*, ed. James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley (Hawthorne: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991), 75–94; Palmer, "Frontiers and Families."

[45] James T. Richardson, "Social Control of New Religions: From 'Brainwashing' Claims to Child Sexual Abuse Accusations," *Children in New Religions*, ed. Susan J. Palmer and Charlotte E. Hardman (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 172–86.

[46] Bromley, "Dramatic Denouements," 26

[47] Shupe and Hadden, "Cops, News Copy, and Public Opinion," 177, citing Baylor Center for Community Research and Development, "Waco Area Opinions on the Mt. Carmel Raid and Siege."

[48] Shupe and Hadden, "Cops, News Copy, and Public Opinion," 177.

[49] See David E. Kaplan and Andrew Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World: The Terrifying Story of the Aum Doomsday Cult* (New York: Crowne Publishers, 1996).

[50] Jessica Hahn was the church secretary who, in 1987, accused Jim Bakker and John Fletcher of raping her in a Florida hotel room. Hahn's disclosure precipitated Bakker's resignation from the PTL empire.

[51] On this, see, for example, Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*; Gene Roberts, "Conglomerates and Newspapers," in *Conglomerates and the Media*, ed. Erik Barnouw et al., (New York: New Press, 1997), 61–72; David Taras, *Power and Betrayal in the Canadian Media* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1999); James Winter, *Democracy's Oxygen: How Corporations Control the News* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1997).

[52] Larry B. Stammer, "Cult's Believers Waiting for Judgment Day," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 March 1993, A1.

[53] See Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction*, 55–56, 136–38. We are indebted to one of the peer reviewers for this paper for drawing our attention to this point.

[54] Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion," 148.

[55] Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion," 148.

[56] Silk, "Journalists with Attitude," 140.

[57] On these different perceptions in the Branch Davidian negotiations, see Jayne Seminare Docherty, *Learning Lessons from Waco: When the Parties Bring Their Gods to the Negotiation Table* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001).

[58] Wright, "Media Coverage of Unconventional Religion."

[59] See, for example, Bernard Goldberg, *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2002); Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*; Robert W. McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (New York: The New Press, 1999); Richardson and van Driel, "Journalists' Attitudes toward New Religious Movements."

[60] See Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion"; Dart and Allen, *Bridging the Gap;* Silk, *Unsecular Media*, and "Journalists with Attitude."

[61] Wright, "Media Coverage of Unconventional Religion,"104.

[62] Silk, "Journalists with Attitude," 142.

[63] Silk, "Journalists with Attitude," 141–42.

[64] Silk, "Journalists with Attitude," 139.

[65] Silk, "Journalists with Attitude," 142.

[66] Silk, "Journalists with Attitude," 140.

[67] Dart, "Covering Conventional and Unconventional Religion," 152.

Perspective: Whither New Religions Studies?

Defining and Shaping a New Area of Study

David G. Bromley

ABSTRACT: New Religions Studies (NRS) is emerging as a new, interdisciplinary area of study in religion. The establishment of a new area of study involves the amassing of a distinctive corpus of knowledge and the construction of organizational auspices for knowledge creation, transmission, and preservation. In this article I identify some components and strategies of successful areas of study and use those as benchmarks for assessing the developmental progress of NRS. Two key organizational units in the development of NRS are universities and professional associations. With respect to knowledge construction, three pivotal components are definitions of the phenomena to be studied, theoretical perspectives in terms of which empirical work is framed, and methodological procedures through which research is conducted. Problems with and prospects for each of these dimensions are explored, with special attention to the issue of definitions. [1]

There have been a number of periods through Western history during which surges of religious innovation occurred. Humanities and social science scholars have studied these episodes retrospectively. What distinguishes the current historical moment is the emergence of a significant cohort of religious movements, the availability of more sophisticated theoretical and methodological tools in the humanities and social sciences, and an interdisciplinary network of scholars with a primary professional interest in studying the new movements *as they are in the process of developing.* The result is New Religions Studies (NRS), a gradually evolving specialty area in the study of religion. What

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will be necessary for NRS to succeed in securing a recognized niche within academe is an interesting issue to which NRS scholars have not paid systematic attention.[2] While scholars have produced a variety of theories and assessments concerning the success/failure of the movements we study, it is ironic that we have not asked the same questions about our own developmental enterprise, the origination of NRS as an area of study.[3]

The establishment of a new area of study involves the amassing of a distinctive corpus of knowledge and the construction of organizational auspices for knowledge creation, transmission, and preservation.[4] To this extent, at least, the process is analogous to the development of new religious groups. One way of both cultivating and assessing the developmental progress of NRS involves identifying the components and strategies of successful areas of study and using those as benchmarks for NRS. From this perspective, two key organizational units in the development of NRS are institutions of higher learning (herein, "universities") and professional societies/associations. Correspondingly, three pivotal components of knowledge construction are definitions of the phenomena to be studied, theoretical perspectives in terms of which empirical work is framed, and methodological procedures through which research is conducted. The specific issue of defining NRMs, which has been addressed by Eileen Barker and J. Gordon Melton in the July, 2004 issue of this journal, is most productively considered in this larger context.[5] I shall therefore offer an analysis of several components of NRS development and an assessment of NRS developmental problems and prospects and then conclude with a proposal for defining new religious movements (NRMs).

ORGANIZATIONAL AUSPICES

As it emerges as an area of study, NRS will be organized primarily through universities and professional societies/associations. Potential organizational goals for NRS within universities include some type of programmatic status at certain institutions. Comparable goals within the professions include sections within existing professional associations, independent professional meetings, and specialty publications.

NRS presently exists within universities most often as one or a few courses offered under a variety of disciplinary auspices. The most ambitious objective for NRS would be some type of programmatic status, ranging from a concentration within an existing academic degree program, to a program within a department, to a free-standing program. Alternatively, an academic program might grow out of a university research institute established to study new religions.[6] It is likely that concentrations or programs would be located at a limited number of institutions with a strong specialization in religion at the graduate level.

While full-fledged programs may seem overly ambitious, the rapid expansion of online education may create the potential for cooperative initiatives that would make this possible. Environmental Studies, Women's Studies, Labor Studies, African American Studies, Gay/Lesbian Studies, Peace Studies, Judaic Studies, Non-Profit Studies, offer well-known examples of academic programs that have achieved an institutional niche.

Whatever form NRS takes, the program model is instructive in thinking through developmental issues since NRS resembles academic programs in four important respects. Programs have had to make a compelling argument that some group or issue could not be properly understood within the context of existing disciplines; they have been interdisciplinary and have had to carve out an independent niche outside of the prevailing department/discipline structure; programs (as opposed to departments) have historically been associated with social movements that have challenged existing social arrangements; and they have had mixed success in gaining and maintaining standing within universities. As a result of these characteristics, there have been some predictable commonalities in their development.

The legitimacy challenge that many programs have faced is to defend their premise that there are distinctive qualities of groups or issues that require a new analytic framework and academic auspices. In general the argument has been that the prevailing structure of social relations has marginalized various issues and groups and that this marginalization is reflected in academe as much as it is in the larger social order. Thus it is argued, for example, that academic work has ignored or distorted the unique experiences of groups such as African Americans, women, and gays/lesbians by comparison with European Americans, men, and heterosexuals and, correspondingly, that there has been an emphasis on understanding development, corporate organization, and conflict in contrast to the limited commitment to studying environmental preservation, labor organization, and the conditions for peace. There is hardly unanimity within programs on how to conceptualize the focal issues, however. In Women's Studies, for example, liberals attribute gender inequality to sex role socialization, Marxists to men's control over women's work, and radicals to men's control over women's reproduction. In the ongoing debate within African American Studies over the distinctiveness of the Black Family, there are those who argue variously that it is culturally deviant, culturally equivalent, and culturally variant.[7] In sum, uniqueness and distinctiveness issues are matters of ongoing debate.

Asserting the need for an innovative perspective on groups/issues has typically resulted in scholars breaking away from established disciplines and joining in interdisciplinary ventures. The construction of a new area of study has involved a struggle to find a niche between disciplines

that is uniquely defined by a combination of disciplines. In occupying this niche, programs are compelled to balance the reward of combining the analytic power of disciplinary perspectives with the risk of becoming an intellectual cul-de-sac, isolated from disciplinary traditions. There is an ongoing challenge to avoid marginalization and isolation by connecting back to mainstream disciplinary issues. The most favorable outcome is that the interdisciplinary area reorients the parent disciplinary perspectives.

Programs frequently have been associated with social movements and therefore have tended to develop at historical moments when emergent, pressing, divisive issues have not been adequately addressed by established disciplines. Because the issues precipitating interest in new programs have involved social disputes and not simply disciplinary pursuits, programs have tended to be viewed as more "political" than ostensibly "apolitical" academic disciplines. In the parlance of religion studies, established disciplines resemble churches and programs are more akin to sects in that they claim the same cultural goals but fashion new institutional means for achieving them. Like other sectarian groups, programs have generated opposition and generally have struggled to achieve legitimacy.

The interdisciplinary, contested nature of programs has meant that they have received less acceptance and their institutional niches have been less secure. The developmental histories of academic programs have been quite checkered. On the one hand, Women's Studies and African American Studies have been reasonably successful in gaining a place in academe; on the other hand, Labor Studies has been transmogrified into Human Relations and Peace Studies has not been widely institutionalized. If programs do not attain an institutional home and are not represented in graduate education, then the training of future generations of scholars and the continuity of the area of study are compromised.

The history of interdisciplinary programs is instructive for NRS problems and prospects. Initial scholarly interest in NRMs emanated from unanticipated and contentious events: the rapid growth of the current cohort of NRMs in Western societies that challenged prevailing secularization theory and the public controversy triggered by those movements that politicized the context of scholarly investigation. Scholars quickly discovered that existing disciplinary theories were not always sufficient for understanding NRMs. For example, in both Religious Studies and Sociology primary focus is on the dominant rather than minority traditions. In Religious Studies, the cultural heritage of most NRMs can usually be traced to one or more of the major religious traditions, but this lineage is not always helpful in interpreting movement organizational dynamics. NRMs can also be productively understood sociologically as social movements, but social movement theory has been built much more heavily on the study of political and economic than religious

movements. And NRMs are not fully interpretable within the traditional church-denomination-sect-cult paradigm. Indeed, a number of movements do not even fall within traditional definitions of religions and subsequently have been deemed quasi-religious.[8] NRS continues to explore the construction of an interdisciplinary identity drawing primarily on Religious Studies and Sociology with contributions from Anthropology, Economics, History, and Psychology.

Social science scholars of religion have already recognized that the study of religion has been marginalized. NRS holds the potential to enhance the relevance of religion in several disciplines by both articulating how new religious forms are created and by providing a more critical perspective in the study of religion that will counterbalance a long history of consensus-based theorizing in the study of religion. Even under the best of circumstances, however, NRS faces a struggle to achieve legitimacy. As in a number of other programs, for NRS the stigma associated with challenging groups/issues by contested movements transfers to the area of study itself. It is likely that questions about the loyalties and integrity of NRS scholars, however baseless, will continue. Finally, as NRS does develop it will be important to establish some type of institutional niche. The first generation of NRS scholars largely found their way into the study of NRMs individually without formal programmatic training. If empirical, theoretical, and methodological knowledge is to continue to grow, a formalized program of study will be essential.

Developments within the professional association domain are promising as NRS has made progress in establishing an identity within several established associations and begun to develop its own associations. Within the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Association for the Sociology of Religion, and Religious Research Association, some sessions devoted to NRMs typically are organized annually. Scholars within the American Academy of Religion have created a more formal presence through the creation of a program unit on new religions. Outside the established professional associations, meetings specifically for presentation of research findings on NRMs are being organized by Center for the Study of New Religions (CESNUR) in Italy, Information Focus on Religious Movements (INFORM) in England, and the Institute for the Study of American Religion (ISAR) in the United States. It is important to note that professional association development has occurred largely within societies dedicated to the study of religion rather than social movements, that most of the associations are interdisciplinary, and that they have a distinctly international orientation. Other noteworthy professional developments include the emergence of *Nova Religio* as the NRS specialty journal and the establishment of an internet site, The Religious Movements Homepage, which is dedicated to compiling and disseminating information about NRMs and is managed by NRS scholars.[9]

Individual scholars were responsible for most of these initiatives, but progress has been made in the process of institutionalization as indicated by publication of *Nova Religio* by the University of California Press and the management of the NRM Homepage by NRS scholars.

KNOWLEDGE CREATION

Three important components of knowledge construction are theoretical perspectives in terms of which empirical work is framed, methodological procedures through which research is conducted, and definitions of the phenomena to be studied.

NRS has begun the process of building a theoretical base. The area's chief asset in theory construction is an active research program by a network of scholars who are chronicling NRM development as it occurs, which is historically unprecedented. The primary data source for theory development is the series of case studies of individual movements and their members, in a few cases multiple studies of the same movement over time. The result is the availability of models for analyzing a range of issues: sociocultural conditions fostering new movements, conversion/defection processes, movement success/failure, movement-counter-movement-societal conflict, leadership/organization structures, episodes of collective violence, and gender organization within movements. The area is now beginning to move beyond the study of NRMs in a Western context toward a more international and global orientation.

As an interdisciplinary area, NRS will inherently reap both the rewards and costs of diversity. Those working under the NRS umbrella include, for example, humanities and social science scholars operating from different theoretical frameworks, activist supporters and opponents of NRMs who clash over their moral meaning, and observers who regard NRMs as either portentous or epiphenomenal. Debates that synergistically advance NRS are useful because the life blood of academic traditions is ongoing dialogue and debate. Two ongoing debates that at the present moment may meet this standard are over advocacy and theoretical voice.[10]

Areas of study associated with social movements have as their mission advocating for the uniqueness of the issues/groups that are their focal concern, and this has frequently involved challenging both popular opinion and established academic wisdom. Indeed, one valuable contribution of NRS has been to challenge assertions about NRMs, from opponents and in media portrayals, that did not comport with scholars' empirical observations. Scholars also often seek to depict the way movement members understand their own beliefs and practices as well as their view of the society of which they are part. Such portrayals frequently are misconstrued or misrepresented as a defense of those worldviews. There is a significant issue to be addressed here. NRMs are experiments

in alternative forms of social relations, but all religious experiments are not by their nature noble experiments. As NRS scholars are well aware, there is a fine line between defending the uniqueness of the area of study and defending its expression in specific groups. Scholars have struggled with this issue as controversy has swirled around various NRMs, abusive practices in some groups have been revealed, and movements have evolved from more radical toward more settled forms. More dialogue and debate on this issue might be helpful in generating agreement on how to handle some complex decisions.

It is also important that NRS finds its own theoretical voice. While it is clear that there will be theoretical diversity given the range of issues and constituencies within NRS, it is worth investigating if there can be any core perspective that characterizes inquiry. Based on the experiences of other areas of study, theories oriented to conflict and the exercise of power may offer a fruitful approach. Feminist Theory and Queer Theory are examples of perspectives that have given a sharp analytic edge to Women's Studies and Gay/Lesbian Studies, for example. If religion involves an ultimate source of authorizing social relations and NRMs challenge established social order, movement-societal tension and conflict are likely during a movement's formative period. It might therefore be useful to adopt an approach that facilitates exploration of power relationships. A conflict-oriented perspective could provide an important corrective to the consensus theory approaches that have long dominated both the Sociology of Religion and Religious Studies. By theorizing about groups in significant tension with the established social order, NRS reasons from periphery to center rather than the reverse. This logic brings into focus the political relationships not only of NRMs but also of established religious groups.

While NRS does not employ unique research methodologies, participant observation fieldwork has been at the center of knowledge development. NRS scholars have produced a sophisticated set of studies of the contemporary cohort of NRMs in the West. Several issues need to be addressed in order to ensure additional progress in knowledge creation. There are at least hundreds of new religious groups in Western societies, but only a handful of the largest, most visible groups have been studied. At present, and for the foreseeable future, knowledge about NRMs will be based on a small, and probably unrepresentative, sample. Even among those few groups that have been studied most extensively, the research consists of case study snapshots of groups at specific periods of their development. There are no groups for which there has been continuous study over their lifespans employing the same theoretical framework and methodology. This means that theorizing is based on cross-sectional data from different groups rather than longitudinal data on a set of groups. The vast majority of research on NRMs is based on information provided by low to mid-ranking members.

The inner workings of leadership are pieced together from documents, histories compiled by the groups themselves, and revelations by former members with close connections to leaders. While the access to centers of power problem is commonplace in organizational research of all kinds, it is probably particularly acute for the study of new religious groups in which a charismatic founder/leader is so pivotal to initial stages of organizational development.

Given the centrality of participant observation fieldwork to the development of NRS, the issue of researchers' relationships to NRMs is a fruitful one for further dialogue and debate. The nature of researchers' relationships to groups appears to be more widely discussed in anthropology, criminology, and journalism than it is in NRS.[11] At this juncture, one general point of agreement seems to be the need for disclosure of any group sponsorship or financing of research. However, there are several other significant issues. There often is limited discussion of the political dynamics of researcher-group relationships in ethnographic reports.[12] In large measure this seems to have resulted from uncertainty about the relevance of "informal" agreements to empirical findings and how to report them in ethnographies. Another issue is the incorporation of material on contested practices into ethnographic narratives. Some scholars have struggled with this issue because it is important to report such practices contextually, reporting impacts their ongoing relationship to the movement they are studying, and they are aware that opponents and media are likely to distort their narratives by creating sensationalistic accounts based on selective, non-contextual reporting. Dialogue and debate on these issues should not be motivated by vacuous allegations of scholars being compromised by NRMs or functioning as "cult apologists." Rather, discussion should be concerned with the implications of alternative types of researcher-group relationships and the reporting of them for theory building.

TOWARD DELINEATING MOVEMENTS OF FOCAL INTEREST TO NRS

I shall conclude with the issue of defining NRMs in response to the proposals by Eileen Barker and J. Gordon Melton. NRMs are the subject matter of NRS. The intent here is to suggest a framework that would identify movements of focal interest to NRS. In constructing this framework, there are four objectives: inclusivity, avoidance of reification, identification of the key analytical dimensions that distinguish types of religious groups, and emphasizing the role of power in analyzing religion.

One objective is inclusivity. An inclusive approach moves away from a focus on the contemporary cohort of NRMs in the West, includes a much broader array of groups under the NRS umbrella than is currently designated by the term NRM, and invites historical and cross-cultural

movement comparison. The considerable literature on church-sect typologies has made it evident that such distinctions are socioculturally relative. For example, any particular group may be designated as denominational in one sociocultural context and sectarian in another. Groups may also evolve; indeed sectarian evolution toward church organization is predicted in numerous models. Since the location of groups in a typology may change over time, temporal markers also should be stipulated. Temporal designation may be a significant issue if new religious groups continue to appear in a society in response to sociocultural changes as they have in the West. One reasonable conclusion, then, is that categorizations will be more useful if constructed for meaningful sociocultural units at stipulated historical periods. Most often typologies are societal, but larger or smaller units of analysis may be legitimate and useful.

A second objective is to avoid reification of the term NRM, a problem that is not unique to NRS. In discussing this issue in the study of "new social movements," Alberto Melucci comments:

> As one of those who introduced the term "new social movements" into sociological literature, I have watched with dismay as the category has been progressively reified. Newness is by definition a relative concept, which here has the temporary function of signaling a number of comparative differences between the historical forms. . . and today's emergent forms of collective action. . . . If analysis and research fail to specify the distinctive features of the new movements, we are trapped in arid debate between the supporters and critics of newness.[13]

It certainly is possible to delineate substantive characteristics that distinguish the current cohort of NRMs from earlier cohorts as Melucci suggests. I think it is more important, however, to identify dimensions along which newness occurs and thereby facilitate analysis across an extended historical period and sociocultural contexts without stipulating specific substantive characteristics of new groups. The third objective, therefore, is to identify the key analytical dimensions that distinguish types of religious groups and lead toward a conceptualization of newness. Two pivotal dimensions that can be employed in this project are the basic forms through which all types of human behavior are organized: cultural and social patterning. One problem in developing a shared definition of NRMs is that Religious Studies and Sociology place differential emphasis on cultural and social patterning. Religious Studies scholars are more likely to categorize groups on cultural criteria. In designating NRMs, therefore, there is an emphasis on the culturally novel aspects of new groups, which sometimes are designated as "new religions." J. Gordon Melton organizes religious groups in terms of "families." The nineteen families that he identifies in the United States are defined in terms of commonalities in "history" (both emic and

etic accounts), "thought world" belief system and beliefs that are particularly emphasized (e.g., apocalypticism or glossolalia), and behavior patterns (including ethics, designated holidays, style of worship, and organization).[14] One way of assessing newness within any particular sociocultural context, therefore, would be in terms of *congruence with the symbolic patterns of the dominant culture.*

By contrast, social scientists are more likely to emphasize the social features of religious groups.[15] Indeed, most of the sociological literature on religious groups is concerned with their social organization. In the church-sect-cult literature, for example, these groups are predominantly treated as different forms of organization and there is a variety of formulations of church-like and sect-like behavior. Newness in the sociological tradition, then, is more likely to refer to organizational newness. In her article on defining NRMs, Eileen Barker enumerates a number of attributes of newness in the sociological tradition, emphasizing such characteristics as the social location of converts, intensity of adherent commitment, charismatic authority, tension with larger social order, and rapid organizational change. A second way of assessing newness within any particular sociocultural context, then, would be in terms of *congruence with the structure and interests of dominant institutions.*

I propose that the social and cultural dimensions of human groups can be usefully subsumed under the broader concept of *alignment*, defined as the degree of congruence with the dominant culture and dominant institutions.[16] Constructing definitions of different types of religious groups around the concept of alignment constitutes the fourth objective, emphasizing the role of power in analyzing religion. From a structural perspective, religion is a status that is granted to or withheld from groups making a claim to that status. At any given historical moment, those religious groups that are most closely aligned culturally and socially with the dominant cultural patterns and social institutions comprise the dominant religious groups. The presumption here is that alignment is not an objective reality but rather a negotiated reality, that groups make claim to the status of religion and that those claims are granted or rejected. Cultural and social alignment therefore can be conceptualized along a continuum with claims being accepted or contested to varying degrees.[17] Groups that are closely aligned with dominant cultural patterns and social institutions are likely to be in low tension with other dominant groups in the social order because there are a limited number of issues on which there is significant dispute. By contrast, groups that are not aligned with dominant cultural patterns and social institutions face numerous bases of dispute. Whether or not active conflict transpires is a product of how disputes are perceived, how salient they are judged to be, and the capacity for dominant groups to activate alliances and issue sanctions. That is, a low degree of cultural

and social alignment is a necessary but not sufficient condition for active conflict.

Cultural alignment involves symbolic continuity with the dominant religious symbolic patterns (such as conceptualizations of the sacred and sacred traditions, sources of legitimate religious authority, the meaning and significance of core rituals, definitions of moral rectitude) as well as broader cultural patterns (such as definitions of family, personhood, the roles of state and religion in social life, conceptions of property rights, conceptions of health/illness). In contemporary American society those groups most highly aligned culturally are those that draw on the central Christian and Jewish mythic and ritual traditions. Disagreements among the dominant groups are likely to be described as variations or versions. Agreement of symbolic forms often translates into actual alliances on religious and secular policy issues. Social alignment refers to such factors as acceptance of organizational leadership of the group by authorities representing the tradition, membership in inter-group coalitions (e.g., National Council of Churches, National Association of Evangelicals, inter-faith groups), non-competitive relationships with peer groups, and acceptance of spiritual status (e.g., baptism) by peer groups. The groups most highly aligned socially are those that have accepted denominational status in the religious economy. Disagreements among the dominant groups tend to be described as policy differences rather than fundamental differences in goals or interests. Dominant groups often forge inter-faith and lobbying alliances.

If for parsimony we assert that for any specific societal-cultural-historical location there are movements of strong and weak cultural and social alignment, the result is a continuum of religious groups. As James A. Beckford has observed, "The difference between 'normal' and 'abnormal' religious groups is not so much a matter of fixed categorical distinctions but more a matter of skirmishes along a shifting frontier."[18] Parallel to the church, sect, cult distinctions that are commonly utilized in distinguishing religious groups, I propose a continuum of dominant, sectarian, and new religious groups based on degree of cultural and social alignment. The continuum in this case refers to the United States during the second half of the twentieth century.

The dominant religious groups category includes groups that are most strongly aligned with dominant cultural patterns and social institutions, typically falling under the umbrella of mainline or mainstream churches. These groups regard themselves as the legitimate bearers of the culturally dominant Christian-Jewish traditions, accept denominational status in the religious economy, and function as "civic religion" that does not challenge the basic structure of the dominant social order.[19] Sectarian religious groups are most notable for their rejection of the authority and legitimacy of the dominant churches and erection

of alternative religious organizations that are regarded by dominant religious groups as outside the mainstream. These groups claim and to varying degrees are accorded cultural legitimacy as Christian or Jewish, although specific beliefs and practices may be disputed. Sectarian religious groups may also engage in practices that are contested by other institutions, such as rejection of military service or alternative healing methods. There is no assumption that sectarian groups naturally acquire dominant religious group status. New religious groups are those that are aligned with neither the dominant cultural patterns nor social institutions. In this sense they are new on both cultural and social dimensions; they are not members of the dominant religious "family," in Melton's terms, and they establish new movement organizations, as Barker suggests. These groups, therefore, are distinctive culturally and socially although most new groups have borrowed at least some elements of their doctrinal systems and organizational forms. New religious groups either make no claim to represent the dominant cultural patterns or to be part of the dominant institutional order, or their claims are rejected on both counts by dominant religious and secular institutions. Absent both cultural and social alignment, there is continuing potential for high tension with the dominant social order. When disputes do occur, new religious groups have difficulty recruiting coalitional partners since they have neither the social nor cultural basis for doing so.

The proposed definition of new religious groups incorporates most of the groups currently designated as NRMs. However, defining new religious groups in this way does not exhaust the possibilities for NRS nor does it limit NRS to groups with low cultural and social alignment. If groups with less contested cultural and social alignment were admitted, then sectarian religious groups with social movement characteristics could be included under the NRS umbrella. There are also emerging movements within dominant religious groups—such as the Charismatic Movement, Marian Apparition movements, Opus Dei, and the Toronto Blessing—that may ultimately break ties with their organizational and cultural lineages. These movements also could be analyzed using NRS theory and methods. NRS thus faces some key decisions about the groups of focal interest that will shape NRS as an area of study. I am simply suggesting that the area of study could be defined more politically in terms of various patterns of cultural and social alignment.

CONCLUSION

NRS is an emerging area of study in religion. I have identified some parameters of success for new areas of study and used them as benchmarks to assess the progress of NRS. A review of emerging areas of study indicates four common characteristics: they face challenges in defending

their uniqueness, they create an interdisciplinary academic and professional base, are associated with social movements that challenge existing social arrangements, and have mixed success in gaining standing within universities. The record to date suggests progress in creating niches within professional associations and specialty publications, theoretical models for interpreting NRMs, and adaptation of research methods to the study of NRMs. Ongoing challenges include building some type of academic programs or research institutes, handling complex issues on the reporting of contentious practices, creating a broader data base for NRS by expanding the range of groups under study, and continuing to explore issues concerning researchers' relationships to movements under study. Finally, there is the issue of defining and circumscribing the phenomena of interest to NRS. I have suggested a framework for defining new religious groups in terms of social and cultural alignment in order to conceptualize all types of religious groups in common terms and to bring power to the forefront of theorizing about religion. Dialogue on this and other proposals would be constructive in maintaining and developing the collective enterprise in which NRS scholars are currently engaged.

ENDNOTES

[1] This article was presented as a paper at the CESNUR Conference in Waco, Texas, June 2004. I would like to thank J. Gordon Melton, Lorne L. Dawson, and the editors of *Nova Religio* for the comments on earlier versions of this article.

[2] One exception is Thomas Robbins, "Quo Vadis the Scientific Study of New Religious Movements," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39 (2000): 515–24.

[3] On the success/failure of NRMs, see, for example, David G. Bromley and Phillip E. Hammond, eds., *The Future of New Religious Movements* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987); Rodney Stark, "Why New Religious Movements Succeed or Fail: A Revised General Model," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 11 (1996): 133–46.

[4] Here I am adopting established, institutionalized status as the criterion for success. There are a variety of possible definitions of success. In terms of contributions to existing bodies of knowledge in the social sciences and humanities, for example, it could be argued that NRS has already succeeded.

[5] The Barker and Melton articles appear in *Nova Religio* 8, no. 1 (July 2004): 73–102.

[6] Lorne L. Dawson suggested this possibility in a personal communication, May 2004.

[7] For a discussion of the debate over African American family structure, see Walter R. Allen and Angela D. James, "Comparative Perspectives on Black Family Life: Uncommon Explorations of a Common Subject," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 29 (1998): 1–7; Robert B. Hill, "Understanding Black Family Functioning: A Holistic Perspective," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 29 (1998): 8–15; Patricia Hill Collins, "Intersections of Race, Class, Gender, and Nation: Some Implications for Black Family Studies," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 29 (1998): 27–34.

[8] On quasi-religion, see Arthur L. Greil and Thomas Robbins, eds., *Between Sacred and Secular: Research and Theory on Quasi-Religion* (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1994).

[9] The Religious Movements Homepage can be accessed at <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/welcome/welcome.htm>.

[10] In contrast to the issue of advocacy, I think that the debate over the brainwashing thesis in its present form does not meet the standard of advancing NRS. There is now a substantial corpus of research on the topic that rejects this perspective. The debate has become intractable, contentious, arid, and unproductive. At the same time, there should be no obstacles to those seeking to challenge current conclusions. In personal communications I have suggested that those interested in debating the issue agree to avoid the term brainwashing for the present and simply acknowledge a number of degrees of socialization/resocialization and influence, specify the distinguishing characteristics of the different configurations, and propose specific cases that could be applied to the typology. This would allow theoretical and empirical work on extreme situations but not presume them by definition. No public objection to this proposal has been voiced to date.

[11] See, for example, Jeff Ferrell and Mark Hamm, eds., *Ethnography at the Edge* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998).

[12] I became aware of the extent of scholars privately wrestling with these issues in the conversations with a number of scholars who had conducted fieldwork on NRMs. These conversations led to David G. Bromley and Lewis F. Carter, eds., *Toward Reflexive Ethnography: Participating, Observing, Narrating* (Oxford: Elsevier Science/JAI Press, 2001). The contributors almost universally reported conflict and uncertainty about how to handle the political situations and negotiations that presented themselves in the fieldwork situation and how to report on these dynamics. As a result, a great deal of information and insight was simply not included in the ethnographic reports.

[13] Alberto Melucci, "A Strange Kind of Newness: What's 'New' in New Social Movements?" in *New Social Movements*, ed. Enrique Larna et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 101–30.

[14] J. Gordon Melton, "An Introduction to New Religions," in *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, ed. James R. Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 33. The major families include Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Sant Mat, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and Native American (and other ethnolinguistic religions).

[15] William S. Bainbridge defines social movements as "collective human attempts to create or to block change" and a religious movement as "a relatively organized attempt by a number of people to cause or prevent change in a religious organization or in religious aspects of life." William S. Bainbridge, *The Sociology of Religious Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3.

[16] Lorne L. Dawson has emphasized the importance of constructing a typology around a single dimension. See, Lorne L. Dawson, "Creating 'Cult' Typologies: Some Strategic Considerations," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 12 (1997): 363–81. Elsewhere I have developed an organizational theory that employs an alignment perspective. See, David G. Bromley, "The Social Construction of Contested Exit Roles: Defectors, Whistleblowers, and Apostates," in *The Politics of Religious Apostasy*, ed. David G. Bromley (Westport, Conn.: Praeger: 1998), 19–48.

[17] Defining religious groups in terms of alignment is consistent with prior usage. In contrasting church and sect, for example, Benton Johnson defines a church as "a religious group that accepts the social environment in which it exists" and a sect as "a religious group that rejects the social environment in which it exists." See, Benton Johnson, "On Church and Sect," *American Sociological Review* 28 (1963): 542. James T. Richardson adopts a similar perspective in defining a cult: "A cult is a group that has beliefs and/or practices that are counter to those of the dominant culture." See, James T. Richardson, "An Oppositional and General Conceptualization of Cult," *Annual Review of the Social Sciences of Religion* 2 (1978): 33. Here I am arguing that dominant religious groups do not simply

accommodate to or accept the social order, they are constitutive of it and participate in its construction and maintenance. I am also specifying the dimensions on which dominance is constructed.

[18] James A. Beckford, "The Continuum Between 'Cults' and 'Normal' Religions," in *Cults and New Religious Movements*, ed. Lorne L. Dawson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 30.

[19] Rhys Williams and Nicholas J. Demerath, "Religion and Political Processes in an American City," *American Sociological Review* 56 (1991): 417–31.

Conference Updates

Compiled by John Bozeman

American Academy of Religion (AAR): 20–23 November 2004, San Antonio, Texas, U.S. 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 7500 scholars from some 70 program areas. Please note that online registration closes 8 November 2004 at 5 p.m., Eastern Standard Time. 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 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (2005), Washington DC (2006), San Diego, California (2007), and Chicago, Illinois (2008).

British Sociological Association/Sociology of Religion Study Group: 11–13 April 2005, Lancaster University, Lancaster, U.K. The topic for this meeting will be "Religion and Gender." The Sociology of Religion Study Group's conferences attract a wide range of specialists and non-specialists. Conferences examine contemporary religious issues and the sociology of religion, providing a forum for both internationally renowned scholars, younger academics, and post-graduate students. For more information, contact the conference convenor, Dr. Peter Gee, at p.gee@odi.org.uk.

Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR): 2–5 June 2005, Palermo, Sicily, Italy. Organized by CESNUR in cooperation with the Institute for the Study of American Religion (ISAR) and the Region of Sicily, Italy, this conference will be an opportunity for scholars and others from around the world to share their insights about the perceptions, reactions, conflict, and adaptations of individuals, religions, and secular institutions to globalization and to the growing diversity found in many

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countries. Local area field trips will also be arranged. Papers are invited from a broad range of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, social psychology, history of religion, law, religious studies, and theology. Possible topics include: new religious movements, violence, and conflict; religious liberty issues from a transnational perspective; fundamentalist movements in international perspective; and new religious movements and globalization. Abstracts of between 100 and 200 worlds and a short C.V. (mandatory) may be sent to CESNUR, Via Confienza 19, 10121 Torino, Italy, before 15 February 2005, or via email (preferred) at cesnur_to@virgilio.it. Those proposing abstracts in 2004 will receive a preliminary notice about acceptance within 15 days of submission.

Evangelical Ministries to New Religions Conference: 24–26 February 2005 at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri, USA. Founded in 1982, EMNR is a coalition of Christian ministries that seeks to "help people distinguish authentic from inauthentic Christianity and strengthen evangelical Christian ministries to new religionists and cultists." The 2005 conference will include presentations on Islamic soteriology and self-martyrdom, open theism, Harry Potter, and many other topics. For more information contact EMNR, 913 Huffman Road, Birmingham, AL 35215. Phone: (205) 833-2858; fax: (205) 833-8699. Email: EMNR@aol.com. Website: http://www.emnr.org/conference.html.

Nineteenth World Congress of the International Association of the History of Religions (IAHR): 24–30 March 2005 at Takanawa Prince Hotel, Shinagawa, Tokyo, Japan. Theme: "Religion: Conflict and Peace." Hosted by the Japanese Association for Religious Studies in cooperation with the IAHR, Tokyo, Japan. The period for formal registration is 1 April 2004 to 30 September 2004. Congress Chair: TAMARU Noriyoshi; World Congress Advisory Committee: Peter ANTES; International Congerss Committee: Armin W. GEERTZ; Congress Secretariat, President of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies: SHIMAZONO Susumu; Congress Academic Program Committee: Gerrie ter HAAR. For more information, contact: Prof. Susumu SHIMAZONO, President of the JARS Congress Secretariat of the 19th World Congress of IAHR, Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Letters, University of Tokyo, 7-3-1, Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, Japan 113-0033. Phone: (81)3-5841-3765. Email: iahr@l.u-tokyo.ac.jp. Congress website: <http://www.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/iahr2005/>.

North American Labor History Conference: 21–23 October 2004 at Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, U.S. The theme of the Twenty-Sixth Annual North American Labor History Conference will be "Class, Work, and Revolution." This year's conference will explore these themes in a range of international and national contexts, such as the American Revolution, the French Revolution, revolutionary movements in Europe,

Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Mexican Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, and twentieth-century national liberation struggles. Sessions are interdisciplinary and may address topics from perspectives of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. For more information contact Professor Janine Lanza, Coordinator, North American Labor History Conference, Department of History, 3094 Faculty Administration Building, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202. Phone: (313) 577-2525. Fax: (313) 577-6987. Email: ao1605@wayne.edu. Website: http://www.cla.wayne.edu/History/conferences/call04.htm.

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion/Religious Research Association (SSSR/RRA) joint meeting: 22–24 October 2004, Marriott Country Club Plaza, Kansas City, Missouri, USA. The SSSR program's guiding theme this year will be "Overcoming Boundaries in the *Scientific* Study of Religion." Unfortunate accidents of history separated the study of social behavior into an archipelago of fields and departments; this has hampered efforts to create general theories of human behavior. This year's meeting will seek to address some of these barriers, including Ameri- and Eurocentrism in research topics, boundaries of methods, boundaries between religions, and boundaries between ideological and organizational groups that resemble religions. Papers addressing other aspects of the scientific study of religion will also be presented. For more information contact William H. Swatos, Jr., Program Chair, 3529 Wiltshire Drive, Holiday, Florida, 34691-1239, U.S. Email: bill4329@hotmail.com. 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 "Linking Social Action and Religious Research" and will examine questions such as how religious research is vital to the pursuit of a more just and humane world. How can careful scholarship on religion illuminate debates about faith, morality, and the good society? Can research bring about social change and, if so, what are the moral obligations? What responsibilities do researchers have to the communities and organizations that they study? Other topics may include religion, social justice, and the good society; the role of religious institutions in a global civil society, transformation of race and gender through religious activism, links and tensions between faith-based and secular social action, social activism and mainstream and marginal religious groups, and the links between religious movements, politics, and public policy. For more information contact John P. Bartkowski, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, P.O. Box C, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS 39762. Email: Bartkowski@soc.msstate.edu.Website: http://rra.hartsem.edu/annual.htm. The next SSSR/RRA joint conference will take place in the autumn of 2005 in Rochester, New York.

Book Reviews

The New Believers: A Survey of Sects, Cults and Alternative Religions. By David V. Barrett. Cassell and Company, 2001. 518 pages. $17.95 paper.

As David V. Barrett notes in Chapter One of this huge (544 pages) volume, the basic purpose of *The New Believers* is to apply to contemporary alternative religions the perspectives and methods which the study of comparative religions, the sociology of religion, and the phenomenology of religion have long employed on major faiths. The author studied for his doctorate under Eileen Barker and worked for three years as an information officer of INFORM, the organization founded by Barker. He is somewhat more sympathetic to NRMs than to anticult and countercult activists, yet he realizes that allegations made by critics and embittered defectors cannot be dismissed out of hand and that problems and abuses exist.

The volume is divided into two unequal parts. What might be considered the "theoretical" component of the book appears in Part One, which has sections dealing with issues such as defining "religion" and "cult," controversies over recruitment ("mind control or brainwashing?"), difficulties in leaving a movement, transformation and institutionalization, apocalyptic visions, violence, the vagaries of "cult experts," and so on.

Barrett rejects the concepts of "brainwashing" and "mind control" but warns that we mustn't "throw the baby out with the bathwater." There is, he asserts, "such a thing as indoctrination, or conditioning, and this can help a movement keep a hold on members, and make it more difficult for them to leave" (p. 52). There is, says Barrett, some evidence that in a few cases new recruits have been subjected to regimens which psychologically and emotionally weakened them such that it became more likely that they "would begin to accept everything they were told" (p. 52). More sensibly, Barrett briefly discusses institutionalization syndromes and large investments in a "spiritual career path" as emergent patterns which inhibit defection. The author somewhat lamely attempts to illustrate the dynamics of recruitment to and defection from a high pressure NRM through the construction of fictional scenarios in which "Tony," "Richard," "Sophie" and "Christine" experience involvement in a demanding group.

Among the "theoretical" chapters, two are outstanding. In "After the Prophet Dies" the author conceptually cross-tabulates "stasis" vs. "change," and "stability" vs. "instability" to identify four trajectories of "continuation," "dissolution," "reform/revolution," and "schism." In "Cults that Kill" the author warns against lurid generalizations such as

"cults kill" and notes that "the unreported non-event" such as "Moonie doesn't commit suicide" is really the norm. Briefly comparing tragedies involving Peoples Temple, the Solar Temple, Branch Davidians, Aum Shinrikyo, and Heavens Gate, Barrett spotlights pertinent factors and processes such as strong but disturbed charismatic leaders, internal stress and movement implosion, external provocation, communication breakdowns, deviance amplification, and self-fulfilling prophecies.

Part Two, which contains about three quarters of the book, provides an encyclopedic survey of around thirty groups. The "criteria of inclusion include: those movements which have a large presence in the U.K., Europe and the U.S.A.; those which have attracted attention from anticultists or the media, and those which are criticized by the Christian countercult movement for being 'counterfeit Christianity' . . ." (p. 12). Movements are subdivided into groups with "Christian Origins" such as Mormons, Opus Dei, and the Unification Church; groups originating as "Other 'Religions of the Book'" such as Baha'i and the Nation of Islam; "Eastern Movements in the West" such as ISKCON and T.M.; "Esoteric and Neopagan Movements" such as Satanism and Theosophy; and Personal Developmental Movements such as Scientology and Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Certain significant movements such as Arica Institute or Christian Identity appear to have been omitted from the volume, which relate to the author being British.

Part Two begins with a chapter on "The Complexity of Christianity" which examines, among other things, salient doctrinal differences among Christian groups. The final section (pp. 130–41) of this chapter purports to delineate the major "heresies" in the history of Christianity, but incredibly omits any reference to Monophysitism! I find this baffling: what was the crucial Council of Chalcedon all about?

Most of the movements covered in Part Two are given only a few pages. A conspicuous exception is Scientology, which gets 32 pages. I sense here that the author feels that there are so many allegations of Scientology wrongdoing that there must be some fire in all the copious smoke. Exposé books by defectors contain "many disturbing details" and the volumes "ought not simply to be brushed aside as the embittered ranting of apostates" (p. 446).

Even longer than the subchapter on Scientology is the fascinating 48-page final chapter or case study entitled "Schism in a Sect: The Worldwide Church of God and Its Offshoots." Drawing on the theoretical ideas of Bryan Wilson and Betty Scharff, Barrett shows how the usual evolution of a radical sect into a denomination was drastically speeded up by the founding prophet's handpicked successor and the latter's son. The new leaders deliberately sought to eviscerate the distinctive, eccentric doctrines propounded by the prophet Herbert Armstrong, including "British Israelism" and the rejection of trinitarian

theology, and to transform Armstrong's movement into a standard "born-again" evangelical denomination. The rapidity of the attempted transformation produced a huge backlash, although the situation was complicated by the persistent strength of the one Armstrong doctrine accepted by his successors—leadership authority and the necessity of total obedience—and by the discrediting of the prophet's son, Garner Ted Armstrong, due to sex scandals. As a result, instead of a quick, decisive schism, there has been a prolonged process of fissioning in which various groups have left the Armstrong Church at different times. The latter has fragmented into a number of often unstable mini-churches, which do not aggregate to the membership size of the original Worldwide Church of God. This chapter's vivid description and analysis of what might be the religious version of a supernova may be worth the price of the book.

Though flawed and uneven, this book nevertheless amounts to a useful, generally competent, and sometimes provocative work. It may serve adequately as both a sort of encyclopedia of contemporary NRMs and a general introduction to alternative religions as a topic, although not every significant movement is included. The extended sections on the Church of Scientology and the Worldwide Church of God are valuable and informative. I found the chapter on the latter group and its fragmentation rather engrossing.

Thomas Robbins, Rochester, Minnesota

The Religious Imagination of American Women. By Mary Farrell Bednarowski. Indiana University Press, 1999. 240 pages. $39.95 cloth, $15.95 paper.

Drawing from a diverse array of theologians, ethicists, writers and thinkers, Mary Farrell Bednarowski attempts to explain not any single religious tradition, but to uncover the commonalities of women's religious thought. Though her analysis relies heavily on feminist scholarship and writings, her examination includes women from diverse traditions and does not hesitate to explore contradictions in women's religious thinking and writing. At the center of Bednarowski's examination of women's religious imagination is her attempt to understand and articulate reasons for the ambiguity woven throughout women's religious thinking and experiences. She begins by making the case that as "dissenting participants"—as both insiders and outsiders of their religious traditions—women experience a creative tension which allows a rethinking of theology that extends beyond institutional boundaries. She asserts that women's ambiguity as marginal participants permits reconsideration of symbols, rituals, conceptualizations of the divine, and so on, which is genuinely innovative.

Bednarowski goes on to assert that women emphasize immanence of the sacred over transcendence in their thinking and writing, because doing so reaffirms connection to, rather than apartness from, the divine. This is a critique, she claims, not just of God as omnipotent, omniscient, and removed from humanity, but of the dichotomized interpretation of women as either morally and intellectually weak, and therefore in need of greater regulation than men, or sentimentally pure and spiritual, and therefore not whole and complex people. Bednarowski draws from traditions as diverse as Buddhism, Judaism and Mormonism to demonstrate that women advocate an immanental theology and concludes that such an approach does not turn women to relativism or diminish their emphasis on transcendence. Instead, she finds in women's religious thinking and writing evidence of women's recognition of the sacred in the ordinary.

Also significant in women's religious thinking, according to Bednarowski, is an emphasis on relatedness to self, to community, and between communities. The complexities of relatedness, she argues, lead women to consider particularities and differences between and within communities in a way that renders clear the need to understand women of diverse communities on their own terms. In her last chapter, Bednarowski explores the theme and varieties of healing as expounded in women's religious thought.

Underlying Bednarowski's analysis is attention to the complexities and contradictions of women's religious thought and the ways in which these serve as an impetus for creative exploration and transformation. While her analysis is not exhaustive, Bednarowski avoids essentialist claims or sentimentality and instead provides an insightful, cogent and intellectually honest survey of women's religious imagination.

Laura Vance, Georgia Southwestern State University

The Politics of Myth: A Study of C.G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Joseph Campbell. By Robert Ellwood. State University of New York Press, 1999. 207 pages. $17.95 paper.

Robert Ellwood's *The Politics of Myth* should be required reading for anyone who has been drawn to the ideas on myth of Jung, Eliade, and Campbell, and perhaps, even more, for those interpreters of myth who have not found their ideas attractive (including Jung's intemperate assailant Richard Noll).

In a long introductory overview, a chapter each on Jung, Eliade, and Campbell, and a brief conclusion provocatively entitled "The Myth of Myth," Ellwood patiently places in context the scholarly approaches and certain of the personal attitudes and actions of the three mythologists. These are approaches, attitudes, and actions that have understandably

come to seem reprehensible for their troubled points of contact with fascism and/or anti-Semitism. With arguably good intentions and undeniably bad judgment, born in part from their embeddedness in the fashionable prejudices of their class and country, Jung and Eliade survived the 1930s in apology and exile as Campbell lived out the post-war decades in an ambivalent relationship to his Irish-American Catholic upbringing and his personal life of clubby privilege (perhaps all the more appealing to him, notwithstanding its bigotries, given his non-WASP origins).

Ellwood details these offenses while continually directing our attention to contextual considerations, concerned as he is to infer a political philosophy from each man's analysis and espousal of myth rather than simply to dissect or rebut the charges against them. That such a political philosophy amounted to a Burkean conservatism with freedom for individuals to follow possibly parallel mythic paths intrapsychically and academically, rather than a totalitarian fascism with one national myth imposed on every citizen (and with ethnic others scapegoated or worse), is a conclusion the author earns through his painstaking and eventually persuasive survey. His exploration of the politics of myth reminds us that the political—and those many sectors of contemporary theory that take such "power relations" as their foundation—is always also to some extent mythic.

Likewise, issues of the individual versus the collective in these mythologists' hermeneutics and hopes for myth in the modern world can still inform our ongoing efforts to weigh the relationship between the psychological and the social. Such issues are sharply delineated and carefully weighed by a commentator who is generally appreciative of the work of his three subjects. Though a student of Eliade, Ellwood is quick to mark difficulties, however. He notes, for instance, the apparent perversity of the collective source of myth being sloughed off by these anti-modernist champions of the mythic. Jung was especially dismissive of what he called "mass man." And yet he, like his two successors, sought a return to the mythic in behalf of the healing of society as well as the individuating self.

In Eliade's case, after pre-war support for the increasingly fascist Legion of the Archangel Michael in Romania, support which (though he never actually joined) a Jewish friend called "catastrophic naiveté" (p. 89), Eliade's longing for a mythic renovation of society and the individual eventually "became intellectual—the 'new man' became the 'new humanism'—rather than political. It was interiorized," Ellwood tells us, "and if it was to have political form it would have to be in the passive role of merely allowing the new man to emerge, a minimal rather than a maximalist state" (p. 120).

For Joseph Campbell, literary romanticism, storytelling skill, and a species of mystical vision imported from India all contributed to a spiritual-psychological view of myth that also owed much to Jung (as well as to

Freud). That this approach to myth has important connections to Campbell's political conservatism—such as, most obviously, his deep-seated (and very American) individualism—is a point Ellwood pursues with admirable subtlety.

By holding himself philosophically above the fray during the wartime political struggle of the 1940s and then often pronouncing in favor of the anti-Communism of the Cold War years while a faculty member at Sarah Lawrence College, he almost reverses the movement of Jung and Eliade away from unfortunate political engagement to more interiorized conservatism as he aged. His occasional alleged—and likely—anti-Semitic remarks were a private affair and a private shortcoming. How these cohere with his public positions about myth is the more significant issue since his death, and here Ellwood relies on Robert Segal and Maurice Friedman to track "anti-Judaic" tendencies in those positions. Ellwood is hardest on Campbell, yet even with him he infers a larger politics of myth with unobjectionable if not necessarily appealing qualities.

For all three mythologists myth was a "myth" in that they usually treated fully-formed official myths, in their literary finest from long ago and far away, rather than emergent mythic images. While Jung did try to assess flying saucers as "a modern myth of things seen in the skies," Eliade expressed support for 1960s and 1970s youth culture interest in the "parashamanistic underground," and Campbell speculated about the whole-earth image as the icon of a world mythos to come, they were mainly attentive to finished myths. These were narratives no longer living for their native cultures (or for ours), but available, arguably, to the inner psychic growth of the modern Western individual.

"In the end," as Ellwood repeats (nineteen times, by my count) in this astute and well-balanced study, we must appraise the politics of these three mythologists in and through the total sweep of their lives and work, not only through the extremities to which their statements and behavior sometimes sank. This is not to forgive, and certainly not to forget. But he also convincingly reclaims the larger utility of their ideas—indeed, of the mythic itself—along with the sociopolitical implications.

We are in Robert Ellwood's debt for making these matters explicit. The memories of Jung, Eliade, and Campbell have been well and justly served by his discerning canvass, and no final evaluation of their legacies can afford to ignore this book.

Daniel C. Noel, Pacifica Graduate Institute

Religious Fundamentalism and Political Extremism. Edited by Leonard Weinberg and Ami Pedahzur. Frank Cass, 2004. 174 pages. $95.00 cloth.

As noted in the editors' introduction, this collection of original papers is devoted "to discussions of links between religious fundamentalism and

political extremism, particularly violent extremism" (p. 2). Violent, extremist religious movements are now proliferating and feature not only militant Islamic groups but also a number of other movements including Christian Identity and "Aryan" groups. Extremist fundamentalist movements, according to the editors, possess several characteristics. They are *reactive* and want to reverse secularist and modernizing trends; they *selectively* take up or jettison elements of a religious tradition; they are *Manichean* and envision the world divided into two camps; they are *absolutist* and dogmatic; they view themselves as an *elite* group which must *separate* itself in some manner from those around it; they are generally organized on *authoritarian* lines; and they tend to entail *charismatic* leadership. Such movements respond not only to secularizing trends challenging traditional religions but also to the prior rise and fall of secular political religions such as messianic socialism (Communism) and messianic, totalitarian nationalism (Fascism).

Most edited collections are mixed bags whose component papers manifest a variable quality. The present volume is an exception in the sense that each of the eight essays is valuable and thought-provoking. One useful paper by Gabrial Ben-Dor and co-editor Leonard Weinberg, "The Uniqueness of Islamic Fundamentalism and the Fourth Wave of International Terrorism" stands out. The authors see "Islamic fundamentalist terrorism" as "the single most influential phenomenon of the first years of the new millennium" (p. 71). The key elements which set Islamic fundamentalism apart from other movements include dynamic activism, a protest ideology, a totalistic "lack of separation between religion and the state," and a strong collectivist orientation toward the religious community. These attributes, "explain why Islam alone, among the three major monotheistic religions, is in a unique position to expand across national boundaries." Islamic fundamentalists, therefore, "are able to penetrate the political systems of other countries in the name of Islam" (p. 79). For Muslims, the state is only legitimate if it serves the purposes of the spiritual community, moreover, "Islamic radicalism . . . does not recognize the boundaries of the secular national states . . ." (p. 81). So, it seems to this reviewer that the popular label "Islamofascism" is distorted because nationalistic fascism lacks the internationalism of Islamism.

Also quite provocative is Michael Barkun's piece, "Religious Violence and the Myth of Fundamentalism." Barkun writes from a somewhat different standpoint from that of Ben-Dor and Weinberg. Barkun notes that contemporary anxiety over "dangerous religions" has generated a literature that attempts to identify sinister faiths in terms of an "essentialist argument that it is possible to find markers of proneness to violence" (p. 56). This quest has led, Barkun maintains, to dubious and confusing propositions about "fundamentalism." In the course of evaluating some current ideas about religion and violence, Barkun reviews contributions of Samuel Huntington, Robert Lifton, Mark Juergensmeyer and David

Bromley. He suggests that, "it might be better to retire 'fundamentalist' to the lexicon of abandoned terms, in the same manner as the equally dubious 'cult'" (p. 68). There is, Barkun insists, "no simple, unilinear relationship between violence on the one hand and religious variables on the other . . ." (p. 68).

Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi's seminal article, "The Return of Martyrdom: Honor, Death and Immortality" looks at the recurrence of certain ideas which had appeared to have been banished by modernity and its "secularization of death and violence." Religious violence and the mystique of martyrdom are surging back, partly in association with Islam, which, "is, in some sense the last religion taking a stand against modernity" (p. 27). The "politicization of religion" yields the "resacralization of politics" and the transformation of "fundamentalism" from a religious belief system to a political ideology embodied in a political mass movement. However, what really appears to unite various "fundamentalists" and religious radicals from a number of traditions is the conservative "discourse about sexuality, procreation and the status of women" (p. 30). Ironically, movements trumpeting this discourse have elicited much female support.

Various fundamentalist movements have converged on a basic "anti-modern ideology" which is strongly collectivist and communalist and downgrades individual rights. Modernity's ideal of "complete and total personal autonomy" has often produced "alienation and emptiness." The failure of liberal, modernist ideals "leads to the dangerous yearning for an idealized pre-modern past" (p. 32).

The other essay that I particularly appreciated was "Reflections on Fascism and Religion" by Roger Eatwell, which evaluates the common notion that fascism represented a "political religion." Many leading Nazis such as Adolf Eichmann were banal bureaucrats rather than quasi-religious fanatics; moreover, Germans who participated in mass shootings of Jews "do not seem to have seen this as part of a millenarian quest to renew the nation" (p. 162). The politicization of religion was less important to the Holocaust than the sacralization of science in terms of the prestige of racial science in pre-Nazi Germany.

All ideologies, notes Eatwell, have religious dimensions. The "essential syncretism" of fascism meant that in places such as Romania under the Iron Guard a congenial marriage of fascism and Catholicism could evolve. Many Nazis believed in an absurd apocalyptic holy war against the Jews, but this was not a motivating dynamic for most Nazis. Less absurd and apocalyptic was the "core ideology of generic fascism . . . the quest to forge a holistic nation and create a radical, syncretic Third Way state" (p. 163).

I found the essay by Daphna Canetti-Nisim, "Two Religious Meaning Systems, One Political Belief System: Religion, Alternative Religion and Political Extremism," slightly disturbing. Some time ago I predicted (to myself) that since "superstition and stereotyping" is a subcomponent of

the "Authoritarian Personality" F. scale, occultism and alternative religion may become stigmatized as reflecting psychological authoritarianism. This paper appears to confirm my expectation. Citing T. W. Adorno, Bob Altemeyer, Samuel Stouffer, and others, the author initially establishes a connection between the strength and intensity of conventional religious commitment (including fundamentalist beliefs) with reactionary political extremism and "right-wing authoritarianism." "A constant finding in politics is that the more individuals are orthodox in religious beliefs, the weaker their attachment to the democratic-liberal line in politics" (p. 36). Canetti-Nisim also reports some support for what she considers to be the slightly counter-intuitive notion that "alternative religions"—by which she means a diffuse occultism involving belief in ghosts, telepathy, séances, astrology—is also correlated with authoritarianism, right-wing extremism and antidemocratic orientations. "The Authoritarian Personality asks for the help of supernatural and political anti-democratic powers" (p. 43). Democracy is also said to be threatened by alienation and political indifference, which are related to alternative religion. An anti-democratic potential additionally inheres in occultists' "abandonment of critical thinking" and "objection to scientific ideas."

Although the author doesn't cite Erik Fromm, there seems to be an implicit "escape from freedom" theme in her essay. "In an age of wrenching change and uncertainty, millions of people will continue to turn to religious and alternative religious movements in their search for a more secure and morally grounded social order" (p. 50). Likewise, anxiety, insecurity and moral confusion may lead citizens to cling to strong leaders, to fear democracy and to reject "outsiders." The author sees religion per se as more or less regressive. "Religious identity creates a unique type of loyalty and group identity, which is the archetype of unconditional tribal and national loyalty" (p. 45). Although Canetti-Nisim can cite some empirical support for her ideas, her anti-religious and anti-occult premises seem evident. A lecturer at the University of Haifa, she may be influenced by the dark spectacle of "religious Jews and Muslims both trying to destroy the Israeli-Palestinian peace process" (p. 43).

The remaining papers involving "Jewish Self-Defense and Terrorist Groups" (Arie Perliger and Leonard Weinberg) and "Counting the Causes and Dynamics of Ethnoreligious Violence" (Jonathan Fox) are both worthy. The volume could have benefited from an additional empirical or "case study" chapter on a topic such as neo-fascist, Christian Identity movements. Nevertheless, this is an excellent and stimulating collection. It is part of the new Frank Cass series on "Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions," which will include volumes on Stalinism, International Fascism, Italian Fascism, Nazism, Euro-Communism, and Genocide.

Thomas Robbins, Rochester, Minnesota

UFO Religions. Edited by Christopher Partridge. Routledge, 2003. 383 pages. $20.95 paper.

Even as popular interest in UFO phenomena seems to be declining, the books, both by believers and by academic students of the believers, keep on coming. This volume, in the latter category, is focused on a few fairly well-organized and well-known religious movements related to unidentified flying objects. Students will recognize some of the best-known scholars of this field among the contributors. There are articles on the Raëlian Church by George D. Chryssides, Unarius by Diana Tumminia, the Aetherius Society by Simon G. Smith, Heaven's Gate by James R. Lewis, the URANTIA book by Sarah Lewis, the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors by Theodore Gabriel, the Ashtar Command by Christopher Helland. In a way that parallels other phenomena in the sociology of religion, small, intensive groups like these that originated out of a once-widespread popular enthusiasm have survived intact well past the fading of that original vogue.

The book starts off with a perceptive introduction by the editor, Christopher Partridge, and general articles on UFOism in Germany and Finland by Andreas Grünschloss and Jaakko Närvä respectively, by Garry Trompf on "UFO Religions and Cargo Cults," Jodi Dean on abduction narratives in her "Alien Doubts," Mikael Rothstein on "UFO Beliefs as Syncretistic Components," Daniel Wojcik on "Apocalyptic and Millenarian Aspects of American UFOism," Brenda Denzler on "Attitudes Towards Religion and Science in the UFO Movement in the United States," Robert Segal on "Jung on UFOs," and finally John A. Saliba on "The Psychology of UFO Phenomena."

This collection naturally invites comparison with the also recently-published *Encyclopedic Sourcebook of UFO Religions* (Prometheus Press, 2003), edited by James R. Lewis, containing similar sociological articles on most of the same groups and many of the same issues, frequently by the same author (see review below). But there is no actual duplication, and in fact the two books complement each other well. Serious students of the UFO religious realm will want to peruse both and set insights in the two alongside each other. Brenda Denzler astutely points out in her contribution to the Partridge collection that "The public (especially academic) image of the UFO community is an illusion because it is based on only a small fragment of the whole," that is, the "contactees" and the religions (p. 302). But while broader academic studies of UFOism would be helpful, these two books do well what they set out to do: that is, study the religions.

Several essays in Partridge's *UFO Religions* give particular attention to ideas concerning the background of UFO religious beliefs, usually giving pride of place to the Theosophical model of an esoteric group informed by communication from "ascended" masters, a concept easily transferred

from the traditional Theosophical adepts of H. P. Blavatsky to the "space brothers." This hypothesis may warrant a bit of critical reflection. I would quibble with the rhetoric of several of these writers regarding Blavatsky. She herself never called her guides by the later, largely I Am, term "ascended masters," insisting for the most part that they were ordinary, though highly initiated, humans living on earth. She never claimed to be in "regular communication" with masters from Venus. Most significantly, I wonder if the term "channeling" is appropriate for the complex process of training, initiation, inspiration, and inner assistance by which she believed masters like Koot Hoomi and Morya aided her in her writing, if by channeling one means instead something like Spiritualistic mediumship (which she disliked) or the current "New Age" channeling. By all accounts her writing process, though remarkable, did not resemble the verbatim trance-delivery of lengthy discourses, as described by accounts in this book, by the likes of George King, George van Tassel, or (though the term "channeling" is rejected by the movement) in the transmission of the URANTIA book to the people of earth.

Nonetheless, something more like the "channeling," "ascended masters" Theosophy of the stereotype had appeared by the second generation of Theosophists like Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater (though still not quite the same thing in my view), and above all in Theosophical offshoots like the I Am and Alice Bailey movements. The point is certainly legitimately taken that, thanks in large part to Theosophy, the image of "highly evolved," transcendent teachers from other realms prepared to help the struggling humanity of earth was in the spiritual air which many founders of UFO religions breathed. Contactees like George Adamski, George Hunt Williamson, and George King were steeped in popular Theosophy. Given the "physicalist" tendency of UFOism to make concrete and material what other faiths might be content to leave in a misty spiritual realm, a characteristic of these movements provocatively described by Partridge in his introduction, the "masters" easily become extraterrestrial communicators.

To be sure, a long history of hidden masters separate from modern Theosophy lurks in Western as well as Eastern occultism, reaching from Neoplatonism to Rosicrucianism, Swedenborgianism, and the Golden Dawn. One can also see in it the footprints of Spiritualism independent of Theosophy in UFO religious movements, as Denzler most adequately acknowledges (pp. 307–08). Science fiction, both in print and on the screen, certainly had its part, probably a greater one than is often credited, in preparing minds for UFO religious revelations. The articles in this book by Rothstein and Wojcik remind us also of the large role that apocalyptic and visionary Christianity, including accounts of communications and visits from angels (e.g., in the founding of Mormonism) as well as in Marian apparitions, could have played in shaping the popular mind for UFOism. Wojcik also reminds us how much modern conspiracy

theory, usually unshared to this extent by Theosophy, has informed the UFO movement. Nonetheless Theosophy, or more precisely secondary literature or movements inspired by Theosophy, were undoubtedly predominant influences on the minds of several of the most influential contactees and founders of UFO religions, though one must strive to get it right and avoid any over-simple single-source hypothesis.

All these are kinds of thoughts stimulated by this interesting book. And there is more. Jodi Dean in "Alien Doubts" offers an intriguing picture of the strange nature of UFO revelatory experiences. In most of the abductees she has spoken with, she reports, the experience "seems to have happened and not happened . . . takes place (or doesn't) in dream, everyday reality, visions and some kind of other dimension and . . . resists earthly temporality . . ." (p. 242) The experience seems, in other words, to be like a contemporary entry into the timeless world of myth, which leads Dean to remark on the "trickster cosmos" of UFOism, and the shamanistic nature of many such encounters and voyages (p. 245). Such observations are reinforced by contactees and abductees whose cosmic visitors were also up close and personal, e.g. a reptilian alien who was, one experiencer commented, perhaps drawn to her because she had been "dealing with an angry, frustrated, and judgmental part of herself" (p. 244). Denzler notes that before having a personal UFO experience, most respondents to her surveys believed that the phenomenon would best be explained scientifically; after an experience, they said religiously, and described the experience as "extraordinary, life-changing," and used "the language of awe" (p. 304).

Without moving prematurely into facile psychological interpretations of the experiences, one can certainly conclude that, like all religious experience, UFO encounters involve complex interactions of cosmos, culture, and subjective consciousness. But such an observation also points to their importance for understanding larger issues of religion and contemporary life. However much they may embody "high strangeness," in the current insider term, or seem merely bizarre to the skeptic on the street, UFO revelations and the groups they have inspired are living laboratories of religion which can teach us much about religion as well as, perhaps, about the cosmos. *UFO Religions* is a fine introduction to current thinking about that subject and its world.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of UFO Religions. Edited by James R. Lewis. Prometheus Books, 2003. 550 pages. $99.00 cloth.

This hefty volume should stand for some time as the definitive work on UFO religions from the point of view of religious studies scholarship. Really a collection of papers rather than an encyclopedia in the usual

sense, it spans a goodly spectrum of groups, scholars, and scholarly points of view. Papers deal with, among other topics, the Aetherius Society, Unarius, Heaven's Gate, the Raelians, the Ashtar Command, and Chen Tao, the first five of this list being fully summarized in a documentary Appendix of well over a hundred pages. Writers include, among others, Hilary Evans, Mikael Rothstein, Robert Balch, David Taylor, Forrest Jackson, Susan Palmer, Ted Peters, John Saliba, Diana Tumminia, and Charles Ziegler. (By way of disclosure, I should add that the final article, a speculative piece on the possible religious impact of extraterrestrial contact, is by the present reviewer.)

The writers initially follow customary interpretation (e.g., Jung's "technological angels") in viewing religious UFOism as lightly secularized, "scientific" versions of traditional soteriology and apocalyptic, with the "contactee" as updated charismatic prophet. But they go on from there. Susan Palmer, in "The Raelian Apocalypse," has made another observation: at least in this case, as time has passed and apocalyptic expectations have not been met, "It seems reasonable to argue that the Raelian religion has begun to resemble a Club Med offering New Age therapies more closely than a flying saucer church" (p. 276). I suspect the same could be said regarding Aetherius and Unarius. On the other hand, "Heaven's Gate" by Balch and Taylor reminds us that the ongoing crisis of an aging apocalyptic group's restlessness and unrealized hopes can be managed by the leadership in the opposite direction of heightened seclusion and internal discipline, leading to the kind of resolution witnessed in the tragedy of Rancho Santa Fe. (The evidence of this "cult" in its most regimented phases also led these writers to comment, of the "brainwashing" hypothesis, "While most sociologists who study new religions dismiss the concept, the history of Heaven's Gate suggests that these scholars may have gone too far in their efforts to downplay the power of social influence" (p. 211).

The classic sociological study of a small UFO group, *When Prophecy Fails*, by Leon Festinger, Henry Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, is revisited by Diana Tumminia in "How Prophecy Never Fails," a study of Unarius. Following J. Gordon Melton's 1985 article, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation: What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails" (*American Studies* 26: 17–29), she suggests that over-emphasis on a single prophecy and its supposed "failure" amounts to a "one-dimensional view of millenarianism [that] neglects the presence of a complex cosmology or an integrated group life." When spaceships failed to appear as predicted in 1975 and later dates, the upshot for Unarius was not disconfirmation of the movement but reinterpretation through other sectors of an unfalsifiable belief system in karma, the reliving of past life events, and truths unknown to the public.

As we move into the twenty-first century, it appears that, barring some startling new development, general interest in UFOs has seriously

declined, perhaps terminally, from its twentieth-century high. At the same time, the power of small, intensive UFO religious movements to energize true believers remains great, as the 1997 Heaven's Gate tragedy, the 1998 saucer-landing expectations of Chen Tao, and even more recent publicity concerning the Raelians, make evident. Nonetheless, several writers in this collection have contrasted statements of observers (including myself) about the smallness of UFO religious groups with polls indicating widespread public "belief" in UFOs. Surely what is needed is greater methodological clarity concerning distinctions between intensive and diffuse expressions of social movements, and the not-uncommon capacity of the former to linger among the highly committed well after vague, diffuse public interest has begun to fade.

Similar terminological clarification is required for apocalyptic. Although several writers in this book speak of UFO religion as apocalyptic, and Susan Palmer entitles her article "The Raelian Apocalyptic," John Saliba, in "The Earth Is a Dangerous Place: The Worldview of the Aetherius Society," queries my earlier use of the expression "apocalyptic theosophy" for that group's outlook, if "apocalyptic . . . includes an eschatological scenario that foretells the imminent end of the world" (p. 130)

While certainly an end of the world scenario represents the "classic" or paradigmatic form of apocalyptic, it does seem to me that the word is not misused if, by the same model, it refers to sudden, tremendous changes involving signs in the heavens and supernatural (or extraterrestrial!) intervention, and a soteriological passage through a time of troubles to a glorious new age. The question of the appropriateness of the term apocalyptic needs to be faced, for it arises in connection with other new and eastern religious movements as well. They often place anguish and radical renewal here below against a cyclical or "metaphysical" cosmology that precludes a literal end of the world, yet present a coming drama that functionally, and perhaps psychologically, amounts almost to the same thing.

Indeed, this sort of "apocalyptic" expectation seems to characterize long-lasting UFO religious groups, as over against the more sanguine progressive eschatology of independent contactees and more ephemeral groups, like those around such figures as George Adamski and Dan Fry. In this the latter were in the tradition of the Spiritualist mediumship that certainly has a historical relationship to UFO contacts. I recall 1950s-type contactees with such a background. That Spiritualist and broader esotericist connection of religious UFOism is not sufficiently brought out in this volume, although the important link to the I Am movement and its Ascended Masters is cited in several places. But it is true that, like I Am, the intensive UFO religions moved toward dramatic eschatologies, verging in the UFO case on "apocalyptic" as defined above.

No doubt the expectation of going though "apocalyptic" tribulations together requires a more closely-knit group than traversing benign

vistas. As Melton and Tumminia suggest, this produces greater toughness against a skeptical world, despite alleged disconfirmations. Such groups may likewise survive longer than widespread but diffuse public credence in UFOs, since they believe in the set-apartness of the "ground crew" from the rest of humanity.

But whether the subjects survive or not, sociological studies of the caliber of many of these papers are important in themselves, as models of the art and for insights that will aid students in understanding many new and minority religious groups. Despite the price, *UFO Religions* is recommended for all major sociological collections.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910. By Kathryn M. Daynes. University of Illinois Press, 2001. 305 pages. $34.95 cloth.

Historian Kathryn Daynes provides scholars the most complete and methodical account of Mormon polygamy to date. She explores a myriad of topics pertaining to the practice, including Joseph Smith's secret and controversial initiation of plural marriage, later articulation of doctrinal support for and rules governing the practice, effects of plural marriage on the availability of potential spouses, factors influencing the choice to become a plural wife, economics of plural marriage, divorce, remarriage, the decline of polygamy; and provides a brief explication of contemporary Fundamentalist branches' practice of polygamy. Employing records from nineteenth-century Manti, Utah, Daynes contextualizes specific data with reference to church teachings and practices, historical milieu and change, and pays particular attention to regulations—both legal and religious—which governed plural marriage.

Daynes begins her examination of plural marriage by recounting its secret origins in Kirtland. She describes the controversy (including his wife, Emma's, objections) surrounding Joseph Smith's marriage to Fanny Alger, though Daynes traces serious dissention in the early church—which eventually led over half of the movement's most prominent leaders to apostatize—more to objections to concentration of authority in Joseph Smith and increasing attempts to control members' lives than to objections to plural marriage. She describes the development of doctrinal underpinnings of plural marriage articulated in Nauvoo, Illinois, following Smith's death, but notes that it was not until Mormons attained the political and religious autonomy that isolation in Utah afforded that the practice burgeoned.

Daynes outlines specific historical contingencies that contributed to the practice of plural marriage, especially economic factors. Women without access to a man's labor or economic support were most likely to become plural wives, allowing them access to men's labor at a time

when, Daynes observes, such access was an important contributor to survival. Her data indicate that women who were economically disadvantaged were more likely to become plural wives, while men who were economically advantaged were more likely to marry more than one wife, resulting in redistribution of wealth in the church.

Daynes does not ignore theological underpinnings of polygamy, including the belief that it was necessary for exaltation, and contends that polygamy served to encourage marriage and reproduction, both key components of Mormonism. She notes that plural marriage restricted the availability of potential wives for some men, thus lowering the age at which women married and decreasing the amount of time immigrant women waited to marry, and that the system devised by the church allowed relatively easy access to divorce and encouraged remarriage.

Daynes concludes her discussion by tracing the demise of polygamy in Mormonism and its persistence among some contemporary Fundamentalist groups. Following the "ambiguous Manifesto," she asserts, polygamy continued, though rules for its practice "became more diffuse" (p. 209). Most importantly, Daynes convincingly argues that nineteenth-century plural marriage was a well-developed system which incorporated different types of marriage—each with concomitant rules and obligations. More than any previous work, *More Wives than One* provides scholars and general readers specific information about the intersection between belief and practice of this often misconstrued marriage system.

Laura Vance, Georgia Southwestern State University

Blue Twilight: Nature, Creationism, and American Religion. By Langdon Gilkey. Fortress Press, 2001. 180 pages. $15.00 paper.

Langdon Gilkey is one of the most important American theologians of the twentieth century. He has been a major voice in Protestant liberalism. Like his mentor Paul Tillich, Gilkey has been a key liberal Protestant advocate of religion's engagement with culture and society, and thus a founding father of contemporary Religious Studies. So anything he says about anything is news. *Blue Twilight* is the most recent collection of his essays, thirteen pieces that can be read independently but also build on his previous and considerable published work. These essays cover a wide variety of topics characteristic of Gilkey's theological agenda, divided under three headings that also constitute the three parts of the book: religion and science; the importance of Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr; and the plurality of many religions, or as Gilkey puts it, "how each religion is to understand itself in the new situation of what we may call a 'recognized rough parity' with other religions" (p. xi). Readers of this journal may not find all parts of the book equally interesting, so I would like to highlight only a few of the issues that Gilkey raises.

Gilkey was a witness for the American Civil Liberties Union, and the plaintiffs, in a famous trial in 1981 in Little Rock on the teaching of creation science in public schools. The State of Arkansas passed a law requiring science teachers to teach both evolution and an alternative "science" called creationism, giving both equal time. A set of groups including the ACLU challenged this law as contradicting the First Amendment. The ensuing court battle brought to light basic issues of religious freedom as well as problems involved in defining religion. One of the essays in this collection, "The Creationist Controversy," contains Gilkey's reflections on this trial, and the issues surrounding it, twenty years later. Gilkey faults both scientists and religionists, then and now, for stereotyping the other's views, and calls for renewed dialogue between advocates of science and religion. Gilkey also addresses basic problems in American religious life in an essay entitled "The Religious Right." He presents an interesting counterargument to the Religious Right's advocacy of creation science. He points out that if creationism were taught as widely and commonly as fundamentalists want, then the technological and scientific edge that the United States has enjoyed, and on which American military might is based, would be blunted. Eventually our nation would lose the primary status it now has in world affairs. Gilkey thus shows that within the fundamentalist argument for a strong America lies a self-destruct mechanism: creation science. His observation would make an interesting point of comparison with various New Religious Movements that contain the seeds for their own potential destruction. Gilkey himself doesn't pursue this line of inquiry, since he isn't interested in NRMs in particular, but he provides an intriguing notion that merits further reflection.

One of the most significant essays in the book is entitled "Plurality and Its Theological Implications," written especially for this volume and based on Gilkey's thinking on plurality during two decades of teaching and discussion with colleagues. Here he puts forward his own solution to the problem of the "rough parity" of religions in contemporary society. He notes that earlier in the twentieth century Western culture, and its religion, Christianity, were understood by those in the West to be superior to all other cultural and religious options. But the latter twentieth century has witnessed the decline of this superiority, in the minds of most Westerners, so that the West now understands its own cultural and religious (and theological) contributions to be on a par with those made by peoples everywhere. This situation has forced theologians, and especially liberal Christians, to look at other religions in a new light. Gilkey dismisses any effort to extract from all religious systems some overarching metaphysical truth, for those who attempt such a move are themselves irrevocably and hopelessly located in their own cultural and religious matrix and cannot transcend it in order to survey all the religious options available to humanity. We are left, it seems, with

equally valid religious symbols and doctrines, none above the other, and thus all relatively true or untrue. Although Gilkey applauds the moral earnestness of those who advocate tolerance amid this diversity, he rightly fears that we nonetheless face relativism as the only remaining position if we accept pluralism as heartily as the present parity of religions seemingly demands. But we must also live with each other, religion side by side with religion. As the American pragmatists insisted, when faced with the pressing matter of actual praxis, of living life with others, what appears contradictory upon mere reflection can be resolved. As Gilkey points out, "If we would *be* as personal and social beings, and even more if we must take a role in liberating action, we must stand somewhere and act from somewhere" (p. 135) Gilkey recommends "a relative absoluteness" (p. 136), a position in which one remains committed to a religious absolute as absolute, yet also remains open to being transformed by others in interreligious dialogue. This is "a workable dialectic" for praxis, even if it remains a contradiction for reflection (p. 137).

Gilkey's solution to the problem of religious parity—that one stand for one's own religious absoluteness yet paradoxically also allow it to be relativized in interreligious dialogue—provides a useful parallel for scholarly study of NRMs. Readers of this journal engaged in sociological, theological, historical, and other forms of study of NRMs are quite aware of the diverse claims made by NRMs past and present. As responsible interpreters of the vast array of NRMS, we cannot look at the world exclusively through the lens provided by any given NRM, but Gilkey also casts doubt on our ability to transcend all NRMs, looking down upon them from some "pure" position undefiled by our own theological or philosophical presuppositions. What the most consistently persuasive scholars of NRMs have managed, it seems to me, is something akin to Gilkey's "relative absoluteness": a position that doesn't claim for itself infallibility or total comprehensibility, but does stake a claim to at least partial truth, always open to further development and improvement. The NRM scholar maintains a commitment to her or his scholarly perspective with a conviction similar to the religionist who believes in the absolute truthfulness of her or his religious convictions, yet that same NRM scholar is also aware that any scholarly perspective is culturally situated, and thus subject to change in light of changing cultural circumstances.

Although Gilkey has not addressed NRM scholarship directly in this collection, *Blue Twilight* nonetheless provides some intriguing points of departure for reflection on the craft of NRM study. Among the most influential movers and shakers of the academic study of religion in the twentieth century, Gilkey's collection of essays is an intriguing buffet of ideas, suggestions, arguments, and provocations.

W. Michael Ashcraft, Truman State University

The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America. By Bret. E. Carroll. Routledge, 2000. 144 pages. $17.95 paper.

I have to admit being somewhat indifferent to and skeptical about this volume when I first received it for review. Upon reading it, however, I am happy to report that my first impressions were rather mistaken. Besides being a high quality production—featuring heavy-weight paper which lends to a finely textured feel—the contents of this book are packed full of insights into the history of religion in America.

As with all of the other volumes in the Routledge Atlases of American History series (edited by Mark Carnes), this one also captures the physical characteristics and geographical dimensions of its subject. The former include visual presentations of institutional developments identified by dots and other cartographic devices, while the latter present demographic as well as diachronic and comparative synchronic layouts and graphs of regional and state-by-state distributions of religious movements and denominations. In addition, one is able to trace the genesis and transmission of religious ideas across space and time. Numerous charts and maps follow developments at the level of individual missionary movements and at the level of socio-religious expansion.

In effect, the reader is treated to snapshots, as it were, of American religious history. The book is divided into six parts: indigenous American religions, prehistory to the present; Euro-colonial America, 1500–1867; colonial formations, 1607–1800; Protestant expansion in the nineteenth century; world religions and the emergence of religious pluralism since 1850; and religions of the modern age. In all, there are thirty-six snapshots, each comprising two side-by-side pages (or, in some cases, up to four pages) and including anywhere from two to six maps, graphs, photos, plates, or other kinds of visual displays. Coverage ranges from the ancient Amerindian agricultural religions, colonialist routes, the emergence of Quaker and German sectarian communities in the colonies, the various Awakenings and communitarian movements of the nineteenth century, through the development of Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism in America, just to capture a sample of the specific topics presented.

Besides some of those mentioned above, a number of other entries will be of interest to readers of this journal. "American Metaphysical Movements" includes maps of nineteenth-century spiritualism, Christian Science, Theosophy, and New Thought. Mormonism takes up four pages rather than two. Modern religions include fundamentalist Protestantism, Holiness and Pentecostal movements, urban African American traditions (Garveyism, Universal Negro Improvement Association, Black Hebrew organizations, Moorish Science, and Nation of Islam), and (discussed together) Unification, Scientology, and Baha'i. Obviously, there is much more that could be said than what appears on these pages about

these movements. Equally obvious are the many groups and NRMs (especially) that are not even mentioned. Yet its goal is not to provide comprehensive coverage of any particular tradition or even of all American NRMs, but to give an overall historical sense of the development of religion in America as a whole. Toward this end, the volume succeeds admirably. In the process, connections are made around the world through visual depictions of the cross-fertilization of religious beliefs and practices, thus accurately portraying lived religious reality.

We should be grateful to Bret Carroll, historian of religion at California State University, Stanislaus. This volume promises to be very useful as a supplementary text in introductory courses to religion in America. It may also serve as a model for future NRM research insofar as it calls attention to the value of cartography as a medium of communicating the emergence and development of religious ideas and movements.

Amos Yong, Bethel College

A Separate People: An Insider's View of Old Order Mennonite Customs and Traditions. By Isaac R. Horst. Herald Press, 2000. $14.99 paper.

In the highly traditional world of the various Old Order Anabaptist groups, insiders have special access to information and points of view that outside scholars cannot achieve. The few Anabaptist traditionalists interested in writing thus provide us with fascinating insights into a way of life that one might expect to vanish in the face of the juggernaut of modernity, but that in fact is perhaps today stronger than ever before. Isaac Horst's book is, therefore, a treasure. It is clearly and straightforwardly written and almost encyclopedic in its descriptive precision. Occasionally there is a digression into opinion, as with diatribes against the welfare state (pp. 138–41), gambling (pp. 149–51), and liberal churches (pp. 256–58). Mostly, however, it's a methodical description of a way of life, illustrated with a number of evocative drawings.

Most of Horst's information is conveyed through snippets a page or two in length. He begins with religious matters, describing worship practices, church organization, and conversion. Then he proceeds to dozens of other topics: marriage and divorce, divided opinions about the use of telephones, relations with nonmembers, voting, shunning wayward members, pacifism, the use of the German language, shopping, retirement, and leisure, to name just a few. The book concludes with a series of stories about old times told by a grandfather to his grandchildren.

The Old Order Mennonites, who among the Anabaptists are second only to the Amish in clinging to traditional lifeways and maintaining an inwardly-focused community, are probably the least studied of the Anabaptists. In recent decades the Amish have received a great deal of

attention as their numbers have increased and their problems of adjusting to the demands and enticements of the outside world have been spotlighted repeatedly. The "regular" (non-Old Order) Mennonites have been studied extensively as they have moved slowly but steadily into the mainstream of modern life. The communal Hutterites have been the subjects of a large stream of literature and film. The Old Order Mennonites, however, have largely escaped widespread notice. Thus this book is a welcome rounding-out of the literature.

Horst warns the reader, however, against idealizing his simple people. "[Sympathetic outsiders] admire the Mennonites for their plain dress, their simple lifestyle, and their antiquated mode of travel," he writes (p. 126). "This may be compared to admiring an apple tree for its blossoms. True, an apple orchard in full bloom is a sight to behold, but it is the fruit that rewards us for our labors."

Timothy Miller, University of Kansas

Expecting Armageddon: Essential Readings in Failed Prophecy. Edited by Jon R. Stone. Routledge, 2000, 284 pages. $22.99 paper.

For decades a dysfunctional bias has influenced the publication of collections of papers dealing with key areas of social science research and theory. With the exception of broad introductory surveys, publishers and editors have been primarily interested in publishing collections of original papers and have shied away from reprinting seminal papers from journals. This has been unfortunate, because there are many significant articles, sometimes published years ago or in obscure or defunct journals, which have not been readily accessible to scholars and students. Today the Internet may provide a basis for accessing less conspicuous articles and "oldies but goodies," but it helps either to know what you're looking for or to be motivated to do a systematic search. Thus, before I purchased the present volume, I had no knowledge whatsoever of the existence of a fascinating paper by William Shaffir published in 1995 in the *Jewish Journal of Sociology* dealing with the interpretive repercussions of the seemingly unfulfilled destiny of Lubachvitcher HasidicRebbe Menachem Shneerson, who was heralded by many Lubavitchers as the long-awaited messiah or *Moshiach* and whose death in 1994 traumatized the movement. Thanks to the huge bibliography in the editor's introductory essay I can, if I wish, pursue the Lubachvitcher episode by consulting a more recent book chapter by Simon Dien which appears in *The Coming Deliverer: Millennial Themes in World Religions* edited by Fiona Bowie (University of Wales, 1997).

This is an excellent and very useful volume. Jon Stone has anthologized what he considers to be the most important or interesting papers which have followed up the issues raised in the famous volume *When*

Prophecy Fails by social psychologists Festinger, Riecken and Schacter (University of Minnesota, 1956). The fifteen selections include an excerpt from the Festinger et al. volume plus contributions by outstanding scholars such as J. Gordon Melton, Robert Balch, Joseph Zygmundt, and Susan Palmer. The groups studied include American and Dutch Jehovah's Witnesses, an apocalyptic Pentecostal church, a deviant offshoot of Baha'i, a Japanese sect, two Canadian mystical-occult groups, a French messianic movement, and HasidicJews. Lawrence Foster contributes an interesting historical paper which compares the literal interpretation of the Advent by the Millerites and the more symbolic conception of the Shakers and discusses Millerite-Shaker interactions. There are stimulating theoretical essays by J. Gordon Melton and Neil Weiser.

The editor's worthy introduction summarizes the history of the "Festinger Thesis" and the subsequent research, which has attempted to verify the theory and in the process has challenged and modified it. One of the factors highlighted in post-Festinger analyses include the embedding of falsifiable prophecies in a broader context of unfalsifiable beliefs. Leadership, social support, ritualization, and hostility and ridicule in the environment have also received attention. "The misstep," notes Stone, which, "Festinger and his colleagues made—a mistake that has been rightly criticized—was in assuming that groups will exhibit their 'recovery of conviction' primarily through proselytizing activities" (p. 25).

Stone's essay devotes very little space to violent and self-destructive responses, which are rare. "Instead, most human responses to endtime expectation, while no less passionate, have been far more passive and far less dramatic" (p. 3). Nevertheless, there are some interesting questions concerning the relationship between confirmation/disconfirmation of prophecy and violence. Is disconfirmation or confirmation more significant in enhancing volatility? Consider the Waco episode: the initial militarized raid by the BATF appeared to confirm tribulationist prophecies, but the prospect of subsequent peaceful surrender to the FBI was probably objectionable to Koresh in terms of disconfirming prophecy in a trivializing manner, i.e., once commenced, the Apocalypse does not peter out with the Messiah proceeding not dramatically to Calvary, but mundanely to jail to await trial for weapons offenses, homicide, and statutory rape. This reader would have appreciated some additional discussion of the interface of prophetic success/failure and group volatility. This fine volume would also have benefited from an index. But this is a vital collection whose topicality should not be viewed as being diminished by the passing of "the current obsession with the coming of the Millennium" and its associated "predictions of computer malfunctions, power failure, nuclear meltdowns, [and] worldwide economic depression . . ." (p. ix).

Thomas Robbins, Rochester, Minnesota

Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian, new ed. By Grace Jantzen. Paulist Press, 2000. 230 pages. $16.95 paper.

"What does it mean to be an anchoress in postmodernity?" With this sentence, Grace Jantzen begins the introduction to her new edition of *Julian of Norwich.* The body of the book, first published in 1987, offers the reader a thorough spiritual investigation on writings of the English medieval anchoress and mystic Julian of Norwich. The new introductory section, written for this edition, expands the meanings of Julian's theology, and makes it accessible and relevant to the "postmodern" seeker of spirituality in the twenty-first century.

The book is divided into several parts. In the first section, Jantzen combines the few biographical details known about Julian with a general discussion of the life of an anchoress in the second half of the fourteenth century. Almost all information known about Julian comes from her own writings, *The Showings of the Love of God.*

In the central core of the book, Jantzen examines Julian's set of visions experienced during severe illness. Her subsequent decades-long exploration of these visions and the meaning they had, informed Julian's spirituality throughout her life. From these visions, and the subsequent spiritual inquiry into the meaning of divine love, comes Julian's sophisticated theology.

In the last section, Jantzen guides the reader in utilizing Julian's theology of divine love into a system for spiritual guidance and growth. In her new introduction, Jantzen emphasizes this last point. She reiterates that Julian wrote for all people and all time. Throughout her text, Jantzen enthusiastically recommends that her readers embrace Julian's guidance and reliance on divine comfort as a prescription for healing. She believes that these writings can be a guidepost for the "anchoress in postmodernity" showing ways to turn towards "new life" and away from the "death-dealing structures and practices of modernity" (p. xxii). It is Julian's theological interpretations of her visions in which she sees Christ as maternal, nurturing, and giving birth to humanity, that Jantzen believes speak most powerfully to the modern reader of these texts. Jantzen reminds us that Julian's *Showings* was the first book written in English by a woman. She asserts that Julian's use of maternal imagery in describing characteristics of Christ connects the lives of ordinary women to the divine. In the subtitle of the book, Jantzen identifies Julian as a theologian, thus giving her an authoritative role in an arena dominated by male voices.

The book is densely packed with insights and interpretations of the text, full of applicable quotations from the various versions of *The Showings of the Love of God.* With this volume, Jantzen attempts to meet the needs of both a scholarly and a more general audience in search of sophisticated spiritual guidance. Although the book targets "anyone

drawn to Christian mysticism," as the back cover copy indicates, it might have more appeal to the scholar of medieval mysticism and theology.

Wendy E. Chmielewski, Swarthmore College Peace Collection

Voices of the Religious Left: A Contemporary Sourcebook. By Rebecca T. Alpert. Temple University Press, 2000. 291 pages. $84.50 cloth, $27.95 paper.

Rebecca Alpert has chosen 36 selections to represent the "religious left" of the past twenty years. She notes that the prominence of religious voices linked to "progressive social change" in the 1960s, such as Pope John XXIII, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Abraham Joshua Heschel among others, seems to have vanished. Alpert suggests two primary reasons for this loss. First, the rise of the religious right at the time of the Reagan presidency captured the public attention as representing the voice of religion so that "voices of protest on the other side of the spectrum . . . all but seem to have disappeared from the public consciousness" (p. 1). Second, "the religious left is multifaceted rather than cohesive" (p. 2) so that it does not speak with a unified voice and necessarily mirrors the complexities of a postmodern era which require theological response to "black, feminist, and gay critiques" (p. 6), as well as to issues like economic and ecological justice. Alpert intends this volume to show that there still are vital voices on the religious left and to bring the whole range of these voices to public visibility.

The content of these selections is varied and often rich with theological insight and gripping exhortation. The reader finds Gustavo Gutierrez describing, not the "culture war" announced by the religious right, but the social and economic war brought by the affluent and powerful against the poor and the oppressed. Gutierrez claims that "poverty means death . . . . To physical death is added cultural death. The ruling sectors seek to destroy everything that will give unity and strength to the deprived sectors" (p. 49). He argues for a "discourse of faith" that is grounded in "a paschal theology dealing with the passage from death to life" (p. 49).

However, Gutierrez's liberation theology is specifically challenged by two Native American voices. Robert Warrior notes the use of the Exodus story as a model for liberation theology, but states that "I read the Exodus stories with Canaanite eyes" (p. 53). Warrior identifies with the Canaanites as an indigenous people and draws attention to "those parts of the story that describe Yahweh's command to mercilessly annihilate the indigenous population" (p. 53). He notes that Puritan preachers in America once referred to Indian peoples as Canaanites who were "worthy of annihilation" (p. 56).

George Tinker complains that "Gutierrez, like other Latin American theologians, explicitly and implicitly identifies the preferential option for the poor with socialist and even implied Marxist solutions that analyze

the poor in terms of social class structure" (p. 172). Tinker claims that "Native American people resist categorization in terms of class structure. Instead, we insist on being recognized as 'peoples,' even nations, with a claim to national sovereignty based on ancient title to our land" (p. 175). Tinker asserts that an indigenous reading of the gospel "will represent a radical disjuncture from the theologies and histories of the Western churches of Europe and America—as we pay attention to our stories and memories instead of to theirs" (p. 176).

Among other selections, Delores Williams indicates that "womanist consciousness" is not separatist, and that "color, like birth and death, is common to all people. Like the navel, it is a badge of humanity connecting people with people" (p. 29). Arthur Waskow suggests that Jews may rightly see the Palestinians as "part of our own larger *mishpocha* (family)" since "both peoples are co-descendants from Avraham/Ibrahim our Father" (pp. 141–42). Mumia Abu-Jamal marshals evidence for the reader to conclude with him that "all Blacks on death row are political prisoners" (p. 184). Rebecca Alpert describes Jewish lesbians confronting the text of Leviticus which labels sex between two males as an "abomination" (p. 215). Helen Tworkov offers a Buddhist assessment that both pro-choice and pro-life groups are "anthropocentric" and that "the abortion debate reflects only a Western obsession with control, not consciousness" (p. 258). And Andrew Linzey argues that theologically addressing the place of animals in the order of creation requires abandonment of "purely humanocentric perspectives on animals" (p. 121).

While Alpert's collection is of genuine service for understanding and engaging with contemporary perspectives of "the religious left," there is no notice that the 1960s were also a time of opening to experiential dimensions of religious consciousness. Out of this context came new religious communities, new religious movements, new cosmologies, and "New Age" spirituality. What you do not find in Alpert's book, for example, is a feminist voice that is Wiccan.

Dale Stover, University of Nebraska, Omaha

Integral Psychology: Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy. By Ken Wilber. Shambhala Publications, 2000. 303 pages. $15.95 paper.

Having authored or co-authored seventeen books, including one each year since 1995's *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, Ken Wilber's remarkably prolific and often controversial output continues unabated. His latest work, *Integral Psychology*, attempts to examine some of the implications of his model of consciousness and being for the discipline of psychology and the practice of psychotherapy. According to Wilber's preface, this book is actually a condensed version of a much larger work on the same subject which he hopes to publish at a later date.

Wilber is considered the pre-eminent figure in the field of transpersonal psychology, although he no longer identifies himself as a transpersonalist, preferring to characterize his work as part of "integral" studies. In brief, Wilber's works represent a modern (or postmodern?) version of the "perennial philosophy": reality can best be understood in terms of gradations of being and consciousness, with the deeper modes of consciousness revealing higher and fuller aspects of being, the deepest mode of consciousness making accessible a non-dualist perception of reality. To this Neoplatonic/Vedantic type of epistemology and ontology, Wilber adds an evolutionary interpretation of both individual and cultural development, in which growth at both levels is manifested in the increased awareness of the spiritual dimension of the universe. In *Integral Psychology*, Wilber applies this model to an analysis of psychology and, to a lesser extent, psychotherapy.

Wilber's basic thesis is that the field of psychology must expand its horizons to recognize all aspects of human consciousness, including the higher modes of awareness that are experienced by mystics and practitioners of meditation. Traditional psychology presents an accurate map of the human psyche as far as it goes, but by only looking at "ordinary" modes of awareness, that map is quite incomplete. Wilber does not attempt to deny the truths found in the works of Freud, Skinner, May and other major figures in the field of psychology, but he argues that their works describe only a part of the human psyche, and a full portrait of the mind must include recognition of the *non*-ordinary states achieved by those who practice meditation and other spiritual disciplines. Thus, a complete psychology must acknowledge not just the conscious ego and unconscious id, but also the soul and transpersonal spirit.

Wilber's many critics are not likely to be swayed by the material in his latest work; Wilber's supporters, however, are also likely to be disappointed, given that there really aren't many arguments, insights, or ideas in *Integral Psychology* that haven't already appeared in his previous works. Readers will find familiar themes: the "all level/all quadrant" model; the basic levels or waves of being and consciousness, including the transpersonal states; the lines of human development; the stages of socio-cultural development; the need to integrate the traditional, modern, and postmodern, and other familiar themes that have appeared in all of Wilber's works at least since *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*. While there is a focus on applying these themes to the specific discipline of psychology, even here Wilber tends to simply offer recycled versions of ideas presented in his earlier works.

Even more disappointing is the lack of space devoted to exploring the implications of his model for psychotherapy. Wilber has sometimes been criticized for being too abstract and cerebral, and, as the subtitle suggests, this book gave him an opportunity to counter this criticism by exploring the more practical implications of his model. Unfortunately,

other than a brief section on "Four Quadrant or Integral Therapy," the implications of his model for the actual practice of psychotherapy are left largely unexplored.

As is often the case with Wilber's books, the text is supplemented with numerous charts and extensive endnotes.

George Adams, Susquehanna University

The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States. Edited by Harold Coward, John R. Hinnells, and Raymond Brady Williams. State University of New York Press, 2000. 301 pages. $62.50 cloth, $20.95 paper.

British-born Muslim women lead a meeting of a "radical feminist" group in the United Kingdom; a Hindu temple in Canada extends the use of its facilities to Indian Christian and Sikh groups; for the first time ever, the World Zoroastrian Congress is convened outside of Iran or India—in Houston, Texas, in December 2000. These are just a few of the compelling circumstances that surround the South Asian religious diaspora in Britain and North America, discussed in more than a dozen separate articles in this collection edited by three distinguished South Asianists and scholars of religion.

The term diaspora (Greek for "dispersion") is, of course, historically rooted in the experience of Jewish communities in late antiquity, which found themselves scattered across the Mediterranean world, and which brought their sacred texts, images, practices, and concepts with them everywhere they went. Co-editor Raymond Brady Williams points out that "transfer of money by migrants ranks second behind oil as the largest transnational movement of capital" (p. 280), and suggests that where capital and people flow on the planet, so too do religious traditions. In her discussion of Hindu identities in the United States, Diana L. Eck points out that such transfer of cultural capital often brings the dispersed closer together than they might have been in their original homelands:

> The dispersal of Hindu communities outside India is considerably more complex than the term diaspora might convey, for these communities were already "dispersed" in the varieties of regional and sectarian traditions that compose Hindu religious life in India. . . . In American cities and towns the diaspora often brings people together who may never have had to cooperate in a project like temple building in the scattered communities of the homeland (p. 224).

While some in the field of religious studies have been uncomfortable with the application of the term diaspora to describe non-Jewish religious communities, in general, the authors whose work is collected in this volume find the category of "diaspora religions" ("those groups that have a

sense of being a minority, commonly an oppressed minority, living in an alien culture at a distance from the 'old country'," p. 3) to be helpful in the description of Hindu, Islamic, Sikh, Zoroastrian, and Christian communities of South Asian origins living in the North Atlantic West.

Three introductory overviews concerned with South Asian Christians, Zoroastrians, and South Asian-led new religious movements in the West address what are, numerically speaking, the least significant aspects of the South Asian religious diaspora. The various authors observe that ecumenical arrangements among South Asian churches (e.g., the Church of South India) often are thwarted by denominational impulses abroad, especially among diaspora Christian communities in the United States (p. 21); that Zoroastrians are, by far, the best educated of South Asian diasporic groups (p. 38); and that recent religious movements such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON or "Hare Krishnas") are now accepted by many diasporic South Asians as authentic Indian religions (p. 67).

The chapters devoted to South Asian religious communities in Britain raise the interesting question of how "twice migrants" (immigrants to Britain from the Caribbean, for example, who are of South Asian descent) relate religiously to "once migrants" (South Asian-born immigrants to Britain). John R. Hinnells argues that persons of Indian descent who come to Britain from East Africa bring with them well-developed strategies for maintaining their religious identity in diaspora (p. 81), an argument paralleled in Kim Knott's discussion of Hinduism in Britain with regard to Indo-Caribbean immigrants (p. 93). This point of difference among various South Asian diasporic religious communities in Britain receives attention in Jørgen S. Nielsen's analysis of British Muslims, in which he highlights the relationship between female Muslims' social radicalism and their particular communities of origin, e.g., Sunni versus Shi'ite, East Africa versus Pakistan (p. 122).

The treatment of South Asian diasporic religious communities in North America is divided evenly between Canada and the United States, and tends to pay more attention to ritual and domestic aspects of religious life than the companion chapters related to South Asians in Britain. For example, Harold Coward discusses how traditional Hindu mortuary rituals have been disrupted and altered by Canadian funeral customs (pp. 158–59, 163–64), while Gurinder Singh Mann also devotes a portion of his discussion of Sikhs in the United States to aspects of Sikh mortuary practice (p. 264). Mann also remarks on the alienation of American-born Sikhs from ritual and scriptural language, theological concepts, and the Sikh way of life in general (p. 273). Finally, several authors address the putative parallels between the religious lives of twentieth-century South Asian immigrants to North America and those of their nineteenth-century European Catholic counterparts. Eck argues that, in their lack of homogeneity, Hindus in the United States resemble

earlier Catholic immigrants to America (p. 223), while Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad contrasts contemporary Muslim immigrants to the United States with earlier generations of Catholic newcomers, pointing out that the relatively high degrees of education and professional achievement which characterize many Muslim Americans do not compel them to assimilate into American society by climbing the social ladder from sweatshops to suburbs, as previous generations of Catholic (and Jewish) Americans were compelled to do (pp. 240–41).

While in general this anthology is extremely useful and thought-provoking, it does suffer from several relatively minor problems. Throughout, there is little mention of Jain or Buddhist communities. While such communities admittedly form a very small portion of the South Asian religious diaspora, they deserve at least as much attention as the Zoroastrian community, which merits an entire chapter in the volume. Occasionally, the monographs seem to rely on rather dated scholarship, perhaps reflecting the momentary burst of scholarly interest in the South Asian diaspora during the early 1980s. Most articles also make use of more recent research, but a few (particularly the work of Coward on Canadian Hindus and of Haddad on American Muslims) draw too heavily from scholarship dating to the 1980s or earlier. Finally, it should be noted that, while the book has much to offer the intermediate-level student of South Asian religious traditions, it cannot stand alone as part of an introductory-level course without supplementary explanatory material on each tradition. Such introductory material is no part of this volume's task, of course, and thus, this final comment should be understood as a caution to users, rather than as a critique of the book itself.

Jeffrey L. Richey, University of Findlay

Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want. By Christian Smith. University of California Press, 2000. 257 pages. $27.50 cloth.

Drawing primarily from data collected in the Evangelical Identity and Influence Project, this book "focuses on the sociological and political orientation of the tens of millions of *ordinary* American evangelicals . . ." (p. 2). The three-year project, national in scope, employed a complementary blend of quantitative survey research and in-depth interviews described in the appendices of Smith's earlier book, *American Evangelicalism* (University of Chicago Press, 1998). *Christian America?* zeroes in on a set of questions that are of great interest to academics, journalists and politicians alike:

> Are American evangelicals ultimately tolerant and freedom-loving people who actually get along with other Americans with whom they disagree? Or are evangelicals finally intolerant absolutists who really seek to impose

> their morals and values upon those with whom they differ? Are American evangelicals friends or foes of diversity and pluralism? Just exactly who are these evangelicals, what do they want from America, and how do they hope to get it?" (p. 6).

Since "evangelical" is a slippery term, Smith explains his own working definition. In this book, evangelicals include "the subset of conservative Protestants whose 'neo-evangelical' movement broke from fundamentalism during the 1940s and after" (p. 15). Furthermore, "'conservative' in the phrase 'conservative Protestant' means theologically, not necessarily politically, conservative" (p. 16). Sociologically, a hybrid of "denominational affiliation, theological belief, and self-identification" is used to map the evangelical terrain (pp. 16–18).

Smith believes that evangelicals are often misunderstood due to the presumption that evangelical leaders represent ordinary evangelicals, the over-reliance on survey research without the further aid of on-the-ground interviews or ethnographic fieldwork, the assumption that people typically hold worldviews that are internally consistent, and by failing to discern significant differences within the movement.

Subsequent chapters reveal a great deal of diversity and ambivalence among evangelicals over the notion of a "Christian America" and the implications they draw for public policy. There is in fact no monolithic evangelical view on the role of religion in politics, public education, and gender roles. Even *within* their churches and families evangelicals disagree over their understanding and practice of male leadership and gender equity. Smith's chapter on this latter topic renders the defunding of several Southern Baptist seminaries by the Baptist General Convention of Texas in October, 2000 less than surprising following the decision to limit the pastoral office to men, and other issues open to interpretation, in the newly revised Southern Baptist Convention's statement of faith.

Each chapter contains analysis of the survey data, complemented by interview responses that introduce nuances, complexity, and inconsistencies easily missed on questionnaires. Chapter topics are generally framed by contrasting the views of ordinary evangelicals with media accounts or academic writings that succumb to one of the "four fallacies" outlined in the introduction (pp. 6–15). This form creates lively narrative, but it is probably overused and may turn some off to the main point. Reporters, political scientists, and other interested observers of the North American evangelical scene will profit by reading this book.

Douglas Milford, Wheaton College

Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches: Promises, Limitations, Challenges. By Richard Shaull and Waldo Cesar. Eerdmans, 2000. xiv + 236 pages. $25.00 paper.

Cesar, a Brazilian sociologist, and Shaull, a Christian theologian in the Reformed tradition and longtime professor (now emeritus) of ecumenics at Princeton Theological Seminary, combine in this volume to cover and reflect on the Pentecostal movement in Brazil. Their motivating question—one that is clearly marked in their previous publications (in Shaull's case, extending back over four decades)—concerns the difference, if any, that religious faith makes in contexts of poverty and suffering. Toward this end, Cesar provides in part one of this book a lucid explication of how the experiential faith of Pentecostals in Brazil enables them to negotiate their socio-economic conditions. Shaull's contribution in part two takes up more explicitly theological issues. He confesses that whereas he began with the intention of understanding Pentecostal faith using sociological analyses (thus the dual project with Cesar), he discovered along the way that the experiences of Brazilian Pentecostals are representative of Pentecostals in the non-Western world in marking a paradigm shift in the Christian understanding of salvation. Whereas traditional Christian soteriology emphasized the forgiveness of sins and peace with God, contemporary Pentecostals understand their encounter with the Holy Spirit in a holistic, this-worldly sense that has material, socio-economic, and political implications. Building on Cesar's work in part one, Shaull details how the Pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit is thereby transformative not only of this-worldly attitudes, but also of socio-political praxis. Shaull argues that this discovery has momentous implications for the established Christian churches not only with regard to the necessity of rethinking the doctrine of salvation, but also with regard to the kind of liberative praxis that is imperative for Christian faith in the non-Western world.

For readers of this journal, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches* raises a cluster of questions regarding alternative and emergent religions, three of which I will briefly note. First, in what sense should Pentecostalism be considered an "alternative" or "emergent" religion? Sociologically, it is certainly the case that modern Pentecostalism has roots in the Holiness movement of the late nineteenth century. Theologically, however, Pentecostals believe theirs to be the faith and experience of the earliest Christian communities. Having said this, it will be immediately obvious that many groups that are sociologically characterized as "alternative" or "emergent" religions also trace their theological ideas and practices to ancient sources. *Nova Religio*'s commitment to be broadly inclusive of ancient traditions within the rubric of alternative religions justifies review of this volume here. It also confirms the difficulty of distinguishing between "essential" and "alternative" in the phenomenon of religion.

The second question concerns how historical, anthropological and sociological approaches to the study of new religions can take up theological issues in a sympathetic and constructive way, with the goal of

facilitating theological understanding. Yet, as this volume demonstrates, such understanding will itself serve to push the theological conversation along. Shaull and Cesar provide an excellent model of cooperative scholarship that—along with the work of Mary Bednarowski, Bruce Epperly, and others who have been involved in dialogues with Unification and Mormonism—demonstrate how those in established religious traditions (in this case, Christianity) can and do take seriously the theological ideas of alternative and emergent religions.

This leads to the final question I wish to raise: just how flexible are the various established traditions in terms of their capacity to have theological dialogue with their "offspring"? This book exemplifies the growing awareness among scholars of religion that theological studies—those conducted by both "insiders" and "outsiders" to the traditions under consideration—cannot be divorced from the approaches that have been the staple of *Religionswissenschaft* over the years. But I wonder if the established traditions are ready to take advantage, in a theological sense, of the gains made by religious studies scholarship. I think, for example, about Soka Gakkai International's relationship to Nichiren Shoshu; about Black Muslim groups and the Islamic tradition; about UFO groups and ancient pagan traditions centered around solar mythologies; and so on. Perhaps the time is just around the corner when what Shaull and Cesar have done for Christian faith vis-à-vis emergent Pentecostalism will be replicated by theologians and leaders of other traditions vis-à-vis their new religious movements.

Amos Yong, Bethel College

From Slogans to Mantras: Social Protest and Religious Conversion in the Late Vietnam War Era. By Stephen A. Kent. Syracuse University Press, 2001. 243 pages. $49.95 cloth, $19.95 paper.

This volume is a valuable addition to the growing list of socio-historical studies of the Vietnam War era, and one that will be of particular interest to students of new religious movements. Stephen Kent provides documentation of one well-known phenomenon associated with the period, the conversion of sixties activists, often associated with the radical New Left and violent antiwar protests, to religious movements ranging from Zen to the Jesus freaks of the early seventies. Kent does not attempt a quantitative assessment of such transitions, which would presumably be even more difficult than establishing the exact parameters of that generation's celebrated counterculture. He is content to illustrate them through an admirable combination of archival research, often in the lively and ephemeral underground press of the times, and in-depth interviews.

The study centers on conversions to ten groups: the Divine Light Mission, the Hare Krishnas, the followers of Chogyam Trungpa, the

Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization, the Meher Baba followers, Transcendental Meditation, Scientology, the Unification Church, the Christian World Liberation Front, and the Children of God. Kent is up-front in his criticism of these organizations when abuses seem to warrant it, but overall he remains objective and allows for empathy with the spiritual journeys of the convert individuals even when that was clearly difficult personally.

Especially problematic for him, as it would be for many others, was the acceptance of the anti-feminism of many of the movements by converts, as well as of their intensive and controlling culture.

The showcase example is Rennie Davis, one of the "Chicago Seven" and then a prime convert to the Divine Light Mission of the teenage Guru Maharaj Ji, but many others, if less prominent, had stories no less interesting. The spiritual change is, at least in the convert's conscious mind, typically connected with discouragement at the sour turn of events after the election of 1968, the Kent State shootings in 1970, and the increasing polarization and violence of society. That produced a general sense that the Aquarian dream was not going to be soon realized. This meant, in the minds of some, that if real change was going to come at all, it would have to start not merely with political change, but with deep-level individual spiritual transformation. Sometimes the shift is remarkable, as when a fervent antiwar activist rather suddenly joins the vehemently anticommunist, pro-Nixon Unification Church, or an apostle of acid, the evangelical Christian World Liberation Front, but the short path from one marginal and absolutist group to an opposing one has been well-trod throughout religious and political history.

This study generally ends with the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. It is a good complement to Steven Tipton's classic *Getting Saved from the Sixties*, now with the advantage of greater distance in time. One hopes a follow-up study will now endeavor to find out what happened to these and comparable converts over the subsequent quarter-century. Did they remain with the group, have second thoughts and transfer to another spiritual path, or perhaps join the "bobos" ("bourgeois bohemians") of David Brooks' *Bobos in Paradise*?

No review of this book could be better than Benjamin Zablocki's Foreword, to which I an indebted for this last question.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

An Introduction to Mormonism. By Douglas J. Davies. Cambridge University Press, 2003. 277 pages. $65.00 cloth, $23.00 paper.

In his *Introduction to Mormonism*, Davies integrates discussion of Mormon history, theology, prophecy, organization, soteriology, ethics, apotheosis, practice, family structure, and growth, and provides critical insights into Mormon culture.

Davies finds in Mormonism a disjuncture between earlier soteriology, rooted in the *Book of Mormon*, and later soteriology, which he argues emerges from the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. The former, typified by what Davies terms "chapel Mormonism," is grounded in the notion of universal redemption and embraces theological elements not unlike those found in mainstream Christianity. The later, epitomized by temple work, emphasizes the LDS notion of exaltation, and thus incorporates concepts that are distinctly Mormon—a plurality of gods, the eternal family, and related beliefs and rituals. Davies traces the origin of chapel Mormonism to early LDS emphasis on millenarianism, while he locates the roots of temple Mormonism in later expositions, especially the King Follett sermon and the Doctrine and Covenants.

Significant contributions of Davies' work include explication of distinctly LDS beliefs, such as the Adam-God doctrine, multiple "levels of glory" in the afterlife (and the related idea of exaltation) and unique conceptions of the trinity, atonement, sin and faith. Davies delineates the manner by which Mormon practices and culture grow from distinctive beliefs—connecting, for example, the LDS conception of exaltation, in which access to the greatest reward in the afterlife is dependent on completion of temple rituals, to a Mormon ethic of activity. Examination of each of these is grounded in analysis of relationships between Mormon history, belief and practice, so that Davies provides a compelling portrait of many aspects of LDS culture, including patriarchal blessings, testimonies, Zion, priesthood, church organization, family, and activity.

Davies also addresses what has become an oft-discussed aspect of Mormonism—its growth into what some have asserted will be a new world religion. Davies' assessment of this question is useful in that he distinguishes definitions of new world religions—a task too often ignored by scholars addressing this question—before trying to determine if Mormonism will become the next. If this status is conferred only on the basis of growth, then Seventh-day Adventism, which has grown more than Mormonism in a shorter period, seems a more likely candidate. Davies concludes that Mormonism is unlikely to follow the path of Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism or Sikhism, but that it may become a global movement, by which he means a religious movement which "makes its presence felt within hundreds of societies yet retains its distinctive identity" (p. 248).

Strengths of the work include its illumination of relationships between theology, history and ritual, its index, and its analysis of a plethora of topics in a manner that is integrated and insightful. This wide-ranging, thorough, and perceptive work is as accessible to the layperson as to the scholar and provides an important contribution to Mormon studies.

Laura Vance, Georgia Southwestern State University

Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism. Edited by Brenda E. Brasher. Routledge, 2001. 558 pages. $125.00 cloth.

This is a volume in the *Religion and Society* series of encyclopedias, each of which focuses upon a particular aspect of the religious experience and how it has influenced history and the contemporary world. This volume focuses upon fundamentalism as not only an American Protestant movement, but as a force within other religious and cultural traditions as well. Thus there are entries on Jewish, Catholic and Mormon fundamentalisms as well as Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic fundamentalisms.

This encyclopedia has over two hundred entries ranging from "Abortion" through "Youth for Christ," The quality of entries is uniformly excellent despite the inclusion of one hundred different authors. While the focus of this series of encyclopedias is cross-cultural it is understandable that the majority of entries in this volume focus upon American Protestant fundamentalism.

Entries are arranged alphabetically, with a useful "List of Entries" at the front. This can be used along with the excellent index to locate topics that otherwise would be difficult to find. For instance, there is no separate listing for "Scopes trial," but by using the index, places where the trial are discussed are readily located.

While the first thought is that this is a necessary book for any library (and it is), the book is surprisingly delightful to thumb through. It would make a useful coffee table book for anyone interested in religion. There are numerous photographs and boxes that highlight or expand upon discussions in the text. Material in the boxes range from The Mayflower Compact of 1620, to excerpts of Clarence Darrow's questions to William Jennings Bryan at the Scopes trial, to selections from Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

The encyclopedia is reasonably exhaustive on the history and contemporary influence of Protestant fundamentalism in America. Indeed, it ought to be required reading for social scientists who empirically study contemporary American fundamentalism, often with biased measures to test equally biased hypotheses. This encyclopedia will quickly reveal that fundamentalism is diverse and multifaceted even in its more limited American Protestant form. Three examples that easily reveal this are the entries discussing *The Fundamentals*, literalism and the *Scofield Bible.*

Understandably the encyclopedia is less exhaustive when it covers fundamentalism in other religious traditions and cultures. Still there are excellent entries on Shi'a Islam, the Taliban, and on Hindu and Buddhist fundamentalisms.

Another useful aspect of this encyclopedia is the inclusion of material necessary to illuminate more fully a fundamentalist tradition. For instance, the entry on Mormon Fundamentalism, associated with the continued practice of polygamy, is followed by one on mainstream Mormons who oppose the practice. Likewise there are entries on general

phenomena not restricted to fundamentalism, such as the article on conversion.

Brenda Brasher is to be congratulated on an excellent editorial job. There are few redundancies even though authorities often of necessity must briefly discuss the same topic, (e.g., *The Fundamentals*). The book is a necessity for libraries and for scholars whose specialty is fundamentalism. For others, the book is a surprisingly interesting read and not, as one might suspect, simply a reference book to be shelved until needed.

Ralph W. Hood Jr., University of Tennessee, Chattanooga

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